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How Have NGOs Reacted and Adapted to the Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan?

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Declaration

I, Julie Trentemøller Faarup, declare that this thesis is a result of my research, investigation, and findings. Sources of information that are not my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for an award of any type of degree.

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Date...13/05/2022.....

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Abstract

This thesis explores how NGOs have reacted and adapted to the recent Taliban takeover in Afghanistan on the 15th of August 2021, and how the impact of the changing relationships between the international NGOs, the national NGOs and the Taliban have helped or hindered their ability to work in the country.

Using a qualitative method for data collection, primary data was collected using in-depth interviews with informants working for NGOs that are operating in Afghanistan. The thesis uses social exchange theory as a theoretical framework to better understand the changing relationships between these actors.

Emerging from interviews were four key themes that were identified to look at the legitimacy of the de facto government, economic challenges, bureaucratic impediments, and women participation in work and society. While INGOs and national NGOs all have been forced to work in humanitarian assistance through donor conditionalities, there are still differences in how they have adapted to the current situation. Though the IEA remain unrecognized by the international community, there has clearly been a consensus to continue working with them. Both national and international NGOs see communication with the Taliban as an opportunity to get the Taliban to recognize the importance of their work. Both INGOs and national NGOs suffer from the economic sanctions and the ability to transfer funds. INGOs have had better access to funds than the national NGOs which has allowed them to be able to adapt and increase humanitarian assistance quickly. INGOs have had a more legitimate line of communication with the Taliban compared to national NGOs which have allowed them to respond more effectively with bureaucratic interference. Lastly, despite increasing restrictions by the Taliban administration on mobility, participation in society and education for girls, INGOs have been able to show more adaptation due to flexible budgeting. Despite the constantly changing restrictions being imposed on INGOs and national NGOs by the Taliban, they continue to find new and innovative ways to deliver humanitarian assistance across Afghanistan.

Key words: NGOs, The Taliban, Social Exchange Theory, Humanitarian Assistance

List of abbreviations:

ACBAR - Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development

BPHS - The Basic Package of Health Services

CDC – Community Development Councils

CJCMOTF - Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force

CRCD - Organization for Research and Community Development

DOD - Department of Defense

ECHO - European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department

IEA – Islamic Emarat Afghanistan

FDI - Foreign Direct Investment

HiHA – Hand in Hand Afghanistan

HSC – Humanitarian supply chain

IMF – International Monetary Fund

INGO – International Non-Governmental Organization

NAC - Norwegian Afghanistan committee

NCA – Norwegian Church Aid

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

NRC - The Norwegian Refugee Council

NSP - Afghan National Solidarity program

OECD - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

UN – United Nations

USAID - United States Agency for International Development

UNHCR - UN High Commissioner for Refugees

WFP - World Food Program

WoT - War on Terror

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1. Introduction

Being rich in natural resources and with a young population, Afghanistan has considerable potential of making progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030. However, due to complex, violent, and long-term conflicts, weak governance, climate change, and gender inequality, it is challenging for Afghanistan to make such progress (WFP, 2021). The shock of Covid-19 and the Taliban takeover on the 15th of August, 2021 have added to Afghanistan's economic, social, and health crisis and resulted in lack of progress towards the SDGs. Days before the Taliban marched into Kabul the World Food Program (WFP) estimated that 1 in 3 people are acute food insecure (Røst, 2021). In addition to having a new de facto government, the country is also facing the worst drought in 27 years and Afghanistan now has the highest number of people in emergency food insecurity in the world (OCHA, 2022).

It has now been over six months since the Taliban took over government control of Afghanistan. Shortly after US military and NATO forces withdrew from Afghanistan the Taliban regained control over major cities in Afghanistan and on the 15th of August, the Taliban had installed themselves in the presidential palace (Glinski, 2022). The democratically elected president fled the country and thousands of people descended on the airport in panic of a future under the Taliban. The desperation felt has been revealed in images of frantic individuals clinging to airplanes and falling to their deaths. As of March 2022, more than 5 million Afghans had fled the country (Glinski, 2022). Moreover, at the beginning of 2022 more than half the population of 24.4 million people were in humanitarian need. This is almost four times the number of people who needed life-saving assistance four years previously (OCHA, 2022). Prior to the takeover, the health care system was already strained due to a spike in waterborne diseases, continuous new cases of polio and the ongoing impact of COVID-19 (OCHA, 2022). This has now been compounded with an unpredictable collapse in financing which had previously kept the health infrastructure above water. The current economic crisis has contributed to lowering purchasing power for the people as prices for commodities and food have skyrocketed (OCHA, 2022). This has led to people being more and more desperate and resulting in many taking up unmanageable debt (OCHA, 2022). For Afghanistan to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe and meet the needs of their populations they now require urgent aid. In the first half of 2020, the UN estimated that Afghanistan required 1.3 billion USD of aid funding (UNOCHA, 2021a). This number has only increased since the

Taliban takeover. In 2022 the UN estimated a need for 4.4 billion USD to be able to assist the 22.1 million people that need life-saving assistance (UN, 2022c).

The lack of funding, a poor harvest season, the shock of COVID-19 and the Taliban takeover have led to world leaders, the UN, and NGOs fearing a humanitarian catastrophe. In the hope of preventing a worsening humanitarian crisis, the Taliban was invited to Oslo, Norway, in January 2022. During the meeting the Taliban met with NGOs, human rights defenders, and government officials (Bolle & Gjestvang, 2022). The restrictions imposed on women and girls after the Taliban takeover have limited their rights and opportunities (OCHA, 2022). The talks led the Taliban to promise the reopening of schools for girls at all levels in March 2022. Furthermore, the Taliban is also aware that they need humanitarian and development assistance to be able to handle the humanitarian crisis ahead (Bolle & Gjestvang, 2022). The Taliban has expressed that they would like NGOs to remain in the country to help those in need (Røst, 2021; Loy, 2021). When the message to “stay and deliver” is used by the UN and humanitarian agencies it represents the need to maintain aid in high-risk and challenging areas due to the level of potential emerging high-level crisis (Loy, 2021). Many humanitarian and development organizations were caught by surprise by the speed at which the government authorities collapsed and when the Taliban entered major cities such as Herat and Kandahar. This led to several aid agencies rushing to evacuate most of their international workers, (Loy, 2021). However, many NGOs have proven their commitment to Afghanistan and have decided to stay and deliver.

Based upon the fore mentioned, this research will examine how different humanitarian aid organizations have reacted and adapted to the Taliban taking control in Afghanistan. It will look at the challenges NGOs have faced since the takeover and how they are currently adapting to the new de facto government, the Taliban. Furthermore, the thesis will look at how the relationship between the Taliban and the NGOs have helped or hindered the ability to carry out much needed aid.

2. Objective and Research Questions

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will present the research question with sub questions, before presetting terms and definitions. Lastly this section will give a brief introduction to the difference between humanitarian assistance and developmental aid. This research will investigate how NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) have reacted and adapted to the complete Taliban takeover of Afghanistan on 15th August 2021. It will attempt to identify challenges and opportunities for the NGO in creating a relationship with the new de facto government to be able to continue their ongoing work. With that in mind, this research seeks to answer:

Research Question:

- How have Non-Governmental Organizations adapted and reacted to the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan?

Sub questions:

- How has the changing relationship between the NGOs and the Taliban helped or hindered their ability to work in the country?
- What was the initial reaction of the different NGOs after the 15th of August?
- How have the NGOs adapted after the 15th of August?

2.1 Definitions and Terminology

This section will present four different terms that are frequently used throughout this thesis.

2.1.1 NGO

NGOs stand for non-governmental organizations. NGOs operate independently from the government and are non-profit groups. NGOs are often connected to civil society groups and can be organized at a local, community, national and international level (Folger, 2021). In this paper, I will mainly focus on national NGOs and international NGOs (INGO).

2.1.2 Reaction

Reactions are defined as “what you do, say or think as a result of something that has happened (Oxford dictionary, 2022b). A reaction is in this sense the immediate response of individuals or groups in response to a change in internal or external environment. The term reaction in

this research paper will be used to describe how NGOs immediately reacted after the Taliban took over.

2.1.3 Adaption

According to the Oxford dictionary adaption is “the action or process of changing something, or of being changed, to suit a new purpose or situation” (Oxford dictionary, 2022a). Adaption is how individuals or groups have responded to changes after the initial reaction. Throughout this thesis, the term adaption is used to describe the process of changing to better suit a situation.

2.1.4 De Facto Government

A de facto government is a government that is in actual possession of authority and control of the state even though it is not the legal and legitimate government and is not recognized by other states. The Taliban is referred to as the de facto government and remains unrecognized by the international community to date.

2.1.5 What is Humanitarian Assistance and Development Aid?

Humanitarian assistance and development aid are terms that are often used interchangeably and can therefore be difficult to differentiate between. They often have a similar objective which is often connected to reducing human suffering. There are, however, some differences.

Humanitarian assistance is defined as short-term support, which is often provided as a response to a specific crisis whether it is a man-made crisis or a natural disaster (Development Initiative, 2021). Humanitarian assistance is intended to alleviate suffering and offer immediate lifesaving aid. This type of assistance can be delivered to any country in the world that is affected by a disaster (De Haan, 2009). Further, humanitarian assistance often has a short response time before it is implemented.

Development aid on the other hand, is often a longer-term process often delivered to low and middle-income countries. Aid often, however, aims to alleviate poverty as well as being a means towards systematic change (De Haan, 2009). Development aid often involves a long and time-consuming process before it is implemented (De Haan, 2009). Key for both humanitarian assistance and development aid is the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence (Development Initiative, 2021).

There are advantages and disadvantages to both humanitarian assistance and development assistance. Humanitarian assistance can alleviate human suffering in a short-term response. However, one of the challenges is that it does not present a long-term solution. In contrast, development aid is often intended to increase local capacity over the long term. In this way humanitarian assistance and development aid can complement each other. One of the main challenges with humanitarian assistance and development aid is that it can create dependencies in local communities (De Haan, 2009).

There are multiple different aid channels which humanitarian and developmental aid can be delivered through. The most commonly used are bilateral and multilateral channels. Bilateral channels are those in which the donor country directly makes transactions with the developing country (Gulrajani, 2016; De Haan, 2009). Bilateral flows can also include transactions to NGOs that are active in a specific country and through international related transactions such as debt relief and administrative costs (Gulrajani, 2016; De Haan, 2009). Multilateral aid on the other hand is delivered by international institutions, an example of this is the UN. Multilateral aid as such loses its “identity” so that the donors cannot pre-determine and track its uses (Gulrajani, 2016; De Haan, 2009). As this thesis is looking into NGOs and how they operate I will look at bilateral aid going from donors to NGOs. The funds from donors are always bound to a combination of conditionalities.

The official definition of aid made by Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Development Assistance Committee (DAC) (Gore, 2013), indicates that aid should be delivered to countries that are on the official DAC-list. Moreover, the assistance provided must have economic and/or welfare development as a main goal for the recipient countries (De Haan, 2009, p.22). Finally, financing aid should have good terms for the recipients and at least 25% of the loan should be a gift (De Haan, 2009, p.22). This definition of aid is used by the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries.

3. Background

In this chapter will start by presenting a brief introduction to Afghanistan's history before looking closer at the humanitarian principles. These principles often define the core objectives of NGOs and are part of the reason why NGOs decide to stay and deliver in countries where it can be challenging to operate. Further, this chapter will present how NGOs have operated in Afghanistan. It will start by looking briefly at aid history in the 50s, 60s and 70s before looking more specifically at Afghanistan and aid starting from 1979 when the Soviet Union invaded the country. This is followed by a section on how NGOs operated during the previous Taliban rule. Thereafter this chapter will examine the implications of the War on Terror (WoT) and securitization of aid in Afghanistan until today. Lastly this chapter will present the different operational approaches of the NGOs that have been gathered through interviews for this thesis.

3.1 Afghanistan – a Brief History

Afghanistan is a country with a unique geographical placement that has led to centuries of strife and discord. The country has been under the rule and influence of several different warlords, as well as British and Russian imperialism (Johannsen & Strand, 2021).

In 1978 the pro-communist PDP party took power in a military coup. At the same time, growing dissatisfaction was seen among the population which led to several years of civil war and internal strife (Johannsen & Strand, 2021). In 1979 the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. An internal resistance movement also known as the Mujahadin fought against the invasion and the war was condemned by the international community. Through this period Afghanistan received support from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United States of America (Johannsen & Strand, 2021). After the Soviets withdrew there were still various groups in the population that disagreed with how the country was governed and in 1994, due to lack of any one coherent government, one of the groups began to rise with support from Pakistan. This group was the Taliban and in 1996 they took power in large parts of Afghanistan (Johannsen & Strand, 2021). They imposed a strong and strict sharia regime and destroyed Buddhist monuments as a symbol of their ideologically driven control. Furthermore, during the Taliban rule, Al-Qaida found the Taliban to be a permanent ally within Afghanistan. Al-Qaida stands on the premise of protecting Muslims all over the world against foreign occupation and innovation. On 11th of September, 2001, Al-Qaida attacked the United States. Al-Qaida hijacked four passenger airplanes, two crashed into the World Trade Center Towers, one hit

the Pentagon and one crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. This initiated the start of ‘the war on terror’ (Brown, 2016) by the US government. With support from the international community, the US took the lead in the military campaign Operation Enduring Freedom and invaded Afghanistan. The US fought against the Taliban, supporting the Northern Alliance and, within a few months, a large part of Taliban forces was defeated (Johannsen & Strand, 2021). The Northern Alliance was a military alliance which consisted of groups whose common goal was to remove the Taliban regime from 1996 to 2001.

After 2001, with UN authority, a number of NATO countries chose to assist the United States by sending military personnel and equipment to Afghanistan. (Johannessen & Stenersen, 2022). Post-war reconstruction is often focused on state-building. This was the case for Afghanistan and state-building and modernization was seen as a tool to deny future emergence of terror organizations and insurgents (Suhrke, 2006). Many argued that large amounts of aid was necessary to rebuild the country and to drown out the illegal economy. One of the people who advocated for this type of aid was the then finance minister Ashraf Ghani, and in 2002 Afghanistan received a pledge of assistance. By 2003, 112 million USD of reconstruction projects had been completed (Johnson & Leslie, 2009). Furthermore, after the 2004 conference in Berlin and 2006 conference in London a financial and social strategy was established for the next five years with a promise of 10 billion USD in aid in 2006 for the next 5 years (2006-2010) (Suhrke, 2006; Johnson & Leslie, 2009). The fragmented and post-war Afghanistan did not have the capacity to handle aid of this size. This led to the then current government hire of international consultants within different departments. This is clearly represented in more than 224 advisor positions within the Ministry of Finance in 2004 (Suhrke, 2006) and led to some donors wanting to favor the UN, and international NGOs. This high presence of foreign consultants and international aid experts fueled further political unrest and dissatisfaction due to the lack of use of local capacity (Suhrke, 2006). The foreign military intervention and the state-building project also led to questions about the new government's legitimacy and came with a critical perspective of the Western Alliance in general. The critical perspective of the Western alliance is ultimately founded in nationalism and Islam (Johnson & Leslie, 2009).

From 2001 and onwards, the Taliban carried out a series of attacks on public buildings, car convoys, Afghan and foreign security forces, UN offices and embassies, among others. NATO and the Government of Afghanistan agreed that the vast majority of foreign forces should be out of the country by the end of 2014 and on the 29th of February, 2020 the United States and the Taliban signed a withdrawal agreement, which required all international forces

to leave Afghanistan by the 1st of May, 2021 (Johannessen & Stenersen, 2022). The Taliban pledged to prevent terrorist organizations from operating in and from Afghanistan and to conclude peace negotiations with the Afghan government. President Biden postponed the withdrawal date to the 11th of September, 2021. As the withdrawal of international forces started the Taliban stepped up their attacks on the Afghan army (Johannessen & Stenersen, 2022). In a mixture of negotiations and warfare, the Taliban occupied large parts of the country and on August 15th, the Taliban forces were outside Kabul. When President Ashraf Ghani and his staff fled the country and the army, and the police laid down their weapons, the Taliban took control of Kabul as well as political and military power in Afghanistan (Johannessen & Stenersen, 2022)

3.2 Humanitarian Principles

As mentioned above, it is important for both humanitarian assistance and development aid to follow the humanitarian principle, though through development aid, assistance tends to be more reliant on diplomacy and economic growth. The humanitarian principles consist of four principles: humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence (Bagshaw, 2021). These four humanitarian principles are followed consistently by several humanitarian organizations. Further, these principles were created to provide a foundation for humanitarian action and are crucial in maintaining access to people in need (Bagshaw, 2012). Compliance to these principles is key in ensuring effective humanitarian coordination (Bagshaw, 2012). Commitment to the humanitarian principles is expressed at an institutional level as 492 NGOs have signed the Code of Conduct for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations NGOs in Disasters Relief (Bagshaw, 2012). The Code of Conduct includes a commitment to adhere to the humanitarian principles and emphasizes the right to receive and offer humanitarian assistance to all citizens of all countries (ICRC, 1994). It involves guidelines on accountability and how humanitarian aid should strive to reduce further vulnerability, and the obligation of the international community to deliver humanitarian assistance where and whenever it is needed, regardless of race, nationality, and belief (ICRC, 1994). Adherence is voluntary but is enforced by organizations who have agreed to maintain this standard it proposes in humanitarian work (ICRC, 1994). Non-Governmental Humanitarian Actors (NGHA) should act independently from any foreign policies and should respect the culture and local customs in the communities they work in (ICRC, 1994). The humanitarian principles can be helpful in understanding how and why organizations decided to stay in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover.

3.3 Humanitarian Assistance in Afghanistan

As mentioned above this chapter will show in depth how NGOs have worked in Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion in 1979 until today. However, it will start by briefly presenting the leading paradigms within aid since before 1950.

3.3.1 The Evolving Role of Humanitarian Assistance

In the 1950s and 60s modernization was the leading aid paradigm and it was a time period highly influenced by optimism. Economic growth combined with modernization theory and "The trickle-down effect" were the leading thoughts within this aid paradigm. (De Haan, 2009). Furthermore, in the early post-war and the beginning of the cold war some donor countries were holding preference over some countries based on their economic and political ideology (De Haan, 2009). The cold war contributed in this way to creating a stronger link between humanitarian assistance and a wider political response to conflict and a new way of thinking about policies emerged (Shannon, 2009). This connection became relevant after to 9/11 with the militarization and securitization of aid.

In the 1970s there was a shift from a focus on economic growth to the importance of poverty reduction (De Haan, 2009). Development aid in the 60s and 70s was to a large degree expected to win hearts and minds during the Cold War against the Soviet Union. The phrase 'hearts and minds' is usually linked with a less coercive counter-insurgency strategy that emphasizes the significance of using minimal force to win the people's hearts and minds (Dixon, 2009). Hearts and Minds theory and counter-insurgency doctrines make assumptions about how local populations perceive dangers and difficulties, as well as how they would select sides in a conflict. Winning hearts and minds were later used specifically in the battle against the Taliban-led insurgency in the early 2000s.

3.3.2 The Soviet Invasion: 1979 – 1996

Since the Soviet invasion in December 1979, NGOs have played a significant role in Afghanistan. In the early stages of the Soviet – Afghan war humanitarian workers offered medical assistance, food and shelter to Afghan refugees fleeing to Pakistan (Mitchell, 2017). Pakistan was in 1979 home to 80.000 Afghan refugees and the number increased drastically and by 1984 there were nearly 4 million Afghan refugees (Mitchell, 2022). During this period NGOs were required to coordinate and register their activities with the Mujahedeen in Peshawar (Atmar & Goodhand 2002; Mitchell, 2017).

NGOs started to implement cross-border programs in Afghanistan in the early 1980s. These programs were focused on addressing basic needs of the population, but they were limited to areas which were not under Soviet control (ACBAR 2014; Mitchell, 2017). The government at the time allowed a small number of local NGOs to operate in Kabul, however international NGOs were banned from the country (Mitchell, 2017). The allowed NGOs were mainly focusing on providing emergency assistance (ACBAR 2014). Moreover, after the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1988 several NGOs expanded their activities to include education, infrastructure, mine clearance and vocational training (Mitchell, 2017). Furthermore, the NGOs also expanded the area they operated in and began working in areas that had previously been of limits (Mitchell, 2017). The aid paradigm leading in the 1990s was an idea that poverty was no longer just an issue of economic capital, but rather expanded to include health care, access to education, and living conditions with democratization becoming a crucial aspect of the development strategy (De Haan, 2009). This era of post-cold war was a time when aid workers hoped aid would finally be free of ideology and could now focus singlehandedly on fighting poverty and inequality (Brown, 2016). This was also the case for Afghanistan. In 1990s, the Afghan government ratified a law formally allowing NGOs to operate in the country (Mitchell, 2017). The ability of NGOs to operate more or less freely led to an increase in funding from international governments and organizations such as United States Agency for International Development (USAID), UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and WFP (Mitchell, 2017). The increase in funding, activities and a growing number of NGOs led to a creation of NGO coordination bodies to increase accountability and professionalism (Atmar & Goodhand 2002). One of the most prominent ones is the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR) who is still operating today. NGOs enjoyed their relative freedom of action from 1990-1995 but this changed again after the Taliban took control of the country in 1996. (Mitchell, 2017).

3.3.3 The Taliban: 1996 - 2001

During the Taliban period from 1996 to 2001 several NGOs were forced to retreat to Pakistan. The remaining NGOs continued to work under significant restrictions placed on their activities (Mitchell, 2017). During this period the Taliban imposed a religious-based form of government, which had roots in an extreme interpretation of Islam (Dobbins & Shinn, 2011). The Taliban enforced strict constraints on women's rights and issued an order that banned all females from working for NGOs (Johnson & Leslie, 2009; Mitchell, 2017). There were also limits and restrictions set to women's access to humanitarian relief (Mitchell, 2017).

Agencies saw this as a direct attack against their values and they also believed this to be an attack against universal rights (Johnson & Leslie, 2009). Schools and education for girls have been a controversial topic for a long time (Barth, 2008), and with the constraints on women's rights followed a ban on education for girls (Mitchell, 2017).

Furthermore, NGOs were also prohibited from engaging in "political" activity, as the Taliban feared that this would be a threat to their Islamic version of society (Mitchell, 2017). A few advocacy organizations tried to work with peace building and human rights during this time, but the main priority of NGOs were relief programs (Atmar & Goodhand, 2002; Mitchell, 2017). The diversity of NGO communities also made it difficult to agree with the Taliban or even find a common position on different matters (Johnson & Leslie, 2009). The Taliban government had an eye on NGOs involved in political activity but were even more suspicious of the western origin international organizations (Mitchell, 2017). In 1998, 38 foreign NGOs were forced to leave the country, and many others left because of the severe limitations placed on their activity (Mitchell, 2017). In addition to limited restricted leading to voluntary withdraws and exclusion from the country was the challenge of getting financing and donors for the NGOs. NGO financers called for disengagement and European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO) stopped assistance to NGOs in Afghanistan (Mitchell, 2017).

3.3.4 The War on Terror and Securitization of Aid – Implications in Afghanistan

After the terror attacks on September 11th, 2001, aid once again became a means to ensure national and international security (Brown, 2016). The United States had growing concerns over security in the global north and xenophobia increased. International aid agencies and governments started reflecting upon security concerns. At the same time aid increased to conflict-affected countries that were strategically important for donor countries. Security concerns led to the military invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan (Brown, 2016). George W. Bush declared "War against Terror" after 9/11. The term itself refers to an international military campaign launched by the United States. The main target of the campaign was primarily Islamist groups, the most prominent group being al-Qaeda. As a result of the WoT many were quick to investigate the link between poverty and the causes of extremism and insecurity (De Haan, 2009). This connection had a negative impact on the world's view of the poor as it implied that poverty was one of the main causes of terrorism. This contributed to aid, once again, as in the early post-war era and in the beginning of the cold war, becoming a strategy to ensure national and international security. This is called securitization of aid. Afghanistan,

with the base of Al Qaeda, served as a testing ground for the shifts in developmental theory, humanitarian policy, aid modalities, global governance, and reactions to the WoT in (Shannon, 2009).

In anticipation of retaliatory military action, many NGOs relocated to Pakistan and only a limited number continued to operate in Afghanistan after 9/11 (Mitchell, 2017). The relocation led to many international NGOs transferring their current project to their local Afghan colleagues (Mitchell, 2017). The exit of NGOs from Afghanistan over the previous six years (1996-2001) combined with the flights of NGOs in 2001 meant that the main distribution network for humanitarian assistance was close to nonfunctional (Oliker et al., 2004). In response to the need for assistance the US military began to build up its own system for aid delivery (Oliker et al., 2004). The USAID made it possible for the Department of Defense (DOD) to implement enormous aid programs that support military operations in Afghanistan (Brown, 2016). In this way an old trend returned, the militarization of aid. Aid, once again, as in the early post-war era and the beginning of the cold war, became a strategic tool for national and international security. Those working in development were quick to investigate the link between poverty and the causes of extremism and insecurity (De Haan, 2009). The WoT and securitization of aid led to a change in how and where development and humanitarian programs were implemented. The newly declared WoT allowed states to deviate from Human Rights Treaties that were concerned with security (Klingbiel et al., 2006, p. 30). Critiques and human rights experts and advocates have raised concerns about using terrorism as an excuse for repressing a legitimate internal opposition (Klingbiel et al., 2006).

An example of this is the hearts and minds strategy. The hearts and minds strategy is also about winning the hearts and minds of the populations where the troops of the donor country are deployed. The troops should win hearts and minds with preferably as little force as possible (Dixon, 2009; Wimpelmann et al., 2017). The winning of hearts and minds strategy has again and again been proven to be overall inefficient, short sighted, costly and put beneficiary communities and aid workers in danger (Dixon, 2009; Fishstein, et al, 2012; Wimpelmann et al., 2017). Moreover, the US civil affairs started in December 2001 with the creation of Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force (CJCMOTF). Several other projects were established to relieve Afghan communities in need (Mitchell, 2017). This later became the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) initiative. The PRT as mentioned above was part of the “hearts and mind” strategy used by the US and some of the NATO allies (Dixon, 2009). PRTs are composed by military forces and civilians. They created teams where civilian development and political experts from the US and European governments

were embedded (Brown, 2016; Klingbiel et al., 2006; Shannon, 2009). The PRTs intention was to elicit a broad list of skills and resources from both military and civilian counterparts, however this never transpired. The PRT approach instead ended up revolving around Quick Impact Projects which had a focus on minor, visible reconstruction activities (Stapleton, 2007, p.11).

The merging of security and development has forced civil agencies and the military into greater coordination and cooperation, which have made the humanitarian space smaller (Shannon, 2009). Humanitarian space in this context is defined as “humanitarian space delineating the agency’s ability to operate freely and meet humanitarian needs in accordance with the principles of humanitarian action.” (Collinson & Elhawary, 2012). Furthermore, when NGOs are seen to be connected to armed forces it can give the population they are serving, the impression that they are not upholding the humanitarian principles and operating under impartiality and neutrality (Klingbiel et al., 2006). NGOs also presume that their security is jeopardized by their association with armed troops and that their humanitarian or development aid ideals are not understood in a local context (Dixon, 2009; Wimpelmann et al., 2017). As a result of ‘the war on terror’, militarization of aid and securitizations of aid, humanitarian assistance became, especially in conflict and crisis states, increasingly more politicized (Klingbiel et al., 2006). However, not all countries have had the same idea about whether it has been good or bad to blur the lines. An example of this is Norway’s approach to finding a balance between military-civilian efforts while engaging with the Afghan Government but at the same time trying to protect the humanitarian space (Strand, 2012). Norway has remained committed to the Afghan government’s, donors, and international organizations agreed-upon development objectives and priorities (Strand, 2022).

Moreover, in the 1990 and 2000s eradicating poverty became part of the aid paradigm which provided an increase in foreign aid to fight poverty (DeHaan, 2009). NGOs also benefited financially from the link between poverty and terror (Easterly, 2016). According to figures from the OECD Afghanistan received very little DAC aid in the early 1900s. In 2002-2003, just a few years after the terror attacks Afghanistan received 1.5% of all DAC aid provided. This made Afghanistan among the top ten countries to receive this type of aid in the world. Further, in 2012-13 Afghanistan was at the top of the list and received 3.5% of all DAC aid delivered that year (Brown, 2016). Even though many NGOs benefitted financially from the connection between poverty and terror, the progress many aid agencies had made before 9/11 has been reversed or has slowed down drastically (Klingbiel et al., 2006). The

focus that used to be on human security in violence-affected areas changed to a differentiation between their security and our security (Brown, 2016).

3.3.5 NGOs in Afghanistan 2001 – 2021

As mentioned above many NGOs have benefitted from increased funding since 2001 and the number of NGOs present in Afghanistan have also increased (Rahmani, 2012). However, multiple NGO activities were constrained by the UN in the period from 2001-2004 (Mitchell, 2017). The main reason for this was that the UN-funded NGOs required to adhere to instructions and guidance from the Office of the UN Security Coordinator (Mitchell, 2017). This meant that many NGOs that returned to the country were restricted to less hostile regions of the country (Mitchell, 2017).

In 2004 more than 2465 NGOs were registered with the ministry of planning (Rahmani, 2012). However, the Karzai government (2001-2014) regularly attacked NGOs by saying that NGOism was one of the three threats to Afghanistan (the two others were terrorism and communism) (Moballegh, 2021). In January 2005 the Ministry of Planning was abolished and Karzai signed a law where all NGOs had to re-register with the Ministry of Economy and abide by new reporting rules (Rahmani, 2012). This resulted in a decrease in NGOs working in Afghanistan and in 2008 there was only a total of 1630 NGOs remaining (Rahmani, 2012).

Furthermore, NGOs ended up engaging in different ways of delivering service such as the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS), Community Development Council (CDC) and Citizen Charter Program implemented by the World Bank. The BPHS is a standardized package of care and was delivered by using a contracting out model. This means that local and international NGOs bid for a health care service contract which last between 12-36 month (Forest et al 2016). The Citizens' Charter adds to the government's long-term goals of poverty reduction and strengthening the citizen-state relationship (World Bank, 2022). An important feature in the Citizens' Charter program in Afghanistan was the Afghan National Solidarity program (NSP). One of main goal of the NSP was to rehabilitate and develop communities and villages in Afghanistan (Jelinek, 2006). The main features of the NSP was the CDCs, which was an inclusive development process to ensure poor and vulnerable as well as women to be included in activities, initiatives, and decisions (Ali, 2009). Even though the involvement of women is an enormous boost for women empowerment the idea of bypassing traditional structures can be questioned (Ali, 2009). Furthermore, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development delegated to 30 NGOs the responsibility of forming more than 30.000 CDCs (Moballegh, 2021). The NGOs had their own staff and funds and took

ownership of the CDCs (Moballegh, 2021). This was problematized by the government that argued International NGOs are seen as proxies for foreign governments who dictate the country's development agenda and ambitions (Moballegh, 2021). Furthermore, having NGOs assisting with nationwide government programs could compromise NGOs principles of independence and neutrality (Jelinek, 2006). Lastly, NGOs emerged and started providing services such as education, health care and alternative livelihood in the conflict zones (Moballegh, 2021). NGOs being involved with the government through CDCs, providing BPHS, education programs and more could contribute to NGOs creating parallel structures within the sphere of the government, which hinder capacity building and threaten the legitimacy of the State (Jelinek, 2006).

By 2010 many UN agencies and several NGOs were financed by international donors while also operating both in Taliban governed areas and government-held areas (Strand & Suhrke, 2021). International NGOs implementing education, health and infrastructure programs funded by the government cleared their activities with the Taliban commission and were in that way able to operate in both areas (Strand & Suhrke, 2021). In the Taliban governed areas, the Taliban supervised NGO activities ranging from details of running a hospital to impose restriction on the curriculum taught in schools (Strand & Suhrke, 2021).

3.3.6 NGOs and the New Taliban Regime

Presently, 20 years after western troops invaded Afghanistan, as a result of the terror attack on the World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001, the Taliban is now back in power (Johannsen & Strand, 2021). The Taliban has however changed its position on a few aspects since its last time in governance. The Taliban have rapidly taken on formal contact with the international community, and China and Russia have stated that they are willing to work with the Taliban government. Russia, although they still do not formally recognize the Islamic Afghanistan (IEA) as the government of Afghanistan, recently received and acknowledged Taliban diplomats at the Afghan embassy in Moscow. Furthermore, in contrast to their last period in power, the Taliban just after they took over, stated that they would support women going work back as well as for banks, universities, and shops to remain open (Merchant & Nyborg, 2021). Latest news shows that women's rights keeps being restricted, now with the restriction for women to wear a face veil (Kermani, 2022).

International restriction and sanctions towards the Taliban after 15th of August can make a critical difference for the future path of the Taliban and their successes (Strand & Suhrke, 2021). The chosen restrictions ranged from isolations and sanctions to continued assistance

and dialogue (Strand & Suhrke, 2021). Right after the Taliban takeover large international NGOs and UN agencies, stated they would continue to operate in Afghanistan (Strand & Suhrke, 2021). The ability the Taliban had to work together with NGOs in the past might create a model for how they can cooperate in the future. Furthermore, the Taliban leaders announced at their first press conference that they would provide security for aid actors, suggesting that they are eager to work together with NGOs (Strand & Suhrke, 2021).

As an initial reaction Sweden reallocated development aid to humanitarian assistance while other European countries such as Germany earmarked their aid for Afghanistan to support the expected new flows of refugees (Strand & Suhrke, 2021). Furthermore, the initial reaction from both the US government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has financially made it more challenging for the Taliban to operate as 75% of the previous governments public spending was donor funding (Strand & Suhrke, 2021). Furthermore, after the World Bank paused their funding towards the health care system there is a fear of system collapse (OCHA, 2022). The current political crisis has resulted in the suspension of loan packages from international financial institutions and freezing of the Central Bank of Afghanistan financial assets which in turn makes cash liquidity a challenge to humanitarian operations (OCHA, 2022). Several NGOs have commented that the sanction towards the de facto government among other things is a driver for further need and suffering in Afghanistan (OCHA, 2022). Because of the challenges the Taliban is facing in regard to finances they understand the importance of peace talks and the importance of communication with donors (Strand & Suhrke, 2021).

The Taliban has proven to be willing to negotiate and communicate with both world leaders, government representatives, and NGOs. In the middle of January 2022, the Taliban came to Oslo, Norway to have talks with different world leaders, human rights defenders, a small contingent of displaced Afghans and NGOs to talk about the future of Afghanistan (NTB Nyheter, 2022; Bolle & Gjestvang, 2022). The main agenda was to discuss the enormous challenges in Afghanistan, with over half of the population at risk of starvation. One individual who spoke with the Taliban was the general secretary of NRC, Jan Egeland. He believes that the financial sanctions against Afghanistan are just as destructive as the Taliban regime (NTB Nyheter, 2022; Bolle & Gjestvang, 2022).

During the conversations in Oslo, the Taliban promised to reopen education for girls at all levels in March 2022 and they also mentioned that the school should be segregated between girls and boys, something secondary school already is (BBC, 2022). Jan Egeland commented on this promise and believes that it would be a “breakthrough” for civil society if the promise

was kept. However, this promise was not kept when the Taliban announced that girls secondary schools would remain shut (BBC, 2022). One of the reasoning for not opening the schools was that proper school uniforms and hijabs which are in accordance with Afghan culture, customs, and Sharia have yet to be designed (BBC, 2022; Amnesty, 2022). There is also the aspect that the delegation that was sent to Norway represents the same attitudes as local Taliban troops in rural areas (Bolle & Gjestvang, 2022).

Ever since the Taliban took over in August 2021, they understand that they are in need of international help to be able to handle the crises that are ahead of them. Some speculate that aid and the work of NGOs will be used to push the Taliban in the right direction, though this could jeopardize their ability to uphold the humanitarian principles. (Bolle & Gjestvang, 2022).

3.4 Different Operational Approaches of NGOs Interviewed in Afghanistan

Below I will present different NGOs that operate in Afghanistan. These are also the NGOs that I have contacted to be able to answer my thesis. The NGOs are the Norwegian Afghanistan committee (NAC), the Norwegian Refugee council (NRC), Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), Hand in Hand Afghanistan and Organization for Research and Community Development (ORCD). These NGOs fall into three different categories. The first is international and direct NGOs. These are the international NGOs that works directly with beneficiaries within the country. NRC and NAC fall into this category. International and indirect NGOs are international NGOs that works through local NGOs. An example of this is NCA, who work with ORCD. The last category is national Afghan NGOs. In this category one can find ORCD and HiHA.

International and direct NGOs	International and indirect NGOs	National Afghan NGOs
Norewegian Refugee Council (NRC)	Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)	Organization for Research and Community Development (ORCD)
Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC)		Hand in Hand Afghanistan (HiHA)

Table 1: Categorizations of NGOs

3.4.1 The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC)

NAC was created in December 1979 as a reaction to the Soviet invasion and has been working in solidarity with the Afghan people ever since. NAC is currently present in 9 different provinces across the country (NAC, 2022a; NAC, 2022b). NAC seeks to contribute to a peaceful Afghanistan with no poverty, where people in rural areas receive increased power and influence within their own community (NAC, 2022a). NAC is a member-based solidarity organization that focuses on long-term development work in the Afghan countryside (NAC, 2022a). The term solidarity, according to NAC, reflects the values of equality, inclusion, friendship, and respect. The three core principles of NAC are independence, integrity, and responsibility (NAC; 2022a). The Norwegian Afghanistan Committees' main programs areas are education, health and food security, as well as the environment. The work involves the education of children, teachers, and health personnel, job creation, sustainable agriculture, dialog, and conflict transformations. Furthermore, central themes within NAC involve good governance, anti-corruption work, human rights, and equality (NAC, 2022a).

3.4.2 The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

NRC was established in 1946 after the Second World War to help rebuild Europe. The Norwegian Refugee Council has been present in Afghanistan since 2003 and is currently present in 14 provinces with mobile teams accessing neighboring areas across the country (NRC, 2022a). The Norwegian Refugee Council is an independent humanitarian organization helping people forced to flee (NRC, 2022b). The vision of NRC is "Rights Respected, People Protected" (NRC Policy, n.d., p.2) and their mission statement is: "NRC works to protect the rights of displaced and vulnerable people during crisis" (NRC Policy, n.d., p.2). Their main goals are therefore to assist and meet immediate humanitarian needs and well as prevent further displacement and contribute to durable situations (NRC Policy, n.d.). To do this NRC implements programs through their 6 core competencies: Camp management, education, information counseling and legal assistance (ICLA), livelihoods and food security, shelter and settlements, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) promotion. Additionally, NRC works with integrating protection, advocacy, and emergency response teams in case of unexpected events (NRC, 2022a).

3.4.3 Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)

NCA started working in 1947 as a small fundraising drive by Norwegian churches. Norwegian Church Aid was present in Afghanistan for the first time in 1979 and has since 2002 had long-term development projects there. Norwegian Church Aid is an ecumenical diaconal organization who works for global justice with an aim to help the poorest and those in need regardless of religious or political beliefs, creed or ethnicity (NCA, 2022a). One of NCA goals is to strengthen civil society actors and they therefore work collaboratively with partner organizations. NCA is not present inside Afghanistan. Together with their partners they aim to empower rights holders and contribute towards upholding human dignity and human rights in their communities (NCA, 2022a). In Afghanistan, NCA has its main focus on climate-resilient water, sanitation and hygiene (CRWASH), and climate-smart economic empowerment (CSEE) (NCA, 2022b). Furthermore, NCA works both within long-term development as well as humanitarian response (NCA, 2022b).

3.4.4 Organization for Research and Community Development Afghanistan (ORCD)

ORCD was established in 2011 and is a national registered organization. They are guided by their mission: “Using evidence-based best practice approach, empower communities to set and achieve their own development goals” (ORCD, 2022a). ORCD currently has offices in 13 different provinces and is implementing projects in more than 20 different provinces. Their main focus is within health, education, women empowerment, creating job opportunities, rural development, and agriculture (ORCD, 2022a). These services are provided through projects such as, provision of health packages, community vaccination, orphan support programs sustainable employment and profit through vocational skills and solar panel and water well projects (ORCD, 2022b).

3.4.5 Hand in Hand Afghanistan (HiHA).

HiHA was established in Afghanistan in 2007. Hand in Hand (HiH) Afghanistan is a member of a Hand in Hand network which works towards eradicating poverty. Hand in Hand International is a group of Hand in Hand NGOs that works in 14 different countries (Hand in Hand, 2022a). HiH Afghanistan is a national NGO registered in Afghanistan, however, it is part of the Global Network of Hand in Hand (HiH, 2022b) HiH Afghanistan’s vision is that all citizens of Afghanistan should have “access to good quality and comprehensive services where their fundamental rights are met without discrimination on the grounds of gender or

ethnicity” (HiH, 2022b). HiHA also works with women’s economic empowerment, providing humanitarian support to households that are at risk of food insecurity and increasing decision-making opportunities for vulnerable Afghan women (Hand in Hand, 2022b). Some of the projects they work to implement are involved in social mobilization and formation of Self-Help Groups, Internal savings, business development services, vocational trainings, life skills training including literacy and numeracy, and job creation (Hand in Hand, 2022c).

4. Analytical Framework

This chapter will present the analytical framework that has been used to analyze the findings in this thesis. The chapter is divided into two sub-categories. It will start by presenting humanitarian supply chains and social exchange theory (SET) before delving into a deeper analysis of SET and its conceptual aspects.

As this thesis aims to explore how humanitarian organizations have adapted and reacted to the new Taliban government. Several different theories can contribute to exploring the challenges humanitarian organizations face. In the article “*Theory in Humanitarian Operations Research*”, Oloruntoba, Hossain & Wagner (2016) present three different social science and management theories that have been used to analyze humanitarian operations in the past. The three theories presented are (i) the internationalization theory; (ii); transaction cost theory and (iii) social exchange theory. According to Oloruntoba et al., (2016) internationalization theory is connected to why some organizations pursue foreign direct investment (FDI) and why some do not (Oloruntoba et al., 2016). Transaction cost theory is connected to the cost of carrying out exchanges between organizations or transfers of resources within an individual organization (Oloruntoba et al., 2016). The focus here is on the use of SET. This theory explains aspects that are associated with all types of exchange relationships (Prakash et al., 2020). Aid and humanitarian assistance will throughout this thesis be seen as a commodity. The SET is the most relevant as it allows for exploration of the relationship between the NGOs and the Taliban, as well as the NGOs and their donors.

4.1 Humanitarian Supply Chains and Social Exchange Theory

Humanitarian NGOs and development NGOs are put under pressure when natural disasters, economic crises, pandemics, conflict and war or other emergency situations occur (Prakash, Besiou, Charan & Gupta, 2020). These NGOs are responsible for providing both short- and long-term aid to affected populations and it is therefore important that they can manage services and goods in times of emergencies (Prakash et al., 2020). An emerged field within supply chain management is humanitarian supply chains (HSC) (Prakash et al., 2020). It is important to note that supply chains are often seen as economic entities however they are also social entities. Further, humanitarian supply chains involve people working together to help other people in need (McLachlin & Larson, 2011). One of the main goals for HSC is to create a flow in supply and information. Furthermore, development of local infrastructure is crucial for a good flow in the supply chain. All of the above-mentioned flow related factors

are initiatives that can increase human well-being and resilience in emergencies (Prakash et al., 2020). If a disaster occurs and a local community is in need of food distribution and there is not a sufficient infrastructure, or flow in the information and supply chains, the food might never arrive in a sufficient amount of time. Moreover, HSC necessitate humanitarian actors to coordinate and manage the efficiency of supply flows such as resources from donors to recipients (Prakash et al., 2020). Because humanitarian NGOs and development NGOs operate in complex and stressful situations which require efficient management, knowledge about culture, power dynamics, politics, the function of various institutions, and capabilities are crucial for the flow in the supply chain (Prakash et al., 2020).

HSC differ from other supply chains as they are more often faced with uncertain demands, damaged infrastructure, and unsafe supply networks (Prakash et al., 2020). Prakash et al., (2020) present four different organizational theories that can be used in the humanitarian context:

- The *resource-based view* contributes to explaining how humanitarian organizations sustain and gain capabilities in a humanitarian setting. It can guide humanitarian organizations in creating more efficient and effective plans on how to deliver their resources (Parkash et al., 2020, p.265-266).
- *Resource dependency theory* aims to explain why some humanitarian organizations are powerful and how to oppose such power. In other words, resource dependency theory can explain the power dynamics/struggles between actors (Parkash et al., 2020, p.265). By assuming that different actors are reliant on one another, the actors that control the most resources within the environment would have more influence over other actors (Parkash et al., 2020, p.267). This is connected to the relationship between different organizations as well as donors and NGOs (Parkash et al., 2020, p.267).
- *Contingency theory* explains how organizations adapt their methods, routines, and processes with a focus on internal and external factors (Parkash et al., 2020, p.265-269).
- Lastly, *social exchange theory* explores all the social aspects that are connected to exchange relationships (Parkash et al., 2020, p.265; Oloruntoba et al, 2016). In SET trust is essential and Parkash et al., (2020) differentiate between competency-based trust and integrity-based trust. This will be elaborated further on below.

4.2 Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory is concerned with the presence of norms such as solidarity, commitment, flexibility, and trust within an exchange relationship (Young-Ybarra and Wiersema, 1999). These norms are seen as essential for successful collaboration and are considered more important than power and the ability to control others (Prakash et al., 2020, p.268). The theory suggests that the relationship between actors involved is a give and take relationship that creates a sense of obligation (Prakash et al., 2020). An example can be how donor agencies provide funding for their local partners. The local partners then provide donor agencies with local capacity, knowledge of culture and geographical conditions. This creates an interdependency between the local partners and the donors. Donor agencies are reliant on the local partner's knowledge and the local partner is dependent on the donor's funding (Prakash et al., 2020, p. 268). However, this dependency can also create challenges as local NGOs can end up being dependent on external support from the local partner. This could create a dependency culture where both local and international NGOs become subordinate to the donor's motives (Tvedt, 2006).

Furthermore, SET provides a comprehensive overarching theoretical architecture that contributes to combining recent and future research in transitions faces of humanitarian and developmental assistance (Oloruntoba et al., 2016). One of the advantages of SET is that it allows for a discussion of social structures that contribute to define which conditions might be limiting for humanitarian operations (Oloruntoba et al., 2016). Moreover, one of the weaknesses of SET is that it has not been applied much in the context of crisis saturations armed conflicts, such as in Afghanistan. Furthermore, research on strategic management and deployment of humanitarian logistics personnel resources, as well as research that analyzes or relates humanitarian organizations to human resource policies, are uncommon in the humanitarian operations literature (Oloruntoba et al., 2016).

4.3 Conceptual Aspects of Social Exchange Theory.

Below the term 'swift trust' will be presented as well as three key aspects of SET. The three aspects are (i) the perception of the value of commodities being exchanged (ii) when exchanging commodities or other resources expectations often arise, and (iii) maintenance and development of social and political relationships resulting from exchanges.

4.3.1 Swift Trust.

McLachlin and Larson (2011) have studied the partnership-building process in a humanitarian setting and they found that trust is a key ingredient in a good partnership (McLachlin & Larson, 2011). They discovered that information sharing, dedication, and joint efforts towards the same goals contribute to trust and commitment which in the long perspective will result in a higher level of performance and satisfaction (McLachlin & Larson, 2011, p.33). Trust is often seen as important in long-term relationships however, Tatham and Kovács (2010) see trust as an important factor in areas where changes happen quickly which is often the norm in disaster relief humanitarian work. In this way they see trust as an immediate important factor also for short term relationships and when rapid changes occur (Tatham & Kovács, 2010). The humanitarian community has often been criticized for poor coordination and collaboration (McLachlin & Larson, 2011). In regard to SET trust is an important component, as trust is linked to the relationship different actors have with each other in the HSC. In the humanitarian sector, swift trust becomes an even more important aspect of relationships as actors in HSC can change rapidly.

Tatham and Kovács (2010), as mentioned above, present the term “swift trust”. They argue that this type of trust can become a necessity for a successful relationship and to improve collaboration and coordination of implementations of aid and humanitarian assistance (McLachlin & Larson, 2011; Tatham & Kovács, 2010; Prakash et al., 2020). Important for swift trust to occur is that the different actors agree on a common goal. In the context of humanitarian and development assistance, this could contribute to relieving the suffering of those in need (Tatham & Kovács, 2010). The road to trust can be defined in three different routes: the peripheral, central, and habitual. The peripheral is connected to early establishment of trust, the central is to continue to further build and develop relationships with a long-term perspective in mind, and the habitual route is where trust is built on patterns established through time in long-term interactions (Tatham & Kovács, 2010).

The most common route within HSC is the peripheral route. This route is when networks are formed, however the members in these networks are not defined from the beginning. Furthermore, these networks are usually formed rapidly (Tatham & Kovács, 2010). The Networks can be relationships between several NGOs, the military, commercial firms, the UN and governments agencies as well as community groups (McLachlin & Larson, 2011; Oloruntoba et al., 2016). These rapidly formed networks are often based on swift trust (Tatham & Kovács, 2010). The term swift trust and the perifacial road to trust is closely connected to humanitarian and developmental aid (Tatham & Kovács, 2010). For example,

after a disaster in a country, a large number of individuals from several different organizations (each with their own organizational structure) will arrive on short notice. This composition of people, both those in the field, as well as representatives from headquarters, need to work together. Furthermore, these different organizations/NGOs need to work together and coordinate with the government of the country. Within this hastily formed network, a swift trust can emerge which can contribute to the deliverance of assistance needed as fast and effective as possible (Tatham & Kovács, 2010, p.38).

Lastly, trust can be divided into two separate components: competence-based trust and integrity-based trust (Prakash et al., 2020, p.269). Competence-based trust arises from a partner's competencies such as skills, reliability and experience where integrity-based trust is connected to character, honesty, and motives (Connelly et al., 2018). Research done in the commercial sector suggests that competence-based trust is more effective in the manufacturing setting. However, as the turnover is high and many volunteers are unskilled in the humanitarian sector it is likely that integrity-based trust is more effective (Prakash et al., 2020).

4.3.2 Three Key Aspects of Social Exchange Theory.

Oloruntoba et al, (2016) present three key principles that are connected to SET. The first is the subjective perception of the value of what is being exchanged or passed on from one party to the next (Oloruntoba et al., 2016, p. 547). An example of this is if a donor provides food as an emergency response. To the donor, the food will have an economic value. However, for the receiver the food might be lifesaving. The subjective value of what is being exchanged can therefore be perceived differently (Oloruntoba et al., 2016 p. 547).

The second principle is when exchanging commodities or other resources, expectations often arise. An example of this is connected to the expectations that a receiver might have towards the donor. This can be both connected to economic aid and an expectation that this will continue over a certain amount of time or the expectation of what type of aid the recipient will receive. On the other hand, the donor will most likely also have expectations towards the recipient. Their expectations can be managed through conditionalities attached to donations and fund, but also through instructions to the recipient that they will report back on what the funds has been used for. Where and how aid is being delivered is to a large extent donor driven. Many NGOs have a geographical interest in certain areas as they have worked there before, or the donor country can have a specific interest in the country the NGO is based in.

Lastly, there is the aspect of maintenance and developing social and political relationships resulting from exchanges (Oloruntoba et al., 2016 p. 547). An example of this can be traced back to the cold war. Many of the countries that received assistance from the United States during this time had to distance themselves from the mindset of communism, which resulted in several developing countries distancing themselves from communism (De Haan, 2009). As mentioned above, both the Cold War and the hearts and minds campaign have had political dimensions. Political dimensions are also often found in connection to humanitarian and development work.

These three principles can be found in relations between donors, NGOs, governments, and beneficiaries in HSC. Further, these three principles are connected to the exchange of knowledge and other resources, as well as, developing trust, commitment, solidarity, flexibility, and the appreciation of organizational competencies (Oloruntoba et al., 2016; Parkash, et. al., 2020). SET allows for a discussion of the social structures that define, condition, or constrain the potential success and processes within humanitarian and developmental operations (Oloruntoba et al., 2016). However, SET retains the ability to fully incorporate motives and agency (Oloruntoba et al., 2016). A successful humanitarian or developmental operation is dependent on the level of understanding, and mutual respect between the donor and the receiver (Oloruntoba et al., 2016). This is often grounded in support, trust, communication, and mutual learning (Oloruntoba et al, 2016; Parkash et al, 2020). Interactions, shared vision, a common understanding, and common knowledge will contribute to trust-building and contribute to creating a form of group solidarity (Oloruntoba et al., 2016). This will further contribute to create a frame of reference for further exchange with members of the same exchange group (Oloruntoba et al., 2016).

5. Research Design

This chapter will present the methods used in this thesis as well as the process throughout the writing thereof. The main purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of how the data was gathered and how the conclusion has been reached. This chapter is strictly about the process and the methods and will not present any findings or analysis. This chapter is divided into three sub-sections. In the first section, I will describe the benefits of a qualitative study before going into the second section which will present more details about my sampling and the interview process. I will also present both the advantages and the disadvantages of using interviews as part of my research. In the last section I will reflect on the reliability and validity of this thesis as well as its limitations.

5.1 Advantages of Using Qualitative Research

This research has primarily used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research has an emphasis on language and may also provide a larger impact on the regular person and in this way make it more interesting for the reader. This is compared to quantitative research which is more often based on statistics and numbers and therefore may appear more clinical (Bryman, 2016). When using qualitative research, one can go more in-depth into an issue that is being studied compared to quantitative research which uses quantification in the collection of data (Bryman, 2016, p.32). Qualitative research, therefore, often provides a thick description to the reader (Bryman, 2016).

5.2 The Interview Process

NGOs are a broad term and can be used to describe numerous different organizations focusing on their piece of the puzzle (Betsill & Corell 2008). Trying to study NGOs, as a whole, is therefore an enormous task. I have therefore decided to study humanitarian and developmental NGOs that in some capacity operate in Afghanistan. For this thesis I have used semi-structured interviews as this allowed me to get answers to some broad themes that are important for the analysis and at the same time allows the interview subjects to speak freely and put emphasis on what they find important (Bryman, 2016). The questions in the interview guide (see appendix 1) were quite broad but still contained several overarching themes and allowed for the participant to highlight what they found pertinent.

5.2.1 Methods of Sampling and Data Collection

For this thesis, I decided to use a purposive sampling, which is commonly used when conducting qualitative research (Bryman, 2016 p.410). This method of sampling is when the participants are found and the interviews are constructed with the research question in mind (Bryman, 2016 p.410). By using this way of sampling, I located participants that were able to provide answers for the analysis that would directly contribute to answer the research question (Bryman, 2016 p.410). Further after finding participants that were able to answer my research question, to a certain degree, I chose to use snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a type of non-probability sampling which means that you start with a few participants that then lead to other contacts. By finding contacts that were able to answer my research question they were able to provide me with contact information to other employees within their NGO. Snowball sampling was conducive as actors involved in the field know other actors working in the same area and they can therefore contribute with more relevant participants. One of the disadvantages of snowball sampling is that the actor/subject may only lead you to contact subjects that have the same information or opinions as they do themselves, and therefore not allowing you to get the whole picture (Bryman, 2016). To avoid this, I conducted interviews with four different NGOs to get a perspective of what the different NGOs have experienced.

For this thesis, my two supervisors provided assistance by contacting two NGOs which became two of my interview subjects. Both of these subjects led to more (interview subjects). In addition, I reached out to nineteen NGOs that operate in Afghanistan of which two organizations agreed to help me. One of the NGOs contributed by participating in interviews and the other led me to one of their partner organizations, ORCD, a National NGO. I was left with eight participants from five different organizations and two of them represent different UN organizations. The main sample units consist of employees in humanitarian organizations that have reacted and adapted their work to the new de facto government in Afghanistan. The NGOs that ended up being part of my sample were the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), a partner organization of Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) which is the Organization for Research and Community Development Afghanistan (ORCD) and Hand in Hand Afghanistan. As mentioned above two interviews have been with representatives from different UN organizations. I have however decided not to include the UN as my focus is on NGOs. Below is a table that provides an overview of my interview objects.

Interview No	Setting	Description	National or international
No. 1	Zoom	NGO country director who is well experienced in the Afghan context	International
No. 2	Zoom without video	NGO staff - provincial office	National
No. 3	Zoom	NGO staff - provincial office	National
No. 4	Meeting room	UN employed, who has worked for a long time in and with Afghanistan	International
No. 5	Zoom	UN employed, who has worked in and with Afghanistan	International
No. 6	Zoom	NGO country director who is well experienced in the Afghan context	International
No. 7	Zoom	NGO Program Manager	National
No. 8	Zoom without video	NGO Program Manager	National

Table 2: List of respondents.

5.2.2 The Interviews

As previously mentioned, interviewing is the most common method to gather data in qualitative research (Bryman, 2016, p.466). Qualitative interviews are less structured than quantitative, and the two main categories of interviews are unstructured and semi-structured (Bryman, 2016, p.466). This research aims to use semi-structured interviews as this allows the participant to be more flexible in their answers and allows them to emphasize what they find important (Bryman, 2016, p.201, 266-269). As Bryman (2016) writes: “In qualitative interviewing ‘rambling’ or going off at tangents is often encouraged” (p.466). Furthermore, in a semi-structured interview the researcher still uses an interview guide to ensure that the necessary topics for data gathering are covered. Moreover, if questions were unclear the participant can ask for elaboration and clarification can be given. Overall, I endeavored not to steer the interviews too much.

Due to Covid-19 as well as the security situation in Afghanistan all interviews, bar one, were conducted via zoom. This has both advantages and disadvantages. Bryman (2016, p. 471) elaborates on the importance of a quiet and safe space for interviewing. As the interviews were conducted online most participants were either at home or in their office. One of the advantages of using zoom is that I could use video and see the participants. Whereas during a phone interview where you only can talk and will not be able to observe the participant in the same way or create some sort of safety seeing who you are communicating with (Bryman, 2016, p. 490). However, due to technical issues and internet connection in two of the interviews, the participants had to turn off their cameras and these interviews became like phone interviews. Permission to record was asked and given with notes also taken in conjunction throughout in case of poor-quality recordings. I transcribed the interviews a few days after, so they were still fresh in my memory. Recording the interviews also proved to be helpful when analyzing the data which is elaborated on below.

5.2.3 Data Analysis

In analyzing the interviews, an explorative attitude is taken towards analyzing the reaction and adaptation of NGOs after the Taliban takeover. As the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan is a recent development there has been little prior research on this topic.

After the interviews I transcribed the interviews. After transcribing the interviews, observations such as gestures and behavior of the participants was added to the transcript from the interviews where video had been used. Furthermore, I did not analyze during the data collection. Therefore, coding of the interviews was done after. For this paper, thematic analysis was a conducive approach to look for overall themes in the data as well as getting a broader view of the different ways to approach the new situation (Bryman, 2016, p.11). Thematic analysis is one of the most common approaches in qualitative research (Bryman, 2016, p.484). Thematic analysis means that the researcher will extract core themes from the data after the data has been examined (Bryman, 2016, p.11). A thematic analysis allows for finding patterns, reoccurring themes, and different perspectives. I coded all my data. When searching for codes I first listened to two interviews to get an initial insight into possible codes. Thereafter I read through the transcriptions of all six interviews and coded them. After having extracted different codes, I created sub themes where I placed the different codes. Lastly, I did the same with the subthemes and categorized that into main themes. Coding is used in almost all qualitative data analyses including thematic analysis. To avoid data becoming fragmented and losing its context (Bryman, 2016, p.598), I read over the main

transcript both before, during and after coding it. Throughout the analysis, I tried to see links between the different themes. I then went through each theme to see what the participants said about each of these and used this in my analysis.

Lastly, natural pauses in conversation have been removed from the quotes that have been used in the findings and discussions chapter, unless it is pertinent to the analysis (Bryman, 2016, p.484).

5.3 Assessment of Study Limitations and Trustworthiness

Reliability and validity are often used when evaluating quantitative studies but can also be used for the evaluation of qualitative studies (Bryman, 2016). Reliability is connected to the ability to replicate a study. In this way, another scientist can do the same study and achieve the same result (Bryman, 2016). This can introduce a problem for my thesis as I conducted interviews around seven months after the Taliban took over. All the participants could remember much of what happened, but memory also fades with time. Their interviews are based on their initial reaction and as this is still an ongoing process, reflection can deepen over time. I do, however, think it is possible to replicate this study in context of initial reactions to similar situation as much of the data collected from NGOs and their processes after the Taliban takeover has been documented. Further, the ACBAR, 2022 report and official documents have been used in my analysis to confirm or challenge claims made by the participant during their interviews. In this way I have tried to triangulate the data collected with other reports looking into the same theme. Validity is concerned with how accurate the methods that are used to measure are compared to the finding (Bryman, 2016). If research has high validity, it means that the conclusions will reflect real variations of the reality. In terms of this research, the validity is not high. To get a deeper and more thorough understanding of how NGOs have adapted and reacted to the Taliban takeover, more NGOs should have been part of this study.

An alternative way to evaluate a qualitative study is to the four criteria of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I will assess the trustworthiness of this study by pointing out any merits and limitations that have had an impact on four criteria of trustworthiness. Credibility is similar to internal validity and according to Bryman (2016) it refers to the credibility of the interview objects. If the participant's view of the situation is reflected in their answers and if this account of reality is acceptable (Bryman, 2016). As I have conducted six interviews that have been used in this thesis, and these represent four different NGOs, I therefore believe that their presentations of the changes in aid

and humanitarian assistance after the Taliban took over are credible. To improve the credibility of this study a larger sample representing more NGOs and more employees in the different NGOs would have been preferred. Furthermore, to uphold credibility I have tried to triangulate the participants responses with the research article “Barely Above Water. Challenges of National and Local NGOs Navigating Humanitarian Space In the New Afghan Context” by Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR), published March 2022. However, due to this being a recent event in which little research has been done, it is challenging to triangulate my findings with sufficient material, which limits this thesis.

Closely connected to reliability is dependability. Dependability is about keeping records of both the date and the process so that one leaves an audit (Bryman, 2016). To ensure dependability throughout this study I have followed scientific research protocols such as preserving records of research proposals, interview guides, and transcripts. This is to ensure that the research method may be independently verified at any moment (Bryman, 2016).

Confirmability is about the objectiveness of the researcher. It entails how much the researcher has been affected by personal values and the positioning of perceptions of the researcher (Bryman, 2016). There are different ways of looking at social science and some scholars argue that scientific objectivity within social science is impossible (Grimen, 2004). I would position myself within epistemological interpretivism. Epistemology is concerned about what we can “know” while ontology is concerned with what exists (Sumner & Tribe, 2008, p.55). Epistemological interpretivism means that since reality is socially constructed it cannot completely be detached from social realities (Grimen, 2004), and in this way the research cannot be utmost objective. I am however aware of my own values, interests and opinions and have tried not to let this influence my sampling, interview guides, interviews, findings, and analysis.

The last criteria, transferability, is the same as external validity and is connected to the ability to transfer the study to other subjects (Bryman, 2016). Qualitative research is concerned with depth and in that way producing thick descriptions. This could provide the reader with the opportunity to decide if these descriptions are relevant and transferable to other cases (Bryman, 2016 s. 384). I do believe my analysis provides the reader with a thick description. However, as it is only my qualitative approach to the interpretation of the data, it may have been interpreted with an unintended subjective interpretation. One way to adequately support my findings is through others research.

Another limitation to this thesis was gathering interview participants. Initially, I wanted to interview staff from NGOs, both from the head offices and in field. However, due to the invasion of Ukraine those in head office did not have the capacity nor time to participate in this research, therefore my sample has been limited to NGO staff working in Afghanistan. The small sample is something that is limiting the credibility of this study. An additional limitation of this study is that I only managed to talk to one woman. This might affect the trustworthiness of the study as women have experienced different restrictions compared to men after the Taliban takeover. Therefore, the reflection upon women's opportunities to carry out their work and how they have experienced the Taliban takeover is mostly presented by their male colleagues.

Furthermore, little research has been conducted on how SET can be adapted to crisis situation such as armed conflict. It has therefore also rarely been applied to crisis and conflict situation. I have however, decided to use it to analyze the finding in this thesis as the social relationship between the NGOs and the new de facto government is essential for a flow in the HSC which again is important so NGOs can assist people in need.

Lastly, the findings cannot be generalized beyond the NGOs represented in the research and, informants were the sole representatives for their own NGO.

5.3.1 Ethical Considerations

One of the most important elements of good ethical research is to do no harm (Bryman, 2016). Harm is defined by Bryman (2016, p.126) as physical harm, stress, harm to the participant's development, or loss of self-esteem. During this research, I have done everything not to harm the participants in any way. Moreover, I have made sure that participants have been anonymous throughout this paper by not using their names or identifying them with the NGO that they work for. Further, I have made sure that all my participants have received a research confirmation letter, to inform the participants about the research and to gather their informed consent. Prior to the interviews, I received informed consent orally to record the interviews. All participants were informed that they could withdraw their participation at any time and that this research paper is anonymous. These are all principles that are important when doing research (Bryman, 2016, p.123- 134). Due to anonymity, I have decided to give the participants random numbers when referring to them. This is meant to protect the participants from stress, unwanted publicity, or security threats (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009).

6. Findings and Discussion

This chapter is divided into four main sections. First the legitimacy of the de facto government will be discussed before looking closer at bureaucratic impediments. Thereafter economic challenges will be presented before diving into women's participation both in terms of program implementations and the challenges met by female staff. Each section will start by presenting the initial reaction of NGOs before presenting how they have adapted to the Taliban taking over. Moreover, the findings made through the interviews will be triangulated the finding from the research article "Barely Above Water. Challenges of National and Local NGOs Navigating Humanitarian Space In the New Afghan Context" by Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR), Published March 2022. The findings will be discussed based on SET, which argues that with the presence of norms such as solidarity, commitment, flexibility, and trust, in exchange relationships a successful collaboration will be possible.

6.1 Legitimacy of the De Facto Government

It is important to note that the Taliban takeover was not sudden on the 15th of August, 2021. It was a gradual takeover. The Taliban previously operated in certain areas and as the NATO and US forces withdrew the takeover slowly started emerging (Informant 1). However, the takeover on August 15th worried several groups of people, especially women and the minority populations as expressed by Informant 1 and 7. In news around the world there were articles about how NGOs were facing a dilemma of whether and how they would continue their work (Loy, 2021). This led to NGOs having different initial reactions to the takeover. According to Informant 1, it was never a question of whether they should leave or not but rather a discussion of how to adapt to this new situation. This however was not the same reaction in other NGOs. Informant 7 mentioned that some of their staff fled to Europe or neighboring countries. This can indicate that swift trust towards the de facto government might be present in the relationship between some NGO and the Taliban.

Furthermore, Informant 1 said that: "*Many refer to it (the current government) as the de facto Government, because they say they don't have legitimacy*". Referring to the Taliban as the de facto government was something that all the informants did. This shows that the current government is not formally recognized by any of the NGOs. Informant 1 continued by comparing the legitimacy of the de facto government to the previous government. "*I don't think there is any less legitimacy now than there was during the last government*". Even

though the de facto government is lacking legitimacy, several of the NGOs have decided to trust them. Informant 1 mentioned that

“We actually trusted, we chose to believe that the Taliban, take them upon their word... It’s not an Islamic virtue to lie so we will take you (that Taliban) up on your word”
(Informant 1).

Further Informant 3 mentioned that they hoped that the Taliban will stand by the promises that they are making and that so far, they are doing good. This indicates that even though there is little legitimacy towards the de facto government there is still both trust and hope. This trust and hope can contribute to a better relationship between NGOs and the Taliban and result in NGOs ability to cooperate with the Taliban over time. According to McLachlin and Larson (2011) swift trust is essential in places where changes happen rapidly, this is often the norm in disaster relief. Furthermore, swift trust can contribute to commitment which in a longer perspective can contribute to a higher level of performance (McLachlin & Larson, 2011). Even though, the NGOs decided to trust the de facto government, and are in that way working towards creating better relations, the same cannot be said about the donors of the NGOs and their trust towards the Taliban. This will be elaborated on in chapter 6.3.2.

6.2 Bureaucratic Impediments and Opportunities

This section will present some of the bureaucratic opportunities and challenges that the NGOs have been facing after the Taliban takeover the 15th of August 2021.

6.2.1 NGO-Taliban/IEA Collaboration and Dialogue

One of the challenges that several NGOs faced initially was how to operate with a newly formed government. Informant 2 mentioned that: *“Not a lot of them (the Taliban representatives) know necessarily or are qualified to know how they are to operate a state”*. Informant 8 is of the same impression and mentions that the Taliban are not professionals, and most of their representatives do not have any relevant experience with what they are working with. This shows a dissatisfaction with the de facto government and how they have chosen to operate. This can be related to the second aspect of SET as the expectations the NGOs have towards the de facto government are not met, which can lead to a poorer work relationship which will make it harder for NGOs to operate. Informants 1 and 6 on the other hand wish to

have a dialogue with the Taliban and in this way contributing to educate and inform them about how to cooperate with the NGOs. Furthermore, Informant 3 mentioned that:

“...because the government is new, and they do not know most of the rules and regulations, we are trying to have a kind of negotiation communication with them so that we can get into an agreement in each and every activity we want to implement”

(Informant 3).

After the takeover most of the NGOs have had to document all their intended programs and most of the NGOs interviewed have started working more within humanitarian work instead of developmental work. The previous time the Taliban were in power the main priority of NGOs were relief programs and only some continued to work with development programs and even less so continued working within peace building and human rights work (Atmar & Goodhand, 2022; Mitchell, 2017). Like last time the international and national NGOs have both started working more with humanitarian assistance after the recent takeover. Further, the INGOs interviewed have continued with more of their developmental programs compared to the national NGOs who have focused more on humanitarian assistance. This will be elaborated on further down. However, all NGOs agreed that they now need to adapt to the new situation.

“Since the events of August 15th last year Afghanistan is being pitched into a big humanitarian crisis, so obviously what we need to do now is adapt what we’re doing to a new situation” (Informant 6).

Furthermore, Informant 8 and 3 experienced that it was also easier to get implementation of humanitarian programmers approved by the de facto government compared to development programs. This can be related to that the country is now in a larger humanitarian crisis than prior to the takeover (NRCc, 2022; Informant 6) or as informant 8 mentions because some of the developmental projects go against the Taliban belief system. Informant 3 said *“Some development projects the Taliban were against. That was the problem, that we were not able to implement smoothly”*. That development projects are harder to implement can be related to the first aspect of SET, which is connected to the subjective perception or values of what is being exchanged. It indicates that the “commodity” of humanitarian assistance might have a higher value in the eyes of the Taliban compared to the value of NGOs implementing their

developmental programs. It also creates a challenge if there is not a common understanding of the goal of the relationship, or how to reach a common goal. If the two parts of the relationship do not see the commodities having the same value or agree on the same goal nor how to get there, it will be harder to obtain a good flow within the HSC.

Even though there are challenges with working with a newly formed de facto government there can also be opportunities. Informants 1 and 6 wish to have a dialogue with the Taliban so that they can contribute to education and, in that way, among others, assist to create awareness of independence and neutrality of NGOs. It is part of an adaption process to learn how to work with the de facto government and can in the future potentially be an opportunity to have a better working relationship between NGOs and the IEA. This will be elaborated further on below.

6.2.2 New Government, New Opportunities?

As mentioned above one of the challenges for the NGOs is that the government is new and they, therefore, are unsure of how to operate and work in terms of running a state, having qualified staff, corruption, and accepting the independence and neutrality of humanitarian organizations. However, there can also be opportunities such as having a dialogue with the government and being able to explain what the independence and neutrality of humanitarian organizations mean. Furthermore, Informant 1,2,6,7, and 8 mentioned that there is less corruption when working with the Taliban compared to the previous government.

When it comes to building a political and social relationship, which is the third principle of SET as well as part of the adaption process, Informant 1, 6, and 7 were convinced that the new de facto government can provide new opportunities and engagement in humanitarian and developing aid. This is evolving around both short-term and long-term opportunities for when the country gets passed the emergency period.

“We were running a lot of programming which had a medium-term basis and a lot of those have had to be, not paused, but modified to deal with a, with a more short-term crisis situation, but the opportunities, that arise in the longer-term, is concerned around how we can deal with a new government. And make sure that when we get over the emergency period, the programming that we're doing, is of a durable solutions nature will be able to continue” (Informant 6).

This poses an opportunity for NGOs to work together with the Taliban and contribute to developing both social and political relationships and in this way have an opportunity to implement programs, both long and short term. The de facto government has also been criticized for being slow and too bureaucratic. Most of the informants found the same, however Informant 1 found that it is easier to access people in high positions in the new government and argued that even though the government can easily be criticized for being ineffective, NGOs and the UN need to get down from their high horses and acknowledge that other organizations such as the UN also can be rather inefficient. Informant 1 further elaborated that the NGOs are expecting the Taliban to be efficient when they are not always efficient themselves. That this expectation is not fulfilled according to SET will make it more difficult for the different parties to cooperate and have better coordination.

6.2.3 Education and Awareness of Government Representatives

As mentioned above Informant 1 and 6 saw an opportunity to educate and inform the new de facto government as part of an adaptation process and to learn how to work with the de facto government. Informant 1 spoke of dialogue being based on two-way communication. For a better relationship according to SET, agreeing on a common goal and how to get there is important. It is therefore important that it is not only the NGOs wanting to educate the Taliban but also that the idea and principles of the Taliban are listened to. Furthermore, one of the issues is a lack of awareness regarding the Humanitarian Principles. Informant 6 said:

“Humanitarian impartiality, neutrality, and independence, there is a real feeling that we have a lot to do, in terms of educating the de facto government about that. They are unlike, you know, other governments” (Informant 6).

As expressed by Informant 6, there is a desire among the INGOs to make the de facto government recognize that the terms under which they previously operated should be the terms in which they can continue to operate. This was not brought up in the interviews with national NGOs. Furthermore, in a survey done by the ACBAR (2022) investigating how NGOs have adapted to working with the new government, about half of the NGOs responded, that they were able to take part and influence how policies at the provincial level were decided and the other half said that they were not. However, the existing administrative system at the sub-national level lacks the capacity, awareness, and skills to design policies in consultation with civil society, results in the urgent need to educate and provide space for

NGOs (ACBAR, 2022). Half of the NGOs that have been part of the policymaking at a sub-national level mentioned that they have successfully engaged with the Department of Education (ACBAR, 2022). Informant 1 is one of the participants that is eager to have a dialogue and both educate and communicate with the Taliban:

“They (the Taliban) claim to be less corrupt and they have been so far, but I don't think they quite understand that nepotism is a form of corruption. So, I think, that's another disadvantage of not actually working too much with the government because we are also then unable to, uh, help them to reduce corruption, vulnerabilities by actually informing them what corruption is” (Informant 1).

Dialogue with the de facto government is part of the NGOs adaptations to work together with this new administration. Furthermore, it leads into the third principle of SET. Informant 1 talked about the willingness to have a dialogue with the Taliban so that they can have a better relationship in the future. In this way they are working towards creating social and political relations which will increase the ability to have smoother program implementation in the future. Lastly, educating and building awareness of the de facto government representatives is something only the INGOs talk about and is not mentioned by the national NGOs. It is indicated that the INGOs desire to priorities and promote values that the general Afghan population and the Taliban may not priorities the same way or even regard as a core value.

6.2.4 Interference in Program Implementation

The NGO representatives interviewed have had some similar experiences and some different of how the Taliban takeover affected their current programs, their planned programs and their ability to carry out their work. As mentioned above Informants 1, 3, 6, 7, and 8 talked about how the de facto government must be informed and sometimes monitor their programs before they are allowed to implement them. Informant 6, when talking about continuation of school classes, mentioned that *“we reported a redesign of the classes for the de facto government. They (the de facto government) also came to monitor our classes before letting us to start the classes”*. Informant 6 continues and mentions that if the project is well described and well explained to the Taliban, and at the same time is not sensitive to their beliefs or matters of their government, the Taliban is helpful towards the NGOs and their implementation of the project. There are parallels to the previous time the Taliban was in

control where they banned political activities as they saw them as threats towards their Islamic version of the country (Michell, 2017). Moreover, this is connected to the second principle of SET which consists of expectations between the different parties. The Taliban has certain expectations of the kind of assistance they approve of. This is connected to the expectations of the receiver of the commodities. In this case the Taliban expects to not receive any assistance that interferes or challenges their beliefs. These initial reactions of finding ways to keep implementing programs have become part of the adaption process: to be able to adapt to the de facto government demands by not interfering with their challenges and beliefs. Furthermore, not only is this connected to expectations but also to trust. The de facto government does not seem to trust the NGOs to follow their guidelines which again makes it harder to build a good relationship and improve the HSC.

As briefly mentioned above, the Taliban is involved in program implementation and visits projects to check up on them. Furthermore, they sometimes have opinions on whom to hire and which beneficiaries should receive assistance. As described by Informant 8: *“So we're often working where we can, where we feel we can work, and I think they (The Taliban) feel that we should be much more extensively involved elsewhere”*. This can in some cases contribute to limiting the humanitarian space where NGOs should be able to operate freely in accordance with the principles of humanitarian action. According to Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR) (2022) Briefing paper, NGOs have experienced delays in receiving approval for the project they wish to implement. According to ACBAR (2022) the Taliban has also asked for beneficiary details which is violating humanitarian principles. Moreover, the NGOs interviewed during this research tried to not let the Taliban influence their choices of where and how to implement their work as this would harm their ability to uphold the humanitarian principles. Informant 7 informed that their NGO tries to not coordinate activities or projects where they are being influenced by the de facto government. The Taliban according to Informants 1, 6, 7, and 8 are more eager to be involved and monitor activities that are put in place by the NGOs which can be seen as a positive. However, they sometimes try to interfere which makes it hard to uphold neutrality and impartiality, which is a challenge that NGOs are already facing. Informant 6 explains:

“Somebody in the Taliban regime or someone in the Taliban who is locally powerful but may not have an actual position within the government, stops us from doing something or delays us from doing something. Either because they're questioning what we're doing. By saying, look, I want more information about what you're doing before

I allow you to go ahead, or they are creating delays for more nefarious personal reasons, because they want particular people or particular groups to be within, in our beneficiaries” (Informant 6).

Trying to manage and influence the NGOs in this way is showing distrust in their ability to make the correct decisions, which then is challenging the NGOs and the de facto government in developing a good exchange relationship. Informant 6 expressed an understanding of why the Taliban might struggle to trust the NGOs and understand the idea behind the humanitarian principles. As many governments provide funds to the NGOs it can be hard for the de facto government to separate the donors motives from the NGOs. Further, while remembering the history of what has happened over the last 20 years where NGOs worked with the military, thought among other the PRTs (Brown, 2006, Klingbiel, et al., 2006; Shannon, 2009) it is not hard to find that there is a lot of disbelief when talking about NGOs being independent. Working with the military as mentioned earlier can send the wrong images about choosing sides and not being independent. According to the ACBAR (2022) briefing paper, lack of awareness of the humanitarian principles is one of the leading causes for the interference of the de facto government in implementation activities such as recruitment and beneficiary selection. This can be connected to the second principle of SET which talks about expectations of exchange. If the Taliban’s expectation is to be able to influence the NGOs on who they employ and the NGOs expects to be able to make that decision themselves, there is a dissonance between the two actors involved, which again will make it harder for NGOs to provide assistance to people in need and slow down the flow in the HSC.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Economy’s briefing paper from January 2022; Monitoring and Control Plan of NGOs Activities for Distribution of Urgent Humanitarian Assistance Food Stuffs and Non-Food Stuffs, is proposing different monitoring, management, and reporting mechanisms for NGOs. The mechanisms that are proposed in the plan will make it almost impossible for NGOs to operate with independence as a non-governmental organization (ACBAR, 2022). If this briefing paper presented by the Ministry of Economy gets approved it will make it almost impossible to uphold principles such as neutrality, impartiality (ACBAR, 2022). Furthermore, this will increase challenges in the design of projects, approval, and implementation (ACBAR, 2022).

6.2.5 Security and Access

All the Informants except number 6, agree that it has now become easier to access hard-to-reach areas as well as communities that have been deprived from education and other supporting programs. Prior to the Taliban taking over, the NGOs had to negotiate “across the line” (Informant 1). There had to be negotiations both with the opposition and with the Afghan military because they were moving between two areas that were controlled by different authorities. Informant 2 explains: *“I think now we are in a better situation because before we have to deal, we had to coordinate with two governments, with two groups that were powerful”*. Even though there is only one party to negotiate with, informant 6 thinks that this comes with some challenges is due to the new power, access sometimes takes a lot of negotiation and especially at a provincial level as there are new actors involved, who do not know the systems. In opposition to this informant 1 says that they are now spending a lot less time on access negotiation compared to before. According to ACBAR (2022) survey found that about half of their informants reported that geographical access has expanded significantly however, finding the correct focal point for the de facto government, and negotiating with them is more time-consuming than previously.

The security situation when going to the field has also, according to all of the interviews, improved significantly. As mentioned above, the Taliban leaders announced early that they wanted to provide security for aid actors (Strand & Suhrke). This is something that according to the informants the Taliban has managed to uphold. Informant 3 mentions that they now have both better access and better security. He mentions that there are no checkpoints, no bomb blasts or armed fights going on, making it safer to travel. Informant 1 said:

“And then of course what has changed for us is that we are now able to go anywhere we want by car by road, road security has improved of course because those who were responsible for part of the insecurity are now in government” (Informant 1).

Informant 1 also elaborates on how much less money is now needed for security measures. However, the money that is being saved here does not necessarily go towards the programs, instead it is, in some cases being used for a mahram or a male guardian that must travel with women. This will be elaborated more on below in section 6.4.3.

6.3 Economic Challenges

This section will present some of the economic challenges that the informants have been facing since the Taliban took over on the 15th of August 2021. The section will start by looking at how NGOs have coped with getting money into the country as the bank system is and has been on the edge of a collapse. This section will then move on to talk about how the donors have reacted to the Taliban taking over and how this has influenced their ability to work.

6.3.1 Salaries to Employees and Bank Systems

Banking restrictions and liquidity remains a concern among almost all NGOs, as they are facing delays in payment to staff, vendors, and in general meeting operational costs of programming. As a reaction to the Taliban taking over all but one of the NGOs interviewed face a variety of delays in their payments for staff. One NGO managed to pay only half a month after the original payday, while others have had to announce to their employees that they currently are unable to pay them and that they could go on unpaid leave if they did not wish to work. The access to cash and NGO funds is limited by the withdrawal limit that banks set for NGOs and their staff (ACBAR, 2022). This has led to NGOs trying to adapt to these new conditions by using alternative money transfer facilities, such as the UN corridor and the Hawala system. One of the NGO informants, Informant 6, explain that one of the ways the liquidity problem is being overcome is by the UN. *“It's called the UN corridor, where they physically transport cash, into the country in large amounts”*. This informant continues to explain that this is a fragile mechanism, and it is relatively expensive because they have to pay 3% to the UN for that corridor facility. Informant 1 mentions that they have also used the Hawala system¹ to be able to get money into the country, so they are able to pay their staff.

6.3.2 Donors and Their Conditionalities

As mentioned above there might be a certain level of trust from the NGOs towards the Taliban, however, the trust from donors of the NGOs towards the de facto government is not equally present. This can be observed in some of the conditionalities that the donors have attached to their funding. Many of the previous conditionalities are still there. Among these is a list of people that the money cannot go to, which include members of the Taliban. Another

¹ The hawala system is an alternative to a transferring system, which operates outside of the traditional banking system which is used in large parts of the world (El-Qorchi, 2002).

conditionality that all of the NGOs are facing is that the donors do not want them to transfer any money to the de facto government. Informant 1 explains:

“In the beginning, it was said, well, you can't transfer any money to the government, and then we said; well, you know, actually, if we want to follow the law, we have to pay taxes, our income taxes. We deduct taxes from our staff and then that is paid into the Ministry of Economy.” (Informant 1).

This shows a distrust between the donors and the de facto government, which again can contribute to enforce the Taliban's perception of the NGOs neutrality as they are accepting money from these donors. Further this might also implicate the relationship between the NGOs and the Taliban as they might think that the NGOs are influenced by the donors, which they are to some extent. The fact that outsiders (the donors) are having specific conditionalities attached to their funding is affecting the NGOs ability to build and develop better social and political relationships with the de facto government, which again is influencing their ability to carry out their work. The donor reaction was to not give the Taliban political legitimacy and they adapted to this by making conditionalities that NGOs are not to transfer any money to the de facto government. Informant 8 told that when talking about donors, many of their funded projects from donors stopped just after the takeover. Furthermore, all their projects that were jointly implemented with the government also stopped because the donor did not allow them to work with the de facto government. Furthermore, Informant 7 & 8 experienced that their donors were more willing to fund humanitarian activities rather than development opportunities. As the last time the Taliban were in power NGOs more easily received funding for humanitarian relief compared to development work (Mitchell, 2017). Furthermore, the NGOs have therefore now made a shift in many of their programs to work more with humanitarian work. Many of the conditionalities have made it harder for humanitarians to carry out their work and help those in need as expressed by Informant 1:

“So, uh, yes, so I would say most donors have been quite rigid and contributed to growth in poverty rather than actually assisted development or assistance and humanitarian work.” (Informant 1).

Throughout the interview process it was expressed that national NGOs have had more challenges with donors conditionalities compared to INGOs. The INGOs have continued to work with the government and have a dialogue with them, something that only the INGOs mentioned during the interviews. Furthermore, through the interviews it is implied that the INGOs have more agency to stand up to their donors compared to the national NGOs. When talking about donor conditionalities, Informant 1 mentioned that they confronted their donors and said that it would be impossible for them not to work with the de facto government and after several conversations this was quietly accepted by their donors. In contrast Informant 7 and 8 both mention that they coordinate any activities or programs with the de facto government as their donors with restriction to their funds not allowing them to.

In terms of the conditionalities all the NGOs have towards the de facto government little was mentioned. When asked all informant went into conditionalities that the donors impose on them. However, Informant 1 did mention that NGOs *“need to get down from our high horse and, actually start working with the government, of course with conditions. I’m not saying that it cannot be unconditional at all”*. Furthermore, all of the NGOs interviewed mentioned that they tried not to let the Taliban influence who they hire, who their beneficiaries should be and which programs to implement.

Lastly, the fact that donors are not willing to work with the de facto government has created concerns around setting parallel structures. After 2001 NGOs started being more involved in the creation of CDC and BPHS. Furthermore, NGOs started providing services within sectors such as educations and health care (Moballegh, 2021). Today not working with the de facto government is according to Informant 1 contributing to the creation of parallel structures:

“The international community has invested billions of dollars in developing state structures within education within health, within agriculture, in all parts of the government. And now because of the fear of dealing with the new government, many, many large donors are supporting a setup that is parallel to the structures they have developed. We are now destroying them (the previously build structures), by building up parallel structures. That is not sustainable” (Informant 1).

6.4 Participation of Women

After the August 15th Taliban takeover women's participation in program implementation and also programs for female beneficiaries have been limited in several different ways. This has not come as a shock to many as the last time the Taliban were in control, they imposed strict constraints to women's rights (Johnson & Leslie, 2009; Mitchell, 2017). However, the limitations, even though strict, are not as strict as the last time. This section will present challenges of female staff, challenges with programs implemented for women, and lastly, the challenges with the new enforced mahram conditions and how NGOs are adapting to these constraints.

6.4.1 Program Implementation for Women Beneficiaries

According to Informant 8, when the de facto government took over, everything in regard to their programs was quite unclear. There was both unclarity from donors in regard to funding as well as the continuation of their already implemented projects. Further, the Taliban announced that all NGOs would continue to work with their projects. As mentioned above, NGOs who had ongoing projects needed to register themselves and the project with the Taliban and get approval from the departments that would represent the area that the projects were working with as explained by Informant 8. Many projects were approved but they did however, have to limit some parts of their projects and other projects were not approved. According to Informant 8, many of the projects that were not approved contained the idea of liberality, women's rights, and gender equality. Not getting their projects approved is connected to the value of the commodity that is being exchanged. Higher education for women as a commodity appears to be more important in the eyes of NGOs compared to the Taliban. According to the first aspect of SET subjective value of what is being exchanged can therefore be perceived differently. This can result in one party pushing for something that the other party does not find equally relevant or desirable. This can make it challenging in terms of an exchange relationship as they do not in this context have the same common goal.

One of the main concerns of NGOs is the opportunity for girls and women to continue attending school. Just as the Taliban took over, all schools for girls and women closed down. Shortly after the 15th of August the NGO of Interviewee 1 contacted the de facto government at a provincial level and national level and asked for permission to continue their programs for education for women. Further, they mentioned that they wanted written feedback and made sure to ask for this politely. Moreover, Interviewee 1 reflected on how they approached the government might have had something to do with the response they got. Instead of talking

about women's rights and girls' rights to education they talked about education for all, both for boys and girls, and the importance of this. Informant 1 continued to explain how important it is to have a dialogue with the Taliban and how this can make it easier to be able to work together. This is a way to develop a relationship, which is the third principle of SET, that in the future can contribute to a better relationship and again make it easier to deliver aid and humanitarian assistance. Informant 1 ended up getting a response from the provincial office accepting that they continued with school for women even though they had male teachers. Furthermore, through the interviews it has become clear that there is a difference between national and INGOs in this regard.

The Taliban made an announcement saying that school will open again for girls and boys on the 21st of March 2022. As interviews were conducted prior to the 21st of March, 2022, it was yet uncertain if girls will be back in school. As predicted by Informant 1: *“there will be less access for girls because, um, they lack female teachers, especially in the higher grades”*. The problem with lack of female teachers is that only female teachers can educate girls and only male teachers can educate boys per Taliban belief. Informant 6 also mentions that the de facto government said that participation in schools for girls can continue and has decided to believe in that. This shows trust, even though it might be a cautious trust. As mentioned above (section 3.3.4) secondary schools remains closed for girls. Part of the arguments for this at the time was that school uniforms and hijab are not in accordance with Afghan culture, customs, and Sharia law (BBC, 2022; Amnesty, 2022).

6.4.2 Women's Participation in the Workplace

A challenge all the NGOs have met are women's participation in the workplace. Informant 1 explained that just after the takeover, many were concerned with both minority populations and women's rights. According to the ACBAR (2022), briefing paper NGOs have had different experiences with women in offices. Initially after the takeover women were not allowed in the same office spaces as men and in some places not even in offices at all. Informant 1 mentioned that as an important initial reaction within their NGO was to ensure and communicate to all their female colleagues that no female staff would be replaced by men. Furthermore, the NGO expressed that everyone would get paid even though there were working from home, even for people who could not really work from home in their current positions. According to Informant 7, their initial reaction was allocating funds and providing equipment such as laptops, mobile phones and internet at home to their female staff so they would have the opportunity to work from home.

After a few weeks, all of the NGOs interviewed mentioned that women were allowed back into the office. They did however have to be in a separate spaces and have separate lunchrooms. How strictly this is enforced is different in the various NGOs that have participated in this thesis. According to ACBAR (2022), NGOs also reported that there were differences from district to district. The main reason for this is gaps in coherence of this policy implementation and gaps in communications in the chain of command at sub-national and national levels within the de facto government (ACBAR, 2022, p.5). Informant 6 mentioned that after women were allowed back into offices' they adapted to the situation by asking women in the office what they wanted:

“So rather than saying this is, this is what the government or this is what the culture demands. We would try and say OK, well, what in the office makes you comfortable in terms of working? And how can we facilitate that?” (Informant 6).

According to Informants 7 and 8 they still have women working in home offices and Informant 1, 2, 3, and 6 mentioned that they now also provide separate offices for women and men. There is a distinction between national and INGOs where women working in national NGOs are still in home office while the INGOs are not. In the offices where men and women are separated the employees are still communicating and Informant 6 explains that if a women need to talk to a man or needs a signature of a man, she will walk into his office and ask for it, without it being any issue. For Informant 7 and 8 there are more challenges as the female staff have home offices and if they need something they cannot walk over to another staff in the office when they might need to communicate with them. This has made it more difficult for the national NGOs to carry out their work.

6.4.3 Enforcing a ‘Mahram policy’ Upon Female Staff

Another challenge the NGOs are facing are the implications the mahram condition is creating for female staff to carry out their work. A mahram is described as a male guardian or male chaperone. The mahram policy has posed challenges and strains of operational costs and has also limited women's ability to move around. Informant 1 explains:

“This (mahram) is nothing new in Afghanistan and most women have had to travel with male guardians, always. In the past, there was more flexibility. For example, some of our

female staff could travel with their mother, and an older woman could be the guardian of a younger woman. That is no longer the case” (Informant 1).

A challenge for women who need to travel to carry out their work is finding a mahram who are suitable and has time to travel with her. This can often cause delays in the work the NGOs are trying to carry out. The initial reaction of the NGOs has been to send women home to have home office. However, the NGOs have adapted differently to women now having to have a mahram traveling with them. One of the adaptations is connected to the extra cost the mahram policy is enforcing. Informant 1 explains how the NGO has changed its salary structures and created a mahram allowance for its female staff. If a female staff is required to travel long distances, they receive a larger mahram allowance compared to those who are traveling shorter distances and less. This extra cost can be challenging for the NGOs as the cost of a mahram often is not included in the donor funds.

As mentioned above there have been a reduction in security cost, however with the increase in the costs to use alternative banking systems and an increase in payment for a mahram some NGOs are struggling to make ends meet. Informant 1 expressed that even with the reduction in security costs they now use more money on just the mahram allowance, without taking the alternative banking system into consideration. More than half of the participants of the ACBAR (2022) respondents said that the mahram conditions have posed challenges for NGOs that want to hire female staff. This ranges from economic challenges to finding qualified staff who also has a mahram. Informant 7 mentioned that they are struggling to get by financially and the new mahram conditions is not making it easier. Additionally, donors are encouraging them to employ female staff but will not always cover the cost of a mahram as experienced by Informant 7:

“To hire female staff.... when we, our own organization give a proposal and a budget for our “call for proposal” if they (the donors) cannot bear the cost of a mahram, that is an issue that the organization will not be able to hire female staff.” (Informant 7).

Here again is a differentiation between INGOs and national NGOs. The national NGOs lower budgets compared to the international NGOs larger budgets make it harder to employ female staff.

7. Conclusion

This thesis has explored how NGOs have reacted and adapted to the Taliban takeover on the 15th of August 2021, and how the relationship between the NGOs and the Taliban have helped or hindered the NGOs ability to carry out their work in delivering humanitarian assistance and development aid.

INGOs and national NGOs have faced similar challenges but have had to respond them differently. As the Taliban is not recognized as an official government by the international community, both national and international NGOs have continued to work with them and sees communication as an important opportunity for the Taliban to understand their role in the community. Having a dialogue with the Taliban can contribute, according SETs third principle, to improve the NGOs and the Taliban relationships, both socially and politically. This can make it easier for the NGOs to carry out their work in the future. When dealing with the de facto government INGOs have had more access and flexibility compared to NGOs, but what they both have in common is that they have moved away from development projects and towards working more within humanitarian assistance.

Furthermore, INGOs and NGOs suffered from the economic sanctions imposed and the ability to transfer funds. The funding form donors have are creating challenges through their conditionalities. This forces them into humanitarian assistance even though they might have other areas of expertise. INGOs have had better access to funds than the NGOs which allowed INGOs to be able adapt and increase humanitarian assistance at a faster pace. Important in SET is having a common goal. The donors of the NGOs, the NGOs and the Taliban seem to have different ideas of what their common goal is, this making it harder for the NGOs to cooperate and work with the Taliban and therefore also to have a good flow in their HSC. The donor restrictions are not allowing NGOs to work with the government that might create parallel structures in, for example, the education and health care systems.

There are indications that the NGOs trust the Taliban to keep their word and uphold their promises. On the other hand, there is a distrust from the Taliban towards the NGOs as they are checking up on their projects and trying to influence who they should hire and who their beneficiaries should be. This makes it more problematic for NGOs to carry out their work and interferes with the NGOs impartiality and can negatively effect the flow of the HSC.

With the Taliban takeover there were multiple implications for female staff and female beneficiaries. Despite increasing restrictions on women mobility, as well as participation and

education by the de facto government, INGOs have been able to adapt due to flexible budgeting.

Lastly, both the INGOs and NGOs are in their own way finding spaces to operate. NGOs have the advantage of knowing the culture, the country and the people, something the INGOs do not. However, national NGO's do not have the same financial stability nor access of INGOs. Even though the NGOs have in many cases adapted and reacted differently to the Taliban they all have ways to go in terms of improving their relationship to get a better flow in the HSCs. The relationship is being worked on in terms of dialogue and awareness and working together to the extent where the donors conditionalities are not hindering them.

Looking from a bottom-up perspective a lot of the restrictions after the Taliban took over have impacted national NGOs more compared to the INGOs. It is thought that the data collected shows that localizations of aid have decreased after the Taliban takeover, and that more donors are reliant on INGOs than NGOs. However more research would be needed to confirm this finding. The work of this thesis reveals the possibility of working under a changing regime. As the past, and present, has proven, this will most likely not be the last time NGOs will be placed in this position. This reflects the need for more research in ways to improve aid under these contexts.

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9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix I: Interview guide

Background questions:

1. How long has your organization been working in Afghanistan?
2. What geographical areas of Afghanistan does your organization work in?
3. What activities does your organization work within in Afghanistan?
4. What values are you organization based on?
5. What is your main role within the NGO?

Main questions:

1. How did the organization react as the Taliban took over?
 - 1.1. When making the decision to stay were the organizations in contact with people in the field? If yes, how has this affected the decision-making process?
2. Has aid to Afghanistan changed after the Taliban has taken over? If yes, in what ways?
 - 2.1. At an international, national, and local level?
 - 2.2. How has implementation changed after the Taliban took over?
 - 2.3. In what ways has development/aid/humanitarian programs/action changed after the Taliban took over?
3. What conditionalities have your organization put for implementing activities?
4. Have you previously worked in Taliban governed areas?
 - 4.1. If yes: Has the working relationship with the Taliban changed and in what ways?
5. How would you describe the working relationship with the Taliban compared to the previous administration?
 - 5.1. Has this influenced how you operate in Afghanistan?
 - 5.2. How has this impacted female staff?
 - 5.3. Security, dialogue, coordination, collaboration?
6. After the Taliban took over in Afghanistan, what have been the challenges and opportunities for your organization?
 - 6.1. Organizational, financial, program implementation, operational.
 - 6.2. Implementation, prioritizations of certain activities etc.
7. After the Taliban took over have your donor had certain conditionalities making it more difficult to operate in Afghanistan?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?



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