

Media, Public Opinion, and Peace Conditionalities in Post-Conflict Afghanistan
A study into local views on donor behaviour

Department for International Development
December 2005



Researcher M. Qasim (right) interviews Marouf Lewal, News Editor for Pajhwok, an independent Afghan news agency in Kabul

Abstract

The Clingendael Institute, the Netherlands, is administering a DFID-commissioned research project entitled “Peace Conditionalities and Post Conflict Reconstruction: Lessons from Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.” This report presents findings of a substudy on trends in popular opinion and media discourse regarding donor activities in Afghanistan following the 2002 Bonn agreement.

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With thanks to the journalists who consented to be interviewees, Mark Eggerman for his help in finding Afghan public opinion surveys and offering generous feedback on this study, and Orzala Ashraf and Sanjar Qiam for sharing suggestions on donor policy

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Summary

Long-term international workers in Afghanistan have reported a growing sense of unease over what they see as worsening local perceptions of the international community. Anecdotally, some claim that the open hospitality Afghans had extended to foreigners in the immediate post-Bonn period has disintegrated to such an extent that they now often feel they are unwelcome or barely tolerated. Such deterioration in local-international relationships, if reflected in wider trends of public opinion in Afghanistan, has important implications for donor policies and strategies for peace.

As a result the Clingendael Institute commissioned an LSE researcher to conduct a substudy of the various popular discourses regarding donors and international intervention in Afghanistan. The data for the investigation was drawn from a survey of existing reports of Afghan public opinion towards donors and the reconstruction process, and indepth interviews with leading “opinion-maker” media elites.

The 7 public opinion reports were conducted between January 2002 to April 2005 and present “snapshots” of Afghan public opinion across time. The main conclusions of a longitudinal analysis of those snapshots of public opinion were as follows:

- Public opinion regarding the foreign presence and the reconstruction process vacillates between anxiety and hope, cynicism and appreciation, and has gained nuance over time.
- Security has consistently been the top reconstruction priority for Afghans throughout the transition period, although the locus of their concern has shifted from the macro (war) to the micro (crime).
- The international military presence, while occasionally criticized, has retained favour among Afghans, and spending on the military is rarely begrudged.
- In contrast, the international development presence receives more mixed reviews, and development spending is commonly believed to be wasted on extravagant luxuries.
- Dashed expectations are a very important source of discontent with the foreign presence.
- There appears to be a steady or increasing call for capacity building of the Afghan government over time.

The media play a central role in shaping and reflecting public opinion, and can also be an important element in donor relations with the general public. Interviews with 10 leading Afghan media figures provided a means of investigating the structures and trends in public opinion-making regarding donor influence in Afghanistan over the 2002 to 2005 timeframe. The interviews were conducted from November 17th to December 4th, 2005, and offered the following findings regarding journalist attitudes towards donors and the reconstruction process in Afghanistan:

- Perceptions of the international community have worsened over time.
- There is a need for stronger accounting and transparency of donor funding.
- Lack of a central governmental aid monitoring mechanism is felt keenly among journalists.
- Donor funding has caused some indirect negative (undermining) effects on the Afghan government.
- Donor presence and funding is criticized for causing culture clash.
- There is heavy skepticism of claims of altruism in foreigner and donor agendas.
- Japan and in fewer cases Germany are generally well-regarded relative to other donor countries.
- The UN (specifically UNAMA) is not currently in favour.
- Perceptions of the electoral process have generally worsened over time with the increasing Westernization of its procedures.
- Journalists favour donor investments in long-term economic and governmental infrastructure.

The interviews also offered some conclusions on the structures and frameworks for working relationships between donors and the media:

- Donors have a lot of room to improve their information sharing practices with Afghan media.
- Journalistic notions of “newsworthiness” affect media coverage of donor activities.
- Afghan journalists tend to prefer neutral “pull” rather than “push” information sharing practices.
- There are marked differences in the way donors are represented among different media outlets.

- Media forms also matter, although there is no consensus on which medium is most effective for donor reports.

Drawing from the two components of its analysis, this study concludes that poor management of expectations and corruption have factored significantly into worsening local perceptions of the international community in Afghanistan. Obscurity of funding flows have further contributed to cynicism and distrust of the foreigner and NGO presence. While the local population has been appreciative of many donor and NGO contributions, many have been alienated by feelings of lack of agency in their country's reconstruction process.

There was strong criticism of the Afghan government among interviewed journalists on the following grounds:

- lack of accountability from the government itself
- its powerlessness in demanding accountability of donors and NGOs
- corruption
- high wages for ministers and other high officials
- inclusion of former war criminals
- lack of capacity
- inadequate (or lack of) strategic thinking and responsiveness

There were indications that the Afghan public and media elite opinion favour donor involvement in strengthening the central government, maintaining security, reducing corruption, and development of a viable economic system. Equalization of NGO and government power, including capped NGO salaries and reintegration schemes of NGO workers into government would address some of the recurring concerns and resentment raised in the study.

Journalists expressed strong frustration over their inability to clearly report funding processes and outcomes. These findings suggest that donors need to communicate more often and in greater depth with the general public in Afghanistan, and that Afghan media would be a willing partner for such communications. In Afghanistan, where a weak judiciary and corrupt enforcement system offer few checks against corruption, the donor community is often seen as an enforcement mechanism of last resort. A more concerted information-sharing donor policy could strengthen Afghan media's ability to act as public watchdog, and is one means through which the international community could ally with public pressure in bringing about institutional reform in Afghanistan.

Concluding recommendations for donor media policy include the following:

- Donors need a more proactive and practical partnership with the media.
- Donor information-sharing must be understandable, contextualized, specific, and tangible.
- In particular, donor communications must locate projects and programs within a larger timeframe and strategic framework.
- Visibility policies in general can benefit from focusing on transparency rather than branding.
- Communicating win-win reasonings between aid investments in Afghanistan and national self-interest may be helpful in reducing distrust of donor agendas.
- Donors could benefit from making explicit any links between funding and improvements in security.
- Donors must be responsive to feedback from the local population.

The term "international community" encompasses a complex range of actors that includes the UN, NGOs, nation-states, the military (peacekeeping operations or otherwise), donors, and individuals. This substudy found that there was some degree of confusion among respondents between foreign donors, implementing partners, and governments, as well as different military operations (PRTs, ISAF, Coalition forces) in Afghanistan. More careful study will be required to investigate with more precision historical and current perceptions of foreign countries, expatriates, donors, and their perceived influence on rebuilding the country.

I. Introduction

DFID has asked the School of Oriental and Asian Studies, London, and the Netherlands Institute of International Relations ‘Clingendael’, The Hague, to conduct a lessons learned study on the role of peace conditionalities in post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. The study, entitled “Peace Conditionalities and Post Conflict Reconstruction: Lessons from Afghanistan and Sri Lanka,” has three principal objectives:

- To examine the extent to which peace conditionalities applied by donors strengthen or undermine overall peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka;
- To identify specific strategies and approaches to peace conditionalities that are likely to strengthen international efforts to build peace in both countries;
- To highlight the wider lessons about the relevance and potential of peace conditionalities in post-conflict settings.

A central focus of the investigation is the triangular relationship between international agencies, domestic elites and societal actors. Intervention in post conflict contexts involves a dynamic and often conflictual relationship between these three sets of actors. Conditionality on aid is a form of explicit donor influence over domestic actors, and local perceptions of such influence can be an important element in its success or failure. This applies not only to the political agents with whom donors deal directly, but also to the broader public.

Long-term international workers in Afghanistan have reported a growing sense of unease over what they see as a worsening of local perceptions of the international community. Anecdotally, some claim that the open hospitality Afghans had extended to foreigners in the immediate post-Bonn period has disintegrated to such an extent that they now often feel they are unwelcome or barely tolerated. Such deterioration in local-international relationships, if reflected in wider trends of public opinion in Afghanistan, has important implications for donor policies and strategies for peace.

As a result the Clingendael Institute commissioned an LSE researcher to conduct a substudy of the various popular discourses regarding donors and international intervention in Afghanistan. The aim of the substudy was to analyze changes (if any) across time in attitudes towards different international actors, the use of donor funds, and the role of the Afghan government, with a view to providing recommendations for donor policy. The data for the investigation was drawn from two sources:

1. existing reports of Afghan public opinion towards donors and the reconstruction process
2. in-depth interviews with leading “opinion-maker” media elites

The findings and recommendations of the substudy are presented in this report. The TOR for the substudy is available in Annex I.

II. Existing reports

Afghanistan is a challenging site for reliable polling of public opinion. Representative sampling of the Afghan population is not possible due to lack of reliable census data. The quality and comprehensiveness of research can also be compromised by logistical barriers such as poor communications and road infrastructure, inadequate mapping, lack of security, illiteracy, widely divergent population estimates and shifting displaced populations in the country (Eggerman 2003).

Despite these difficulties, seven publicly available¹ reports present snapshots of Afghan public opinion in January 2002, May 2002, June 2003, September 2003, March 2004, July 2004, and April 2005. The reports are fairly divergent in their approaches, agendas, and scopes, but taken together do offer some insight into changes in local perceptions of the reconstruction effort over time.

Elements of the reports that are relevant to this study are summarized in the following three pages and their full bibliographic details are in Annex II.

A. Summary of findings

Analysis of the seven reports suggests the following:

- **Public opinion regarding the foreign presence and the reconstruction process vacillates between anxiety and hope, cynicism and appreciation, and has gained nuance over time.** There are large regional, urban/rural, and gender-based differences in attitudes towards the reconstruction process. However, generalizing broadly, there does appear to have been a period of hope in 2002 then heightened criticism of reconstruction choices and the foreign presence around 2003. Report findings from 2004 and early 2005 then suggest greater ambivalence (ie, recognition of progress/dependence even as criticism continues, and acceptance of the need for foreign help as Afghans demand and take on greater ownership of the reconstruction process).
- **Security has been the top reconstruction priority of Afghans consistently throughout the transition period, although the locus of concern has shifted from the macro to the micro.** The main manifestation of Afghan fears over insecurity appear to have moved from the national arena (the outbreak of civil war) to the personal (crime, corruption, kidnappings). Possible factors contributing to this change include the following:
 - increased provincial stability due to the expansion of ISAF/NATO forces beyond Kabul;
 - the relatively peaceful conclusion of several stages of the political process; and
 - an increase in crime linked to inadequate economic alternatives and the impunity offered by an ineffective judiciary and increasingly corrupt enforcement system.
- **The international military presence, while occasionally criticized, has retained favour among Afghans and spending on the military is rarely begrudged.** There was a movement towards desiring independence from the international military in 2003, but this reverted to dependence in 2004 and onwards. Reasons for this reversion could include
 - Afghanistan's poorly trained national military and police being understood to be inadequate for the country's continuing security needs;
 - Concern that the disarmament campaign had failed; and
 - Changes in US military strategies and the visibility of tangible reconstruction efforts via Provincial Reconstruction Teams improving the public image of the international military.

¹ The US government has consistently conducted large scale quantitative polls of attitudes in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban, but their findings do not appear to have been made public. The Asia Foundation has also produced two studies additional to its 2004 study cited here, but as of the writing of this report they have had yet to be released.

- **In contrast, the international development presence receives more mixed reviews, and development spending is commonly believed to be wasted on extravagant luxuries.** Reasons for Afghans' markedly different attitudes towards military and development funding could include
 - The primacy of security as a post-conflict priority for Afghans;
 - The military is seen as having fulfilled its role in maintaining peace, whereas the development sector's follow-through on its promise of reconstruction is seen as having left much to be desired; and
 - Military spending is neither as visible nor accessible as that of the UN and NGOs.

- **Dashed expectations are a very important source of discontent with the foreign presence.** Broken international promises and unrealistic Afghan hopes have frequently led to feelings of disillusionment with the reconstruction effort. Reasons for poor management of local expectations might include
 - Underestimation of the complexity and scale of Afghanistan's difficulties by the international community when proposing timeframes for the reconstruction process;
 - Failure of the international community to provide explanations of processes involved in their work, instead often limiting their public communications to program launches and branding of project sites with a logo or flag; and
 - Donor's perceived need of encouraging political participation leading to repeated broadcasts of the benefits of the political process such that expectations of improvement during the transition period were driven overly high.²

- **There appears to be a steady or increasing call for capacity building of the Afghan government over time.** Afghans express concern that their central government has limited capacity and is plagued by corruption and nepotism, but also feel that it is vital for state power to be strengthened and centralized.

B. Notes on methodology

Please note that there is significant diversity in the reports reviewed. The particular concerns and frameworks presented in the reports address needs specified by their funders. As a result, the reports tend to frame their concerns around issues of interest for reconstruction agencies involved in two general areas: human rights and the political process. The trend information presented in this section is thus based on and influenced by the concerns and interests of two development sectors and several funders in Afghanistan. The tables summarizing the seven reports below maintain the spirit and language of the original reports where possible.

All the reports reviewed use quantitative and qualitative data drawn from Afghan respondents except for the Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) report, which included interviews with international aid workers. The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium (HRRAC) – which comprises 13 organizations including the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, OXFAM International, and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission – each conducted two reports, allowing a more controlled longitudinal comparison of findings across the similar methodologies and frameworks of their paired reports.

² This speculative point is triggered by reflections on media broadcasts and the June/July 2004 HRRAC report's description of the way Afghans had excessively high faith in the political process: "Although the Afghans surveyed feel overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the upcoming elections, there is a very low level of political awareness. In addition, hopes are so high that many expect the polls to bring radical change almost overnight" (HRRAC 2004:2).

C. Tables

| Fieldwork period | Jan 2002 | Apr/May 2002 | Apr/Jun 2003 | Aug/Sep 2003 | Feb/Mar 2004 | Jun/Jul 2004 | Apr 2005 |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| Organization | CESR | NDI | HRRAC | NDI | Asia Foundation | HRRAC | CSIS |
| Field covered | Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad + rural regions, Peshawar and Islamabad | Kabul + rural regions | Herat, Kabul, Gardez, Saripul, Panjao, Faizabad, Kandahar, Zaranj | Kabul, Bamiyan, Herat, Jalalabad, Mazar-I-Sharif, Kandahar | 29 of Afghanistan's 32 provinces | Kabul, Herat, Faizabad, Jalalabad, Mazar-I-Sharif, Kandahar | 20 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces (two provinces added) |
| Perspective | Human rights | Political process | Human rights | Political process | Political process | Human rights | Political process/HR |
| Prevailing view of reconstruction process | “guarded optimism” : hopeful that foreigners follow through on promises | “remarkably upbeat” : hopeful that emergency LJ would resolve conflicts | “temporary peace” : More than 90% felt safe, but only 78% thought Afghanistan would be more peaceful in a year's time. | “unfulfilled promise” : country is moving forward but growing sense of unmet expectations | “positive mood” : 64% of respondents feel the country is moving in the right direction (but this lowers to 17% in the Northwest and 39% in the South) | “dominance of gunmen” : greater confidence in security since “temporary peace” study, but crime levels are far too high | “slow, unequal improvement” : corruption major impediment to progress |
| Opinion of foreigners (NGO/donors) | Aid a moral duty : foreigners must make amends for role in years of bloodshed. UN should have primary reconstruction responsibility | Welcome : foreigners broadly welcomed despite disappointment at shortfall in assistance delivery | Feeling of being let down : 85% were aware that foreign governments had promised money for reconstruction, but only 54% thought the promises would be kept | Self-serving : NGOs profit from assistance, suspicions of foreign interference, but internationals must remain engaged for successful transition | Generally popular : Foreigners working in Afghanistan were viewed very positively (80% favorable) and interviewees felt favorably towards the United Nations (84% overall favorable and 51% very favorable). | Not queried | Criticized for waste but could have role in eliminating corruption : international wages seen as waste of aid money, but it would be a big help if UN could develop mechanism to vet courts. |
| Opinion of foreigners (military) | Essential : without ISAF, war likely. Objections to US policies of continued bombing, arming of warlords and resistance to extending ISAF beyond Kabul | Essential : vital that ISAF expand beyond Kabul | Gradual phase out needed : 53% wanted Afghan forces to be responsible for security, 42% wanted either international forces alone or both international and Afghan forces working together | Must train army : slow development and deployment of police and military contributes to ongoing insecurity | (US-centric polling) : 65% positive towards the US and 67% positive towards US military forces in Afghanistan | Reliance : 83% believe international forces should oversee the removal of weapons. 59% call for both international and Afghan forces to provide security | Essential : without international military, violence will erupt |

| Fieldwork period | Jan 2002 | Apr/May 2002 | Apr/Jun 2003 | Aug/Sep 2003 | Feb/Mar 2004 | Jun/Jul 2004 | Apr 2005 |
|----------------------------------|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| Organization | CESR | NDI | HRRAC | NDI | Asia Foundation | HRRAC | CSIS |
| View of Afghan government | Deep distrust: skepticism of all, from interim govt in Kabul to local warlords | Karzai popular: hope that his power would continue following Emergency LJ | Government should be responsible for service delivery: however, there is recognition of its weak capacity, corruption and partisanship | Karzai popular: however, political parties seen as corrupt and linked to military, ministries corrupt and nepotist | Large majority favour Karzai and transitional government: earning positive ratings from 62% and 57% of respondents, respectively | Need for a more assertive central government: strong govt must break down the power base of regional commanders | Need for more visible results: general approval for Karzai's government, but narcotics problem politically damaging |
| Priorities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Security ▪ Food ▪ work ▪ education <p>Need to target aid to remote rural areas hit hardest by hunger</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoiding warlordism in political process ▪ disarming militias ▪ housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 43% Security (eg trained police, disarmament) ▪ 40% Economic (eg health care, education or job creation) ▪ 7% Political (eg corruption, ethnic representation) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Security (as key to political and economic development) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 37% Security ▪ 29% Economy ▪ 12% Infrastructure ▪ 9% Education ▪ 2% Health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disarmament ▪ Rule of law ▪ Increase the national and international security presence ▪ Free and fair elections ▪ Increased civic education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disarmament ▪ Crime ▪ Justice system ▪ Economy |
| Areas of discontent | US arming of warlords, UN lack of accounting for past crimes in giving warlords powerful roles. UN and US feed false ethnic divisions | Unpaid salaries to govt and school employees, privileging of returned refugees for high profile jobs | Lack of tangible reconstruction, misuse of funds | Slow disarmament, government not meeting economic expectations or providing basic necessities, poor consultation for Constitution | Dissatisfaction with Transitional govt, slow reconstruction, economy, interfering neighboring states, education poor, Western influence and foreigners | Frustration over the very slow pace of disarmament, skepticism of its thoroughness | Disarmament a failure, low salaries force bribe-taking, Afghan National Police are "re-hatted militia", courts are "houses of bribery," not enough jobs |
| Analysis provided | Criticism of development's top-down cookie-cutter approach and pressure for visible results. Local implementation would reduce cost | Afghan expectations unrealistically high | Paradox: for peace, need to marginalize 'spoilers' through developed economy; but economic development requires secure environment for aid and private sector to operate | Emergency Loya Jirga seen as flawed and unrepresentative. Security/insecurity divisions distinguish Kabul from provinces, and cities from countryside | South and northwest out of step with the rest of Afghanistan | Fears of child kidnapping are high. Despite instability, Afghans fairly positive on security because for many security is defined as 'an end to the fighting' | Afghan priorities (corruption, security) not same as foreigner (Taliban/Al Qaida, burqa, drugs). High expectations and new balance of power of reconstruction elite cause dissatisfaction. Men's needs met more than women's |

III. Interviews with leading media opinion-makers

The media play a central role in shaping and reflecting public opinion, and can also be an important element in donor relations with the general public. We now turn from direct surveys of public opinion to an exploration of public opinion-making via media elites and institutions. In this section, we present findings from interviews with leading Afghan media figures as a means of interrogating the structures and trends in public opinion-making towards donor influence in Afghanistan over the 2002 to 2005 timeframe.

The findings presented here reflect issues emerging from 10 interviews with Afghan media actors in state and non-state print, radio, television, news services, and media development. The interviews were conducted from November 17th to December 4th, 2005, and averaged 52 minutes in duration.

The full list of interviewees and the interview guide are available in Annex III.

A. Summary of findings

- **There is a need for stronger accounting and transparency of donor funding:** the main recurring preoccupation across and within interviews concerned frustration over the poor or obscure accounting of aid disbursements in Afghanistan. Journalists and media developers reported that the public had become alienated from development initiatives as donor media releases would only offer aggregate statistics or speak in abstract terms. All the interviewees reported difficulty in obtaining dependable, accurate information on aid budgets and the channels through which they reached Afghanistan and stated that it often frustrated the public to learn that large sums of money had been granted to Afghanistan without seeing any benefits or knowing where or how the money had been spent:
 - *We are not able to report accurately and inform the public, only general statistics are given to journalists, not a proper accounting.*
 - *50% of the [National Solidarity Program] was positive – we could tell people that this well, or that school, or this clinic has been for people, and this has been the accounting. If all NGOs could do this, it would be much better.*
 - *Transparency is a right – Afghans have the right to ask what is happening – otherwise, there will be distance and distrust of people from donors and government and this could cause another crisis.*

- **Journalistic notions of “newsworthiness” affect media coverage of donor activities:** The journalists interviewed seemed to prefer covering two categories of project: good projects that helped people and produced tangible results, or wasteful projects in which there was such leakage of funding that by the time aid reach the implementation site only a small fraction would be left. The journalists saw themselves as a vehicle for ensuring accountability through media reporting, helping to build public pressure and catalyze change. They often saw themselves as working for donors as much as for the public as funding watchdogs and investigators of the activities of implementing agencies:
 - *Most reporting is on NSP projects around Kabul: Wardak, Parwan, Logar. There is a great resemblance in NSP projects because of the common need or lack of creativity – so it is usually electricity and water (generators or wells).*
 - *We like to present the good as good, and the bad as bad. We like help, but if there is help that is using Afghanistan’s name but hasn’t reached benefits to Afghans, we don’t like that... We like to report on two types of stories – the projects that really are beneficial to people,*



Usman Akram, Editor in chief of Zanbile Gham, a popular satirical magazine based in Kabul

and those where large amounts are spent without good results and we find this kind more interesting. We prefer the second kind because we want to show that people are not ignorant of what is going on – that while there is a lot of talk, there is no action – we notice these things.

- **Lack of a central governmental aid monitoring mechanism is felt keenly among the journalists:** while many journalists took on the role of aid watchdog on their own initiative, they still felt the need for a coordination body located within the government system:
 - *If I had the ability, I would put together a committee of [Afghan] experts, plus a few international experts, and they could monitor all the aid that comes into the country.*
 - *Given that there is not a group or commission to oversee the aid process and also inform donors that there needs to be work done in this sector or that, there has been trouble.*
 - *Another important point – the office of the ensejam e omoor or AACA [Afghanistan Assistance Coordination Authority], should have overseen this aid, but from my point of view, the office wasn't very good at this. We need to look back to the conferences to find out how much of the funds have been disbursed, how much used, how much remains.*

- **Perceptions of the international community have worsened over time:** the journalists were split around halfway on whether they began with high expectations of the international community only to be disappointed, or began with cynicism and found no redeeming elements in the reconstruction process to change their opinions. Factors contributing to negativity included growing awareness of corruption both among foreigners and Afghans, and loss of innocence over the motivations of foreigners:
 - *At first I thought the Westerners first came that they were trying to help but since the beginning I think it's not only Afghans who are corrupt – many of the Westerners are corrupt or incompetent, and they get very high wages without doing good work.*
 - *Until the NGO politics or bureaucratic corruption in the government are destroyed, my opinion will not change. 2300 NGOs are working in Afghanistan, 60-80% of the money going to NGOs goes to luxury cars.*
 - *Since 2002, the media market and production systems have changed. Now there are more outlets and a different quality of reporting, which allows more coverage of [funding] issues than 2002/3. There is more pessimism, more criticism of aid projects, although not necessarily well-informed.*

- **Donor funding has caused some indirect negative side effects on Afghan society and government:** dependence on funding has institutionalized dishonesty into government monitoring structures, and NGO-centrism has undermined the government and conflated aid agencies with the private sector:
 - *Help hasn't been used in the proper way. The problem isn't only from Afghans, because the countries that help here have so much influence they've undermined Afghan abilities. Reports going to monitoring and evaluation are not true, as even if there are lots of problems with the project, people still need the money from the aid and say why do you cause trouble? So within the system there are tendencies to maintain these problems.*
 - *NGO is a very new name for people and these are irresponsible, etc, and also feel that they are a form of government.*
 - *If there isn't more power given to the government (forget excuses of privatization and free markets – this isn't America) then the state is crippled and can't maintain security or get rid of corruption.*
 - *NGOs hadn't had a long history in Afghanistan, and even now NGOs are not understood as being in a non-governmental sector. There is a lot of confusion between NGOs and the private sector. It's good to explain these to people.*
 - *Ministers and other high ranking officials have two kinds of salaries: one from government and one from NGOs. There is a widening gap between the lives of rich and poor people, and the government must narrow this gap.*



Gululai Habib, Editor-in-Chief of Shafaq,
an Afghan women's publication

- **Corruption is of course a central concern:** there is unease over the growing strength of shadowy “mafia-like organizations” in Afghanistan, anger at large disparities between Afghan and international payscales (seen as a form of foreign corruption), and anxiety that donors would not be as willing to fund reconstruction projects if the government could not demonstrate accountability:
 - *Afghanistan has two budgets: 680M dollars, that given budgets for the Ministries, but this is a small amount, but the real budget from the 4800M they keep that hidden so we don't know about it, and there is a lot of corruption of this...Rumours go around quickly because of the people who are in the government, money disappearing. Even the most illiterate seeing that in 4 years the streets haven't been improved understands. Consultants coming here getting 14000 [USD] monthly, and all that money goes out of Afghanistan again. If [Minister of Energy] Ismail Khan took the money that went to him and burned it, Afghanistan would be warm.*
 - *We have always said that this is a very important opportunity and the government needs to be accountable and thus there will be more help to the country. One of the major problems is corruption in the government.*

- **There is heavy skepticism of claims of altruism in foreigner and donor agendas:** for some, there was a clear sense that the international community had a responsibility to make reparations for Afghanistan's Cold War losses, but the notion that foreigners would spend millions and sacrifice soldiers without self-interest was nonsensical:
 - *We all know foreign countries that come here to help aren't people who are here to help us. They have their own interests, and coming here to spend money – they must do it for themselves. We have our own interests, and so we think if they want to spend money on their interests, our interests have to be kept in mind as well.*
 - *We reported on the Aga Khan about their religious and political issues – that they will work in areas that have Ismailis, for example.*
 - *Ministers are under the control of different countries. Some are with Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Germany...some I feel do less of this, and I think Japan is one.*

- **Japan and in fewer cases Germany are generally well-regarded relative to other donor countries:** Not all respondents differentiated between donor countries, but of those who did, attention (both negative and positive) seemed to focus on donors of large infrastructural projects:
 - *We discuss all the donor agencies, especially the ones that do more work – United Kingdom, Japan, US, and we criticize them more...because they interfere more. The US is the most powerful country in the world, and they can help weak countries to become well if they are more transparent.*
 - *For Afghan people, it should be known which country honestly helps Afghanistan...Germany and Japan really did help in reconstruction.*
 - *The country is not important to us, nor the donor. We are interested in the goal of the aid. But two countries that have helped a lot and have had good people have been Germany and Japan.*
 - *US is reported most because of its visibility policy and also the EU is reported, UN... Critical coverage doesn't vary decisively with donor so much as it does with implementing partner – PRTs are quick and efficient, for example. Criticism is usually more related to partners and more often it's not known which donor works through which agency.*
 - *We report on USAID, IOM, the EU, but most of the reports have been on USAID or IOM or other large organizations.*
 - *The US has the habit of writing prescriptions but not giving medicine.*

- **The UN (specifically UNAMA) is not currently in favour:** aside from one positive perspective on UNAMA, journalists expressed dissatisfaction with UNAMA's work in the Parliamentary Elections:
 - *I felt there was a betrayal by UNAMA – people were elected by bribes, and people were not happy with these elections.*
 - *It was not the first parliament and elections in Afghanistan. We had Jirgas, Parliament and elections during Daud and Dr. Najib's regimes...the money UNAMA spent on elections was too much. We never had spent such a large amount of money in elections in the past. Anyone you ask will say it was too much.*
 - *All donors look for profits in different areas. The UN As well – we saw this in the elections. UNAMA has a hand in the corruption during the parliamentary elections: 173M was used but lots of it disappeared. There is lots of business going on.*
 - *UNAMA worked in this effort in bringing candidates that would have ability to deal with the Loya Jirga – this was a big job. Also the constitutional LJ was a big job which UNAMA and the international community has done. Until now, with the presidential and parliamentary process done – it seems that the promises of Bonn have been fulfilled.*

- **Perceptions of the electoral process have generally worsened over time with the increasing Westernization of its procedures:** discontent has grown as the costs of the Loya Jirgas and elections have become more apparent and expectations of having an improved, competent, non-corrupt governmental body have been dashed:
 - *The media saw the Emergency Loya Jirga as a very traditional Afghan thing and public perception was that recovery of tradition was a good thing. It marked the end of war. Foreign involvement was seen as opportunistic and a goodwill gesture to put Afghanistan on its path. Media coverage was on what processes were going on, what major disagreements had ensued, how known disagreeers acted and tolerated each other in the debate. There wasn't much coverage of foreigners compared to other things like the parliamentary elections, which was organized by foreigners. [For the Loya Jirga], the amount of international money put in the process for logistical issues was not as obvious. Perceptions clearly changed for the [Parliamentary] elections.*
 - *The expenses were too high, it was very shocking. There was a lot of corruption in the preparations for both the emergency and constitutional Loya Jirgas.*
 - *That Mr. Sayaf is a convicted war criminal but is sitting in government, this is a problem.*
 - *The Loya Jirga was not made up of experts who knew about Constitutional matters.*

- **Donor presence and funding is criticized for causing culture clash:** a number of journalists suggest that the values and methods introduced in Afghanistan's reconstruction process have been inappropriate:
 - *They bring external methods, translate them, try to fit Afghanistan into them [when they ought to have gathered resources according to people's tastes. Some don't care, some sit and listen [to awareness raising information about the Parliamentary elections] but don't understand as it's translated from other places. All countries have their own values and understandings. If something works for Bangladesh and Kosovo, the same design doesn't work in Afghanistan!]*
 - *They often want their culture to be here, but our culture is different, so we explain that it isn't that we can set aside everything – we can take bits and pieces of Western culture that will help us grow. They don't understand us well, and some want to photocopy democracy and bring it here. I don't think there is any country in the world that wants to set aside their ancient values.*

- **Donors have a lot of room to improve their information sharing practices with Afghan media:** a number of journalists complained that the donor community was very distant with them and currently provide little useful material to journalists:
 - *I don't think a year's worth of work can be explained in 5 seconds of a conference. These organizations work is very complex, and so people don't understand what they are doing. They don't keep people in the loop – no documents are given to you.*

- *Right now there are about 10 minutes per day of donor-funded Public Service Announcements at radio stations. This potentially can be increased. In 2002 there was very little - 30 seconds - so it has grown, but there is space for a lot more Public Service Announcements.*
 - *One problem is that good [donor] reports aren't written, nor do people have the patience to read them. Especially good reports that go through the accounting – generally such things are obscure. If these were to be reported in an analytical way to the media, that would be good.*
- **Afghan journalists tend to prefer neutral “pull” rather than “push” information sharing practices:** two journalists reported resistance to instances of direct international pressure for presenting particular perspectives:
- *We produce reports based on press releases, or on conferences of NGOs, or we report on people's complaints or demonstrations.*
 - *There was a crisis – one NGO which was backed by the French wanted me to publish anti-Bashardoost articles, but I rejected them, even when money was offered.*
 - *The Association of Asian Women is one of the few organizations that helps without asking for their name to be displayed. GTZ asked us to put their logo on our publication when they helped us – I didn't like this as it was a bit of self-worship.*
-
- Nematollah Hashemi (right) interviews Masood Qiyam, producer of the Six Thirty Report for Tolo TV in Kabul*
- **There are marked differences in the way donors are represented among different media outlets:** hierarchies of information flow and policies of individual outlets are two opposed forces in the diversification of donor representations in the media:
- *Many media organizations are helped by the international community and political groups, so they are influenced by their funders, but we are independent so we are able to have a different style of criticism which also satirizes.*
 - *Local radio stations do not have much coverage of the process of aid disbursement. They do not get original news, but use information provided by other agencies: Pajwhok [News Agency], BBC [World Service Trust News], etc.*
- **Media forms also matter, although there is no consensus on which medium is most effective for donor reports:** print is generally seen to be more analytical but not as popular, whereas broadcasters have wide reach but are forgettable/impermanent:
- *Generally print has to work harder and is not as influential. But broadcasters tend to not report on donors as much.*
 - *Radio and TV are best as they reach a larger population.*
 - *Radio has a larger coverage and families, whether they are literate or illiterate or whether they have electricity or not, listen to the radio...With TV we have the problem of electricity...but TV also [has] more impact because people can watch and listen.*
 - *People take more pleasure from TV, so most prefer TV, but print media is seen as more careful and its analysis is taken more seriously.*
 - *The difference is that TV reports on economic issues are short, and they don't stay in the viewers' minds. The press is better because it is a paper document, especially its editorials, and it is permanent and can be reviewed.*
 - *Generally radio and TV give one report and news, but weeklies are more focused on editorials [and this can influence opinions more].*



M. Qasim (right) interviews Toryalai Zazai, Editor in Chief of Hewad, a governmental newspaper

- **Minister of Planning Ramazan Bashedoost³ emerged as a recurring symbol for the dilemma Afghans face regarding the international community:** one or two rallied around him, but otherwise the general consensus was that while he had made public an issue that needed concerted attention, his methods were inappropriate:

 - *Bashedoost as Minister of Plan was set aside because of his criticism of NGOs, and he became popular among people because he hit a chord in society, so he became successful in the parliamentary elections. In the same way, we have hit a chord in society...we aren't anti-foreigner, but we don't want the foreigners, especially the Americans, to have the same fate as the Soviets.*
 - *He was too extreme in wanting all those NGOs to be eliminated – there were mine clearing agencies among those. His complaints were a bit political and showy after a while.*
 - *90% of media organizations are dependent on NGOs or political parties. When Bashedoost wanted to eliminate 1900 NGOs, most media presented this negatively. I defended him on his design but not his implementation method as I didn't agree with it. But generally I agreed with him. But most media disagreed with my opinions, as they were worried that their own doors would be closed. The VOA and BBC, being external, offered space for my opinions, but not others.*

- **In contrast, a similar moment of uproar and rioting sparked by allegations of desecration of the Koran at Guantanamo Bay⁴ resulted in greater positivity towards the international community:** while one respondent felt that the desecration had made Afghans unhappy and insulted Muslims around the world, there was agreement among the rest of behind the scenes instigation for the riots that ensued:

 - *People found out that there are 55 Islamic countries in the world, [yet] we moved very quickly – that in those 55 countries, nobody rioted like we did. There is a saying: you can say that the cat has taken your nose, but take a look first to see if your nose is there or not before believing that the cat has taken your nose. People realized that there are the hands of the enemy in our country, and this was a positive thing – and it was positive for people to*

³ In December 2004, Bashedoost asked the Afghan government to shut 80 percent of all local and foreign aid agencies in the country, calling them corrupt and ineffective. He resigned following the rejection of his proposal by the government, causing a storm of controversy. For more details, see “Afghanistan: Concern at ministerial proposal to dissolve 2,000 NGOs,” IRIN, Kabul, 14 December 2004

⁴ In May 2005, a Newsweek report that the US military had mishandled the Koran at Guantanamo Bay sparked riots in Afghanistan that killed at least 15 Afghans. For more details, see “Riots over US Koran 'desecration',” BBC News, 11 May 2005

realize that the help that is reaching us is actually happening and is not the way people say. So it was a positive thing [for donors] rather than a negative one.

- *The end understanding was that someone had used riots to achieve a political act. The media said this in particular. The demonstrations were peaceful, then got worse when some demonstrators and police overreacted. People saw it as a domestic issue, not related to foreigners.*

▪ **Journalists favour donor investments in long-term economic and governmental infrastructure:**

factory reconstruction, economic protectionism, and the need to create an environment conducive to investment was a strong thread running through a number of interviews, and government capacity building and elimination of corruption ran through almost all interviews. Physical infrastructure continued to have great support:

- *Two things are needed: longterm re-creation and support of a middle class for the country (through education and economic stability and public services like health), and building institutions which could ensure investments in Afghanistan's progress could continue.*
- *I would pay attention to education and higher education, ...and pay attention to agriculture, trade and farming. This would prove useful to create jobs. Mining is also very important because we have unused mines in different parts of our country such as copper in Logar. A recent survey by NASA shows that we have many more mines in Afghanistan and we should invest in this sector because it will bring lots of changes.*
- *I would prioritize health, rural development, roads, and electricity.*

B. Notes on methodology

All interviews were conducted in Dari with respondents in Kabul except for one interview, conducted in English with an Afghan media worker temporarily based in Europe. Where possible, the Afghan researchers conducted interviews to avoid bias (Afghans are culturally very hospitable and would see criticism of a stranger's home country as rude). The two interviews conducted by the non-Afghan London-based researcher were with long-term Afghan media colleagues.

Journalists were chosen to represent as wide a range of perspectives in Afghan media as possible. In some cases, journalists initially chosen for interview would be unavailable or out of the country – in such cases they were asked to recommend a colleague with similar background and views.

The interview questionnaire was used as a guide and was not followed strictly during the course of interviews. All the interviews were translated and loosely transcribed by the London-based researcher except for one interview, which due to lack of time was transcribed by the local project manager in Kabul.

Due to time limitations, fact-checking and verification of interviewee claims could not be part of our analysis. We have merely presented journalist's views in this report, including any misinformation or bias, as a way of indicating some of the logics and frameworks underpinning elite Afghan opinion.

Originally, the research design called for analysis of trends in public opinion over time as suggested by the mood in Afghanistan surrounding three critical incidents:

1. June 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga
2. April 2004 Berlin conference
3. September 2005 Parliamentary elections

This tactic was not effective, however, as respondents tended to remember only the debates surrounding the event, rather than the more general mood at the time of the event.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

This study concludes that poor management of expectations and corruption have factored significantly into worsening local perceptions of the international community in Afghanistan. Obscurity of funding flows have further contributed to cynicism and distrust of the foreigner and NGO presence. While the local population has been appreciative of many donor and NGO contributions, many have been alienated by feelings of lack of agency in their country's reconstruction process.

There was strong criticism of the Afghan government among interviewed journalists on the following grounds:

- lack of accountability from the government itself
- its powerlessness in demanding accountability of donors and NGOs
- corruption
- high wages for ministers and other high officials
- inclusion of former war criminals
- lack of capacity
- inadequate (or lack of) strategic thinking and responsiveness

There were indications that the Afghan public and media elite opinion favour donor involvement in strengthening the central government, maintaining security, reducing corruption, and development of a viable economic system. Equalization of NGO and government power, including capped NGO salaries and reintegration schemes of NGO workers into government would address some of the recurring concerns and resentment raised in the study.

Journalists expressed strong frustration over their inability to clearly report funding processes and outcomes. These findings suggest that donors need to communicate more often and in greater depth with the general public in Afghanistan, and that Afghan media would be a willing partner for such communications. In Afghanistan, where a weak judiciary and corrupt enforcement system offer few checks against corruption, the donor community is often seen as an enforcement mechanism of last resort. A more concerted information-sharing donor policy could strengthen Afghan media's ability to act as public watchdog, and is one means through which the international community could ally with public pressure in bringing about institutional reform in Afghanistan.

A brief overview of the Afghan media landscape and some channels for donor access to media discourse are presented below, followed by concluding recommendations for donor policy in Afghanistan.

A. Overview of Afghan media landscape

Media, particularly radio, has occupied an important place in the lives of Afghans in their recent history. For women restricted to the home due to purdah, "regular access to radio...is commonly described as a window to the outside world or as a lifeline" (Skuse 1999:67). During the Taliban regime's ban on most forms of media, many Afghans listened clandestinely to radio broadcasts, "glued" to news from Iran, the BBC, and Voice of America (Kamal 2004). During the US bombing of Afghanistan, the radio often remained constantly on and tuned to the news in refugee households in Pakistan (Kamal 2005). Following the fall of the Taliban, regular use of the media has helped ethnic minorities in northern Afghanistan assess the volatility of their environment and monitor their security situation (Von Seibold 2002). For many Afghans, the media has offered connection as well as information vital for coping with uncertainty.

Post-conflict investments in the media sector have worked to strengthen local Afghan media's ability to promote public discourse and politically engaged citizenry. Since the fall of the Taliban, the number of local print media outlets has grown from a handful to (estimates vary) over 150, radio stations have gone from 2 or 3 to around 50, TV broadcasters likewise from 1 to over 20, and at least 5 state and independent news agencies have become active around the country. International broadcasters (the BBC, Voice of America,

Deutsche Welle, Radio Liberty, Radio Tehran, and Radio Pakistan, among others) continue to have significant market share, particularly for news, despite the reconstruction of local media.

B. Donor access to local Afghan media

There are a number of media channels through which donors can inform the public about their work. Aside from press releases and press conferences, donors can purchase airtime on individual independent radio stations or television stations or advertising space in print media to disseminate public service announcements. For greater geographical coverage, one option would be to purchase airtime during Salaam Vatandar, a daily radio program broadcast on a network of around 40 radio stations across Afghanistan by Internews, a media development organization in Afghanistan. Another option would be to distribute CDs, videotapes, or print material to radio and TV stations across Afghanistan using the Tanin distribution system, also housed within Internews, although such distribution would not guarantee that the media outlets receiving the material would disseminate it. Access to rural populations is possible through the satellite radio transmissions of Equal Access, a development communication organization. Finally, Afghanistan's state broadcaster RTVA has very high reach both via a powerful central transmitter and provincial broadcasters of their Kabul content. Requests for inclusion of programming on state transmissions are fielded at the Government of Afghanistan's Ministry of Information and Culture.

C. Recommendations for donor policy

- **Donors need a more proactive and practical partnership with the media:** there are clear areas of common interest between donors and the media which include managing reconstruction expectations among the Afghan population, combating corruption, and promoting understanding of the processes and difficulties of post-conflict development in Afghanistan.
- **Donor information-sharing must be understandable, contextualized, specific, and tangible:** transparency is an Afghan right as much as a donor imperative, and financial accounting of aid disbursements must be broken down to the extent feasible in communications with the media, along with clear explanations of programs' relevance to the lives of Afghans.
- **In particular, donor communications must locate projects and programs within a larger timeframe and strategic framework:** media information kits must include the donor mandate, projects previously supported, projects underway, and future projects. The focus needs to be on progress, historical investments of donors in the reconstruction effort, and short- and longterm commitments and strategies, thus better informing Afghans of what has happened and what lies ahead.
- **Visibility policies in general can benefit from focusing on transparency rather than branding:** comparison of the public opinion surveys against journalist interviews suggests that Afghan media workers are more pessimistic and critical than average Afghans. A focus on branding may have negative consequences for a donor's representation in the media.
- **Communicating win-win reasonings between aid investments in Afghanistan and national self-interest may be helpful in reducing distrust of donor agendas:** DANIDA and CIDA's policy of investing in foreign aid to promote national security are good examples of symbiotic aid relationships and promote greater understanding with locals than would claims of altruism.
- **Donors could benefit from making explicit any links between funding and improvements in security:** the lack of begrudging of military spending suggests that donor aid with positive consequences for security will be well-received.
- **Donors must be responsive to feedback from the local population:** the media can act both as a channel for communication and also a reflection of (elite) public opinion. Careful attention to media representations of aid activities and donors could offer local expertise and insight into areas for improved donor practice and effectiveness.

The term “international community” encompasses a complex range of actors that includes the UN, NGOs, nation-states, the military (peacekeeping operations or otherwise), donors, and individuals. This substudy did find that there was some degree of confusion among respondents between foreign donors, implementing partners, and governments, as well as different military operations (PRTs, ISAF, Coalition forces) in Afghanistan. More careful study will be required to investigate with more precision historical and current perceptions of foreign governments, expatriates, donors, and their perceived influence on rebuilding the country.

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Bibliographic details of the public opinion reports surveyed are available in Annex II.

Terms of reference

Study into local views on donor behaviour: Afghanistan

The British Department for International Development (DFID) has commissioned a study to four researchers into 'peace conditionalities'. The study is being administered by Clingendael Institute, the Netherlands.

In general terms aid conditionality refers to attempts by donor governments to induce recipient governments to policy reform, to change their behaviour or to influence the way the aid itself is spent. This study focuses on the way donors have (or have not) used conditions in an attempt to induce peace. It consists of two case studies: Afghanistan (after the Bonn agreement) and Sri Lanka (after the 2002 ceasefire agreement).

A central focus of this study is the triangular relationship between international agencies, domestic elites and societal actors. Intervention in post conflict contexts involves a dynamic and often conflictual relationship between these three sets of actors. Since this study deals with the way donors have tried to influence domestic actors, it is important to understand how donors are perceived locally. This applies not only to the political agents that donors deal with directly, but also to the broader public. Due to language and other limitations, it is difficult for a foreign researcher to grasp these local opinions. Therefore, it has been decided to commission a sub-study to a researcher with familiarity with the vernacular and English language media in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.

The aim of these two sub-studies is to provide a brief overview of the media landscape and donor access to media and a more detailed analysis of the various popular discourses about donors and international intervention. The main focus of the study will be on public opinion of donors, as reflected by media texts and interviews with media elites. Alternative sources (eg public opinion polls) or complementary documentation indicative of the public opinion may also be consulted. The selection of material will require some discussion between the core research team and the authors of the sub-studies.

For the post Bonn period in Afghanistan and the post-ceasefire period in Sri Lanka, the following questions should be addressed:

- To what extent and how have donors' policies, statements and activities (particularly aid disbursements) been covered by local media (or other sources)?
- What opinions are voiced with regard to donor behaviour in these documents (eg in editorials or by experts quoted in news articles)?
- Does the media distinguish between different categories of donors and/or international actors? How are international NGOs covered?
- To what extent do donor agencies attempt to engage with/influence the local media?
- How does the media cover relations between donors and the state, and donors and non state actors eg the LTTE, warlords or commanders? What are the key differences in terms of the way these relationships are covered?
- Can any trends be observed in the way donor behaviour is covered or commented on throughout the years?
- What are the differences between the various media (in terms of ethnic or political background) with regard to the above questions?
- Does the level of media independence from government/non government sources of pressure influence media views?

In Afghanistan, 3 critical incidents and media discourses surrounding them will be used to gauge shifts in public opinion towards donors over time.

Any material studied that is available in English should be provided in an Annex.

The time-frame does not allow for an extensive study. The time investment should be no more than 15 days. The deadline of the study is 2nd December, 2005. The author is to hand in a (electronic) report that specifies the main conclusions, concrete examples and quotes, and an overview of the sources studied. The author will be given an advance to cover field expenses, with the balance paid upon completion of the report. The fees will be negotiated between the author and the Clingendael Institute.

Key tasks

- collect data
- conduct interviews
- liaise with key informants in Afghanistan
- provide verbal feedback to research managers
- prepare and redraft report based on feedback from research managers

Critical incidents

- June 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga
- April 2004 Berlin conference
- September 2005 Parliamentary elections

Output

A written report of a maximum of no more than 20 pages with an executive summary of 2 pages and annexes as required.

Annex II: Existing public opinion reports reviewed

| Field period | Jan 2002 | Apr/May 2002 | Apr/June 2003 | Aug/Sep 2003 | Feb/Mar 2004 | Jun/Jul 2004 | Apr 2005 |
|-----------------------------|---|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| Organization name | Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) | National Democratic Institute of International Affairs (NDI) | Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium (HRRAC) | NDI | The Asia Foundation | HRRAC | Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) |
| Organization details | Established in 1993, the Center for Economic and Social Rights is one of the first organizations to challenge economic injustice as a violation of international human rights law. In projects abroad and in the United States, CESR combines research, advocacy, collaboration, and education. | The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is a non-profit organization working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide. NDI provides practical assistance to civic and political leaders advancing democratic values, practices and institutions. | The Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium is a group of 12 Afghan and international NGOs working in the fields of humanitarian relief, reconstruction, human and women's rights, peace promotion, research, and advocacy. It was established in early 2003 to engage in proactive research and advocacy on human rights issues over a sustained period. | See Apr/May 2002 | The Asia Foundation is a non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to the development of a peaceful, prosperous, just, and open Asia-Pacific region. The Foundation supports programs in Asia that help improve governance and law, economic reform and development, women's empowerment, and international relations. | See Apr/June 2003 | CSIS is a nonprofit, bipartisan public policy organization established in 1962 to provide strategic insights and practical policy solutions to decisionmakers concerned with global security. |
| Title of Report | Human Rights and Reconstruction in Afghanistan (USA: 2002) | Afghan Perspectives on Democracy: A Report on Focus Groups in the Kabul Area on the Eve of the Emergency Loya Jirga (USA: 2002) | Speaking Out: Afghan Opinions on Rights and Responsibilities (Pakistan: 2003) | A Society in Transition: Focus Group Discussions in Afghanistan (USA: 2003) | Voter Education Planning Survey: Afghanistan 2004 National Elections (Afghanistan: 2004) | Take the Guns Away: Afghan Voices on Security and Elections (Pakistan: 2004) | Voices of a New Afghanistan (USA: 2005) |
| Data source | Interviews with 134 Afghans and 42 international aid workers | 12 focus groups stratified by gender, age, education and ethnicity | individual interviews with 1104 adults and group discussions with 375 adults | 14 focus groups stratified by gender, age, education and ethnicity | 804 in-person interviews with random, representative sample of Afghan citizens 18 or older | 750 interviews with Afghan citizens | 1,060 interviews with Afghan citizens |
| Funding | Office of the Senior HR Adviser (UN Coordinator's Office) Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church | unspecified | The United States Institute for Peace (USIP) and Consortium members | USAID | USAID | This survey was funded by Novib and Consortium members | IOM, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, UNFoundation, the Better World Fund, the Carnegie Corporation of New York |

Annex III: Interviewees and interview guide

List of interviewees

| | Interviewee | Position | Organization | Notes |
|----|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Mr. Usman Akram | Editor in chief | Zanbel e Gham | Independent satire magazine |
| 2 | Mr. Toryalai Zazai | Editor in chief | Hewad | State newspaper |
| 3 | Ms. Shukria Barukzai | Editor in chief | Women's Mirror | Independent women's magazine |
| 4 | Mr. Sanjar Qiam | Media researcher | Warsaw University | Independent rural radio |
| 5 | Mr. Sakhi Munir | Editor in chief | Anis | Independent newspaper |
| 6 | Mr. Marouf Lewal | News editor | Pajwhok News Agency | Independent news agency |
| 7 | Mr. Dad Nurani | Editor in chief | Peshraw Weekly | Independent newspaper |
| 8 | Ms. Gululai Habib | Editor in chief | Shafaq | Independent women's magazine |
| 9 | Mr. Mudaqiq | News Editor | Ariana TV and Radio | Independent radio and TV |
| 10 | Mr. Qayim | TV producer | Tolo TV | Commercial TV |

Interview guide for Afghanistan peace conditionalities and media study (used by Afghan fieldworkers)

Agenda:

1. Obtain basic facts about Afghan media coverage and editorials on donor assistance
2. Gain understanding of longterm trend of public opinion on donor assistance via informants' recall of the media discourse surrounding three key controversies
3. Gauge the role of informal communication flows as markers of public opinion and its impact on the media during those same key controversies.

Introduction:

Hello! My name is Mohammad Qasim, and I work on media in Afghanistan. I'm currently working on a research study on the public's views on donor assistance in Afghanistan with university researchers from the United Kingdom. As part of our project, we're interviewing a select group of experts on Afghanistan media. This conversation can be on-the-record, on background, or off-the-record, whichever is most convenient for you.

[If they ask: the interview should take about 30 minutes. If possible, do as much as you can now and finish up later. Please remember to ask if you can tape the interview, and note the date and time.]

Questions:

[For questions 1a to 1c below, do the research first that will allow these to be confirmations rather than questions. Get a business card if you can, and make sure you have contact details in case follow up is necessary. Please also use these questions as a guide – the wording and questions may have to change depending on the person you are interviewing.]

1. Background

- a. Full name
- b. Job title
- c. Organization/affiliation
- d. Number of years in that position
- e. What is your professional involvement with media in Afghanistan?
- f. What kind of media do you work in?

2. Media coverage of donor assistance

- a. How do the media report on the foreign aid reaching Afghanistan? Can you share a few examples of the kind of reports your media organization has done on donor aid?

- b. What do you normally report on – donor funding pledges, information based on press releases and donor statements, information on the uses made of the funding, any others?
- c. What do you tend to report on the most? Why?
- d. What kinds of opinions does your media organization present on these activities?
- e. Have these opinions changed from 2002 until now?
- f. Which donor agencies or countries do you report on the most? Why?
- g. What kinds of opinions does your media organization present on the different countries?
- h. Have these opinions changed since 2002? Why?
- i. Do you think it is important to report on donor aid? Why?
- j. What is the best way of reporting on donor aid?
- k. Do other organizations report on donor aid differently from you? If so, who? Why?
- l. Is there a difference between the way newspapers, radios, TV, or magazines report on donors? How can donors improve their practices in ways that would help the Afghan public?
- m. Do donor agencies try to influence your organization when it comes to reporting on them? How?
- n. Do you play Public Service Announcements by donor agencies? How often? From who?
- o. Are you aware of any policies of donor agencies which require certain conditions to be fulfilled by the government before they give funds to Afghanistan? If so, have you reported on them?
- p. Do you think it would be a good or a bad thing for conditions to be put on donor aid? How would it be good and how would it be bad?
- q. Do you think conditions on funding could affect peace in Afghanistan?
- r. What kind of relationship should there be between donors and the government?
- s. Do you agree with the way government spends the donor funds?
- t. How would you invest donor funds?

3. Discourse during key controversies

- a. If you remember, the Emergency Loya Jirga took place in June 2002. Can you remember how your media organization reported the activities of foreign assistance at that time?
- b. Can you remember some of the key reports your organization made at this time? What did you say?
- c. Can you remember what rumours or informal stories that were going around at this time?
- d. What do you think the public felt about donor assistance at that time?
- e. Now think back to the Berlin Conference of April 2004. [repeat questions a -c]
- f. In September 2005 of course there were Parliamentary elections. [repeat a -c]
- g. Do you think Bashardost's resignation or the Koran riots had an impact on public opinion regarding foreign aid to Afghanistan? How?

8. Other sources of information

- a. Are you aware of any reports or findings that may talk about the media or public opinion regarding donors in Afghanistan?
- b. Anyone you'd recommend we speak with?
- c. You mentioned a few media reports during this interview. Can you help us find those?
- d. Can we follow up with you later?

Wrap-up:

Thank you so much. This has been very helpful. I'll leave my contact information with you in case you have any further questions or comments. Could I have your contact details? Could I also have your permission to cite you in the study? Would you like a copy of the study sent to you? Thanks again!