

# Signposting Success

Civil Society in Afghanistan



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### 3 List of Acronyms

ASOP	Afghan Social Outreach Program
CDC	Community Development Council
CSO	Civil Society Organization (For the purposes of this report, the term CSOs is used to encapsulate both non-governmental organizations and social organizations)
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DDA	District Development Assemblies
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
KII	Key informant interviews
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSP	National Solidarity Program
SO	Social Organization

The purpose of this study is to identify noteworthy organizations, movements and networks in Afghan civil society that are fundamental entities with the potential to strengthen and sustain a democratic Afghanistan and to analyze the elements and characteristics that have enabled the success of these entities.

Data was collected through secondary research and primary qualitative research in the form of key informant interviews and case studies. A total of 40 case studies were conducted with noteworthy entities in Afghan civil society between June and July 2012. Case studies were conducted across six areas of interest (human rights; independent media; anti-corruption; youth; women's rights; and electoral monitoring) and across five regions of the country (Kabul and center, Herat and the west, Jalalabad and the east, Mazar and Kandahar). A complementary set of ten case studies were conducted in the Afghan private sector during the same timeframe to shed further light on factors of success.

### 4.1 Background and Context

Since the fall of the Taliban regime in late 2001 and the subsequent changes in the political landscape, the civil society sector has undergone a number of changes:

- After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the bulk of the initial assistance and humanitarian work was undertaken by international and national NGOs, which emerged from years of very sparse funding and tight control under Taliban rule.
- Between 2001 and 2004, civil society organizations (CSOs) concentrated more primarily on the delivery of public services in partnership with the government, due to the high magnitude of needs. However, as the country moved from emergency relief to development in 2004, CSOs moved back to more traditional civil society areas such as human rights and advocacy.
- A revised legal framework in 2005 established that only NGOs were eligible to receive donor funding (and not social organizations) and all NGOs were required to (re)register with the Ministry of Economy. While the changes in the law helped to structure what had become a frenetic and saturated sector, it also empowered the GIRoA to exercise considerable control over the functioning of NGOs.
- The number of civil society networks also began to grow post-2001, with specialized networks emerging (eg. Afghan Women's Network (AWN)). Beyond donor backed coordinating bodies (such as AWN and the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)), other networks have recently emerged through an informal grassroots process (for instance, the Mazar Civil Society Union). Although networks can play an important role in coordinating the work of CSOs, interviewees often complained about the lack of coordination among networks themselves and their inability to truly represent civil society.
- In more recent years, the creation of councils by development actors that are based on traditional models (for example, the National Solidarity Program NSP), and the increasing access to varied forms of communication, have blurred the geographic and tribal lines that used to shape customary civil society structures.



## **4.2 Islands of Capacity in the Afghan Civil Society and Private Sector**

### **4.2.1 Civil Society**

The cross analysis of 40 civil society entities has revealed seven key factors that drive success among this sample: positioning; organizational structure; reputation; financial sustainability; geographic coverage; influence in advocacy; and the ability to develop synergies.

Each organization combines these key factors differently, revealing a spectrum of successful models rather than one formula for success. Ultimately, success seems to rest on a fine balance of the following themes:

- A strong strategic vision can provide an organization with the capacity to incorporate donor funding into its own wider sectorial strategy, which guarantees its independence and its ability to focus on local realities;
- Strong management not only derives from charismatic, creative and, often, foreign-educated leaders, but also from an inclusive managerial style that builds the capacity of staff and teaches them to take ownership for their work, thereby creating a decentralized and more resilient model;
- The anchorage within the community through strong links with local populations and citizen participation not only brings legitimacy and local knowledge but also lends itself to the relevance and the sustainability of initiatives;
- Strategic linkages with the donor community and the procurement of donor funding usually result from the capacity to “speak the language of donors”;
- Donor dependency is limited by developing income generating activities and mobilizing volunteers;
- The ability to coordinate and network with other CSOs and people of influence enables advocacy efforts and can alleviate security concerns because of the power that exists in numbers.

However, persisting conservatism, a possible deterioration of the security situation in a context of transition, dependence on donors funding and its anticipated decrease, elitism among CSO activists, the corruption of the government as well as the lack of mechanisms to ensure internal accountability among CSOs, represent current obstacles to success in the civil society sector.

### **4.2.2 Private Sector**

Examples of success in the Afghan private sector confirmed the importance of investing in staff by building their capacity over time; the role of foreign educated managers; the importance of networking with government and other companies; and anchorage in the community through corporate social responsibility.

However, the islands of capacity in the private sector differed from their civil society counterparts in a number of ways. Firstly, private sector case studies demonstrated greater success in achieving financial stability; companies followed a managed growth approach where they were conscious of not risking dependency on a third party to expand the business in an unsustainable fashion. Secondly, private sector successes are dependent on systematic and methodical market research prior to entering business markets. Finally, private sector companies demonstrated a long-term vision that resulted in much more strategic action and an ability to look ahead and plan for possible changes.

### 4.3 Perspectives

Looking forward post-2014, a number of considerations emerge:

- While decreasing international financial assistance will potentially decrease donor dependency, there is also a risk that a smaller international presence will negatively impact the economy and allow more fundamentalist elements to increase their representation in the political landscape, thus silencing voices for democracy.
- The best method for supporting grassroots organizations to ensure their continued capacity without interfering with their autonomy is unclear.
- Combining advocacy with service delivery allows CSOs to have more influence as service delivery increases the buy-in of the population (as they benefit from the services) and of the government (as they receive a partner in their service delivery), thereby fostering advocacy efforts.
- A large number of youth activists in the sample came from a journalism background, which identifies a niche to be explored at universities in Afghanistan.
- There is a general lack of specialization among CSOs fueled by the scramble for donor funding and the lack of technical skills, with the independent media sectors constituting the exception. There is also a perceived rush to achieve national coverage, arguably, too quickly.
- Sustainability remains the biggest challenge for CSOs in the long-term. The private sector provides some examples of success in this regard for possible emulation.

### 4.4 Areas of Opportunity

The following areas of opportunity combine findings from the cross-analysis with the perspectives on the future nature of the sector and represent areas that could be explored in order to better prepare current civil society actors for future changes:

- Addressing sustainability issues by targeting specific important but non-profitable sub-sectors and by combining public service delivery and advocacy;
- Building management capacity by providing training programs for CSOs in marketing, creative collaborative approaches, building middle management, and efficient use and retention of volunteers;
- Supporting networking and coordination mechanisms to strengthen the CSO sector by promoting strategic partnerships between elite<sup>1</sup> and grassroots organizations and by encouraging the development of networks among independent media at a number of levels;
- Developing avenues for NGOs/CSOs to participate and contribute to public debate by prioritizing women's rights in any peace talks and in the transition and by supporting grassroots coordinating bodies by including them in high level negotiations;
- Educate the populace on the role and function of civil society to introduce a level of accountability for the sector and to promote the status of NGOs/CSOs in Afghan society.

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<sup>1</sup> Older organizations that have benefited from large amounts of donor assistance and can now effectively “speak the language of donors”)

## B INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

Over the past 10 years, as the reconstruction of Afghanistan has been underway, the Afghan civil society sector has gone through two major adjustments that have affected the structure of the sector, and it is now on the verge of a third.

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the bulk of the initial assistance and humanitarian work was undertaken by international and national NGOs, which emerged from years of very sparse funding and tight control under Taliban rule. Many of them had operated out of Peshawar, Pakistan during this time. As the needs were great, and the volume of international financial support was large, the number of NGOs grew significantly between 2002 and 2004 and the civil society landscape shifted to one where NGOs and civil society organizations started to also partner with the government in the delivery of traditional public services (such as health and education).

In 2004, as the country moved from a state of emergency relief to one of development, the public sector was restructured and a private sector began to emerge. In this climate, the civil society sector moved back into the more traditional sectors of support (such as advocacy, human rights, etc.), with the exception of some public services. This shift in the landscape led to changes to the regulatory environment, including the establishment of a new NGO law in 2005, which required civil society organizations to adjust once again. Many of the newly established organizations shifted to the private sector while others simply ceased their activities.

Looking beyond 2012, international financial support is likely to decrease during the security transition of 2014 that will, undoubtedly, have great impact on the structure and scope of the civil society sector once again. Within this context, the US State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) has asked Internews and Altai Consulting to explore where the most promising examples of success can be found in the Afghan civil society, and to glean the most relevant factors that have been responsible for their success, in order to best plan future assistance and to ensure that the gains of the last ten years are sustained.

This report brings together the details of that investigation and the extensive research led by Altai that culminated in 50 organizational case studies, and a cross analysis of the factors that led to the success of these organizations, in order to provide a number of areas of opportunity to be potentially explored by DRL and other key stakeholders of this sector.

## **1 Methodology**

### **1.1 Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to identify noteworthy organizations, movements and networks in Afghan civil society that are fundamental entities with the potential to strengthen and sustain a democratic Afghanistan.

A second objective of the study, which follows on from the first, is to analyze the elements and characteristics that have enabled the success of these entities as well as their sustained capacity and potential.

This research was requested by DRL, through the Fundamental Freedoms Fund with the overall objective of understanding how existing actors in Afghan civil society could be strengthened and how future funding could be used most effectively to ensure the fostering of the nascent Afghan democracy.

### **1.2 Approach**

The study involved a number of complementary research modules that combined an investigation of the context of civil society, the identification of “islands of capacity” in the Afghan civil society sector, and a set of case studies based on successful civil society organizations or movements. Lastly, a small sample of successful private sector companies was also studied in order to analyze a set of complementary models. The idea was to analyze drivers for success in the Afghan private sector in order to glean what Afghan civil society sector could learn from the private sector.

Data was collected through secondary research and primary qualitative research in the form of key informant interviews and case studies.

The investigation was conducted in five regions: Kabul and the central highlands; Herat and the west; Mazar-e-Sharif; Kandahar; and Jalalabad and the east. The phases of research included:

1. Phase 1: Secondary research
2. Phase 2: Key informant interviews
3. Phase 3: Case studies
4. Phase 4: Cross-analysis and report writing

### **1.3 Areas of Interest**

Six particular areas of interest were chosen for this investigation. That is, it was decided that within civil society, this investigation would focus specifically on islands of capacity in the following sub sectors:

1. Human rights
2. Independent media
3. Anti-corruption
4. Youth
5. Women’s rights
6. Electoral monitoring

These six areas of interest are all areas that have seen more involvement from civil society organizations (CSOs) in recent years and where civil society has been carving out its niche. These are also areas where private companies are barely present, and in which CSOs are playing a key role of representation and acting as a monitor of the work of the government. Considering these different reasons, and in line with its mandate, DRL recommended that this investigation focus on these six areas of interest or “sub-sectors”.

**1.4 Secondary Research**

In order to inform the selection of key informants, secondary research was conducted with the intention of reviewing academic work and past research on civil society in Afghanistan. The results of this research were then combined with recommendations from key stakeholders in the civil society sector to identify a number of key informants in the five regions.

**1.5 Key Informant Interviews**

Key informant interviews were conducted with representatives from the donor community, government, civil society, and the private sector in order to collect an exhaustive set of valid contacts for case studies that was representative across sectors and geographic areas.

Key informants were asked to identify the successful outliers in their sector, both significant organizations and individuals that could be considered for the study. These informants also provided an initial understanding of what makes CSOs strategic, sustainable and resilient and what criteria would be most pertinent to the analysis of those organizations.

**Overall, 78 key informant interviews were conducted across the country.** Of those, 63 key informant interviews were conducted in Kabul, one in Bamyan, five each in Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat, and two each in Kandahar and Jalalabad.

**1.6 Case Studies**

Based on a shortlist that resulted from the key informant interviews, 40 CSO case studies were conducted across the five regions. For each case study, an in-depth qualitative interview was conducted with the main focal point (either director, founder, or general manager, depending on the nature of the organization); complementary on-site observations where made, where possible; and short interviews of other staff or partners of the organization were also conducted where possible, to gain a better contextual analysis of the factors contributing to the organization’s success. Case studies were conducted by one international and one national researcher over half a day.

**Fifteen case studies were conducted in Kabul and the central highlands, six in Herat and the western region, seven in Mazar-e-Sharif, five in Jalalabad and the east, and six in Kandahar, across the six areas of interest.** The 40 civil society case studies are represented in Table 1 according to location and sector.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For a full list that contains a short description of activities, please refer to ‘**Error! Reference source not found.**’.

	Acronym	Name	Location	Sector
1	8AM	Hasht-e-Sobh	Kabul	Media
2	Afghan Community Foundation	Afghan Community Foundation	Mazar	Youth
3	AIHRC	Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission	Kabul	H Rights
4	ANGO	Afghanistan New Generation Organization	kabul	Youth
5	Assistance to Defend Women Rights	Assistance to Defend Women Rights	Mazar	Gender
6	AWN	Afghan Women's Network	Kabul	Gender
7	AWUDO	Afghan Women United Development Organization	Jbad	Gender
8	AYNSO	Afghanistan Youth National & Social Organization	Kabul	Youth
9	Badloon Radio (kunar)	Badloon Radio (kunar)	Jbad	Media
10	Bamiyan activists	Bamiyan activists	Kabul	H Rights
11	BAO	Better Afghanistan Organization	Mazar	H Rights
12	Beenawa	Benawa Cultural Organization	Kandahar	Youth
13	ECW	Educational and Training Center for Poor Women and Girls of Afghanistan	Kabul	Gender
14	EPD	Equality for Peace and Democracy	Kabul	Govt
15	FEFA	Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan	Kabul	Elections
16	Hindara	Hindara Media and Youth Development Organization	Kandahar	Youth
17	HOOAC	High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption	Kabul	Govt
18	IEC	Independent Electoral Commission	Kabul	Elections
19	IWA	Integrity Watch Afghanistan	Kabul	Govt
20	Kandahar Press Club	Kandahar Press Club	Kandahar	Media
21	Killid	The Killid Group	Kabul	Media
22	KKWAC	Khadija Kubra Women's Association for Culture	Kandahar	Gender
23	Mazar Civil Society Union	Mazar Civil Society Union	Mazar	Govt
24	Mediothek	Mediothek	Kabul	Media
25	New Minds	New Andishan	Herat	Youth
26	NLSO	New Line Social Organization	Mazar	Elections
27	Pajhwok	Pajhwok	Kabul	Media
28	Paktia Women's Shura (Gardez)	Paktia Women's Shura (Gardez)	Jbad	Elections
29	Professional's Shura	Professional's Shura	Herat	Govt
30	Radio Merman	Radio Merman	Kandahar	Gender
31	Radio Rabia Balkhi	Radio Rabia Balkhi	Mazar	Gender
32	SEO (Farah)	Society Empowerment Organization	Herat	Youth
33	Shaiq Media Group	Shaiq Media Group	Jbad	Media
34	THRA	Training Human Rights Association for Afghan Women	Jbad	Gender
35	TV Asia	TV Asia	Herat	Media
36	TV Herai	TV Herai	Herat	Media
37	WASSA	Women Activities and Social Services Association	Herat	Gender
38	WEEO	Women Economy Empowerment Organization	Kandahar	Gender
39	WYSC	Women and Youth Support Centre	Mazar	Gender
40	YWC	Young Women for Change	Kabul	Gender

Table 1: CSO case studies according to location and sector

## 1.7 Private Sector Research

In parallel to the 40 CSO case studies, a total sample of 10 private sector case studies were identified and assessed in the same locations.

### 1.7.1 Objectives

The purpose of the private sector case studies was to provide a set of complementary models. The idea was to analyze drivers for success in the Afghan private sector in order to glean what Afghan civil society sector could learn from the growth and development in the private sector.

### 1.7.2 Sectors

A wide range of sectors was covered in the private sector research, including:

1. Media
2. IT
3. Education;
4. Logistics and transportation
5. Construction
6. Finance
7. Manufacturing
8. Agriculture
9. Energy
10. Security

### 1.7.3 Approach

In total, 10 case studies were conducted and consisted of businesses based in Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, and Herat to understand shared and unique success factors across different geographic areas. Profiles were also chosen to represent small, medium, and large businesses as well as famous vs. unknown and internationally influenced vs. entirely home-grown businesses to include a broad spectrum of success stories.

The case studies were selected among outstanding private sector companies that emerged from Altai Consulting's past research projects that have covered more than 20 sectors of the Afghan economy and led to interviews with over 2,000 companies. This was cross checked with recommendations from key informant interviews in the different cities, in order to create a sample covering a broad spectrum of outstanding success stories in the private sector.

**A total of six case studies were conducted in Kabul, two in Mazar-e-Sharif, one in Herat, one in Kandahar.** The 10 private sector case studies are represented in Table 2 according to location and sector.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For a full list that contains a short description of activities, please refer to 'Error! Reference source not found.'

	Name	Location	Sector
1	Arzu Radio & TV	Mazar; broadcasts nationally and internationally	Media
2	Herati Cashmere and Skin	HQ in Herat; suppliers from across Afghanistan	Manufacturing
3	Kainaat Group of Companies	Afghan offices: Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Mazar-i-Sharif, Badakhshan, and Baghlan / International offices: Dubai	Multi-sectorial
4	Kardan Institute of Higher Education	Kabul	Education
5	Khurasan Ice Factory	Kandahar	Manufacturing
6	MOBY Media Group	Offices in Kabul & Dubai; broadcast nationally and internationally	Media
7	Netlinks	Kabul	IT
8	Sanaizada Cooking Oil Company	Mazar; products available across Afghanistan	Manufacturing
9	Tanweer Investments	Kabul, Dubai, London, Abu Dhabi, Geneva	Multi-sectorial
10	Noma Consulting	Kabul	Consulting

**Table 2: Private sector case studies according to location and sector**

### 1.8 Tools

Separate interview guidelines were created for the key informant interviews and the case studies. Separate interview guidelines were also created for the civil society and private sector case studies. These guidelines were translated into Dari and Pashto, pilot tested with a first sample of case studies, and submitted to Internews and DRL teams for validation.

### 1.9 Advisory Committee

An advisory committee was established by Internews to provide oversight on the scope and outcomes of the research. The committee consisted of representatives from DRL, Internews, Altai Consulting, and Afghan civil society and acted as an advisory body to ensure a transparent and fair selection of CSOs for the case studies and to provide guidance on the direction of the resulting analysis. The Advisory Committee met four times during the course of the project.



### 1 Legal Framework

NGOs, both national and international, have been active in Afghanistan, and among Afghan refugees in the camps of Pakistan, for many years. However, the fall of the Taliban in late 2001 and subsequent changes in the political landscape saw an expansion of the scope for NGOs, which resulted in a sudden, exponential rise in the number of NGOs operating. By February 2005, there were 2,017 Afghan NGOs registered with the (then) Ministry of Planning<sup>4</sup>. The large number of NGOs, combined with a weak NGO regulatory structure, allowed opportunists to jump on the lucrative NGO bandwagon and compete with established NGOs for donor funds in various sectors. This included a large number of “construction NGOs” engaged in profitable activity under the label of non-profit or non-taxable organizations.

Along with the increase in activity came an increasing number of claims that NGOs were ‘stealing from the people’ by spending lavishly on operational costs. There were also stories of funds being siphoned off by ‘fake NGOs’, which would cut corners in implementation of the projects they were awarded, or even vanish with the funds without having completed any work at all. By 2004 the issue was receiving considerable attention in the media, with calls for more transparency and accountability. President Karzai even became involved in the debate, saying in a May 2004 press release that, “the current situation requires a differentiation between real NGOs, which are non-profit organizations serving the public good, and those which use the NGO name but do not serve the people.”

The NGO community’s response included the signing of an NGO code of conduct in May 2005. A new NGO law was also signed by the president on 15 June 2005. The NGO law set out criteria for eligibility for NGO status and required that all NGOs (re-)register with the Ministry of Economy. This requirement caused many of the ‘fake NGOs’ to disband.

#### 1.1 The Distinction Between Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Social Organizations (SOs)

The law defines NGOs as “a domestic non-governmental organization which is established to pursue specific objectives” (a tremendously vague classification) and social organizations (SOs) as “the voluntary unions of natural or legal persons, organized for ensuring social, cultural, educational, legal, artistic and vocational objectives.”

NGOs are required to register with the Ministry of Economy and social organizations are required to register with the Ministry of Justice. The greatest difference between the two is that social organizations are forbidden from receiving funding from foreign organizations or governments. This led to a number of social organizations re-registering as NGOs in order to be able to benefit from donor funding; for example, the transformation of ACSF (The Afghan Civil Society Forum) into ACSFO. For the purposes of this report, the term CSOs is used to encapsulate both NGOs and SOs.

The process of registration has opened NGOs up to some level of scrutiny, which ensures some level of accountability. The relevant Ministry is empowered to scrutinize the annual reports of NGO/social organizations and refuse renewal of registration if it deems it necessary. In May 2010, the Ministry of Economy terminated the registration of 172 NGOs, and in November 2010, another 149 NGOs, due to

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<sup>4</sup> Afghanistan Civil Society Assessment (ACSA).

the failure of these NGOs to submit reports over a two-year period. According to the Ministry's NGO Department, by April 2012 the Ministry has terminated a total of 847 local and 92 international NGOs.

While such regulations do provide some structure to a frenetic and saturated sector, they also allow the GIROA to exercise considerable control over the functioning of NGOs, which does not safeguard their independence and does open the door to potential corruption on the part of Ministry staff. A number of NGOs reported cases of forced bribery by line ministry employees in order to be allowed to pursue their work.

## **2 Current Role of Civil Society Organizations**

There are currently 1,707 local NGOs registered with the Ministry of Economy, and close to 3100 SOs registered with the Ministry of Justice (as of April 2012).

While in the early years NGOs were focused on partnering with the government in the delivery of public services, in response to the magnitude of needs that existed, since 2006, CSOs have started moving back to more traditional areas of operation. That is, between 2004-2006 efforts were focused on traditionally governmental areas such as health and education, and today, they have moved to traditionally civil society sectors, such as advocacy and human rights.

However, there is still some overlap, with some NGOs still active in the area of public service delivery. This is notably in the areas of health and education with national programs such as BPHS and BESST formalizing this structure. However, the six areas of interest - **advocacy, human rights, independent media, anti-corruption, youth, women's rights, and electoral monitoring** - are all areas that have seen more CSO involvement in recent years and where civil society has been carving out its niche.

## **3 Regional Differences**

### **3.1 Kabul**

Kabul contains the bulk of the CSOs active in the country. Most CSOs in Kabul had near national coverage and operated their headquarters in the capital. CSOs in Kabul tend to be elite organizations that have been operating for a longer period of time and have been heavily invested in by donor bodies, leading to their success in "speaking the language of donors".

There is also a trend for CSOs based in the provinces, once they have reached a certain size and coverage, to establish an office in Kabul and move their headquarters there. There is great incentive for provincial organizations to move themselves to Kabul because of the large donor community there and the opportunities that exist for networking with the national government.

The capital also contains the biggest pool of quality human resources, due to the high proportion of foreign educated Afghans based there, and the large number of donor implemented capacity building programs. The quality of human resources results in the relative quality of implementation conducted by the CSOs based there.

CSOs in the capital tend to be more active in high-level advocacy work. Almost all CSOs in the case study sample that were focused on human rights, government accountability, and elections monitoring were based in Kabul, and there was a visible scarcity of such efforts in the provinces.

### **3.2 Balkh**

Mazar-e-Sharif also contains a vibrant, active civil society sector. CSOs based in Mazar-e-Sharif often tend to play a role in the region, in a number of the provinces in the North. Sometimes this reach extends across the nine provinces between Faryab and Badakhshan.

A striking characteristic of civil society in Balkh is that it is very much split on political and ethnic lines, with the number of CSOs that have emerged on these lines being relatively high. Balkh is one of the most ethnically diverse parts of the country, which creates a politically charged environment. This has, naturally, affected the development of civil society in the region.

Another significant characteristic of the region relates to the relative peace that it has enjoyed in recent years. Generally good levels of security have allowed civil society to develop in an uninhibited manner and have had great ramifications for the status of women. Women's rights are often linked to security levels, with trends demonstrating that deteriorating security leads to lower levels of girls enrolment in school and women's civic participation. For this reason, relatively good security levels have resulted in improvements in the status of women.

Relatively good security levels have also enabled a high level of donor activity and presence in Mazar-e-Sharif. The German government is notably quite active in the region and its focus on rule of law issues (among other things) has led to solid development in this sector in more recent years. There tends to be a good spread of both elite organizations and longstanding, as well as newer, grassroots movements.

The independent media sector is also active in the region, with approximately 15 local TV channels operating in Balkh. Arzu TV, which is based in Mazar-e-Sharif is currently competing with some of the national players and is broadcasting internationally via satellite. In addition, there are strong networks created between civil society and independent media.

There is a high incidence of coordination effort in the region that has emerged from both donor instigated initiatives (such as the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) working groups) as well as grassroots coordination bodies like the Mazar Civil Society Union.

Balkh University in Mazar-e-Sharif is also responsible for the emergence of an intellectual community in the city, and the good levels of youth participation in the civil society sector and in the civic life of the country.

### **3.3 Herat**

As the third largest city in Afghanistan, Herat also contains an active civil society scene that serves much of the region around it. The city is characterized by high levels of migration, with a large proportion of the population having spent at least some time across the border in Iran, and with some segments having spent decades there. A good proportion of the youth community have spent most of their lives in Iran; with many of them having been born and raised in Iran and returned to Afghanistan within the last few years.

The migration patterns of this community, and specifically the access to high levels of education in Iran, coupled with the presence of Herat University, have created a vibrant young intellectual life in

the province. Moreover, relatively higher levels of education have also created a fertile ground for civil society.

Security has also been relatively stable in Herat city. Relatively good security coupled with relatively high levels of education has resulted in the gender debate receiving considerable attention. This is helped by the fact that the post of Attorney General in Herat is currently held by a woman (Maria Bashir). There are roughly 50 organizations that are currently working on women's rights in Herat. However, there seems to be a strong focus on service delivery for women and less attention given to advocacy for women's rights.

The gender issue is also a highly complicated one in this region with many Afghan women who spent large amounts of time in Iran (where they enjoyed relative freedoms) finding it difficult to adjust to a more restricted life in Afghanistan. It is believed that this phenomenon has contributed to the high incidence of self-immolation among women in Herat.

The independent media sector is also strong with a number of local outlets and there are strong connections between media and civil society. However, there is an abundance of Iranian media broadcast from over the border, which creates strong competition for local outlets especially since they have a strong audience in Herat thanks to their relatively higher quality and variety and to consumption patterns that were developed by Heratis during their time in Iran. A number of Heratis also mentioned that they prefer Iranian media because it is monitored and censored by the government (unlike in Afghanistan) and so they know that they can trust it and that it will always be aligned on Islamic lines.

There is a vibrant youth community that is relatively much brighter and more educated than its contemporaries in other parts of the country. Once again, this is thanks to migration patterns, education received abroad in Iran, and the role of Herat University. The university acts as somewhat of a nucleus of community life for youth. However, high unemployment levels and lack of opportunities for youth to engage meaningfully in the civic life of the community have led to a number of concerning patterns such as drug use and addiction (also influenced by habits formed in Iran where addiction rates are very high).

The new Provincial Governor of Herat province, Daoud Sabah, has shown willingness to collaborate with civil society and to acknowledge its function and role. He convenes regular meetings with the bigger CSOs and frequently visits projects on the ground. This bodes well for civil society actors and has encouraged the growth of the sector. The downside, however, is a growing feeling among civil society activists that they have to "keep him happy" by providing him a lot of media exposure through their projects in order to maintain good relationships with him.

### **3.4 Kandahar**

Kandahar province is generally part of a zone that includes Helmand, Zabul, and Uruzgan. If security permitted, most NGOs would focus their efforts on these provinces. However, very poor security levels has significantly affected the work of civil society and altered its function and scope in both Kandahar and the surrounding provinces.

Poor security and high levels of Taliban/insurgent presence have affected a number of areas of life in Kandahar. Firstly, education levels are very low. Secondly, inhabitants in areas of the province under

Taliban control have limited links to the government or civil society and do not connect with CSOs out of fear of consequences from the Taliban.

This setting affects the mode of operation of CSOs in the region. Before 2010, civil society had a very limited role, but as security began to improve somewhat, post 2010, so did civil society activity. Ongoing security concerns, however, mean that CSOs tend to work on very specific issues and generally in the arena of service delivery. Geographical coverage is poor, with most organizations focusing on a very specific area, usually the neighborhood of a city (not even the entire city).

Outside of service delivery, human rights and women's rights are challenging areas and there are few organizations active. Independent media, however, is enjoying relative success and many women's groups have started utilizing the media to achieve their aims. There are also a number of youth groups active in the area, however their activities are limited. Many reported that it was difficult to encourage young people to engage because many of them were from the districts and had come to Kandahar city for their studies. Consequently, they were afraid to get involved because of the possible security ramifications, when returning home, of being linked to an NGO or CSO in the city.

### **3.5 Jalalabad**

Jalalabad is characterized by similar challenges to Kandahar, especially in relation to security, albeit not as severe. Migration patterns in the area (to and from Pakistan) also affect the nature of society and civil society activities in the region, in much the same way as migration patterns in Herat. NGOs in Jalalabad also tend to cover the eastern region, although they are generally limited to provincial centers because of poor security at the district level.

The provincial office of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) is quite active in Jalalabad. However, outside of this body there is little work on human rights, women's rights, and advocacy, with independent media being the only exception. Most NGOs are focused on service delivery. The lack of coordination among CSOs is one of the biggest challenges for the sector and it is fueled by poor security. The AIHRC is currently working on this issue by conducting three workshops per month that bring together mullahs, tribal elders, government employees, police, judges, prisons officials, media employees, civil society representatives, youth, and teachers.

A large segment of the youth community was raised and educated in Pakistan, which has led to relatively high levels of education and, notably, strong English skills. Youth are an active part of civil society, which is also fueled by Nangahar University.

## **4 Civil Society Networks**

Civil society networks can potentially play an important role in coordinating the work of civil society organizations and actors and creating a unified civil society that speaks out with one voice. Not only does this have the potential to improve the impact of civil society as a monitor of government and democratic values, but it can also have far reaching effects on its own sense of purpose and on the reputation of this body of actors among the community.

Networks are not a new construction and have existed as far back as the 1990s when ACBAR was coordinating the work of NGOs in the refugee camps of Peshawar. The number of networks naturally began to grow post-2001, with specialized networks becoming more prominent (such as the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) for women's rights organizations).

Among the civil society actors interviewed, however, there were recurrent complaints about the lack of coordination among networks themselves and their inability to truly represent those that they claim to be representing.

It was observed that, like the NGOs themselves, the networks could also be classified in two ways: those that are donor backed and formalized institutions (such as AWW and the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)) and those that have emerged through an informal grassroots process. For example, the Mazar Civil Society Union was created by a number of NGO heads that wished to make the distinction between actual NGOs and CSOs and construction companies or political organizations that had registered as NGOs/CSOs in order to take advantage of tax breaks. Once they managed to make the separation their initial aim gave way to a bigger objective of coordinating the work of civil society organizations to increase the impact of assistance and create heavier pressure on the government. The union has not registered itself with any governmental body (although all the individual NGOs represented are registered) and remains an informal grassroots movement that is visibly very active.

## **5 Traditional Civil Society**

Traditional civil society structures, such as various forms of village and elder councils, have existed in certain parts of Afghanistan for decades. They have been active in acting as a bridge between the populace and the government, building consensus on collective issues, and resolving disputes at the community level. However, such bodies typically remained fairly local and assembled on geographic and tribal lines. In more recent years, the creation of councils by development actors that are based on these traditional councils (for example, the National Solidarity Program (NSP)<sup>5</sup>) and the increasing access to many forms of communication have blurred these geographic and tribal lines and traditional bodies are starting to play different roles in Afghan communities.

Beyond traditional elders shuras at the community level (which generally play a role of dispute resolution) the NSP set up a network of Community Development Councils (CDCs) at the village level to implement development grants from the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. They receive requests for development projects from the community and present them to the government. In this way they liaise between the community and their elected representatives. The MRRD has also established District Development Assemblies (DDAs) to coordinate the work of CDCs at the district level. Officially, each CDC in the district sends a representative to the District Assembly, however, in practice, their scope and level of activity is limited. Moreover, in late 2009, the IDLG launched the Afghan Social Outreach Program (ASOP), which gave birth to “ASOP shuras” active in a number of Afghan districts, as an attempt to involve local traditional authorities in government. In many Afghan districts, ASOP shuras cohabit with DDAs and other sector specific councils.

Currently, the role of traditional councils remains primarily one of dispute resolution and of linking the community with the government. It has also been found that at the community level, it is not uncommon for community members to seek advice from their elder councils. Their local focus,

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted however, that the Community Development Councils established by NSP do differ from traditional councils in a number of important respects: CDCs are elected bodies whereas traditional councils are not; CDCs have been established across the entire country, whereas traditional councils did not exist everywhere; women have been included in CDCs; the membership terms, duration of office, and terms of reference of CDC members are fixed by NSP.

however, prevents them from playing any major role in advocacy, especially at the national level. Some CSOs in the sample did maintain linkages with traditional councils as a means of anchoring themselves in the community and increasing their legitimacy in the eyes of the community, although it seems that this opportunity is not capitalized enough by the civil society sector.



## **D** SECTORIAL ANALYSIS

### **1** Women's Rights

#### **1.1** Context

The fall of the Taliban signaled a new era for Afghan women, and from the very outset, beginning with the Bonn Agreement of December 2001, significant provisions on issues of women's political participation, human rights, and transitional justice were established. The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) was established to promote women's rights and address societal imbalances stemming from violations of their rights during the years of war. Following the Bonn Conference a number of women's organizations became active and donor budgets became heavily focused on gender mainstreaming. The women's organizations that emerged (or re-emerged) during this time can be classified accordingly:

- Women's groups which worked clandestinely during the Taliban regime to provide basic services for women (health, education) and began to work openly post-2001;
- Women's organizations that had been working from Peshawar which re-established their operations in Afghanistan after 2001;
- International NGOs and CSO devoted to women's rights that began working in Afghanistan;
- Women's organizations that emerged in the new political landscape, post-Taliban;
- Women-run shuras, Peace Councils and CDCs at the community level which, arguably; have the most impact in the more remote and rural locations of the country.

#### **1.2** Current Landscape

The women's rights sector is a large and active sector with coverage across the nation in urban, peri-urban and rural locations. The large donor budgets devoted to this sector, and its prioritization by donors at all levels, coupled with the great need that exists, have led to a proliferation of activity.

Women's organizations are currently active both in terms of service delivery (in the form of literacy, health, education, income generation, and rights awareness for women and girls) but also in advocacy, particularly in terms of advocating for legal reform in favor of women's rights. Efforts to improve the state of women's rights have also necessitated efforts to increase women's access to justice (via both formal and informal mechanisms) and monitoring the implementation of rights at law, which has at times proven to be the bigger challenge.

In the current landscape, women's organizations can be classified in the following way:

- Elite organizations that were established either pre- 2001 or shortly after (i.e. have been active for long periods of time), have received much assistance in terms of training and financial support, can now speak the language of donors, and have created a financial model based entirely on donor funding;
- Grassroots organizations that work very closely with people on the ground but are unable to attract donor funding and struggle with financial sustainability;
- Those that fall somewhere in between in that they capture donor funding from time to time but survive on voluntary efforts between projects.



### 1.3 Obstacles

The state of women's rights is intimately linked to security in Afghanistan with trends linking the deterioration of security with decreases in the enrolment of girls in school (especially high school), decreases in the number of female civil servants, and contracted geographic coverage of women's rights NGOs.

Political representation of women, and political will to amend the plight of women, has also proven elusive. Despite close to a third of parliamentary seats being filled by women, parliament still approved the Shia Personal Status Law<sup>6</sup> (which was later amended); and did not approve the presidential nominees for the position of Minister of Women's Affairs. Moreover, there are concerns that in a security drawdown, if more fundamentalist elements of the population find greater representation in the government, women's rights will not be prioritized without international pressure.

The large number of NGOs and CSOs in the women's rights sector which are competing for the same funding has led to strong competition among organizations and consequent low levels of coordination.

A total of 12 women's rights organizations were included in the sample of case studies, as delineated in Table 3.

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<sup>6</sup> The Shia Personal Status Law contained provisions that made it compulsory for women to travel with a male chaperone and forbade women from studying or working within the same room as men, to name a few provisions.

	Organization	Abbreviation	Location	Description
1	Assistance to Defend Women Rights	-	Mazar	The core mission of this NGO is to bring “positive change in the lives of all Afghan women by providing legal awareness, capacity building programs and legal service support.” Since its beginning, the organization has trained around 5,000 women and 40 grass roots CSOs across the Northern Region.
2	Afghan Women's Network	AWN	Nationwide	AWN focuses on raising awareness on women’s issues, including representing gender in international conferences and supporting the empowerment of Afghan women. AWN comprises of approximately 3,000 individuals and representatives from 98 organizations .
3	Afghan Women United Development Organization	AWUDO	Jalalabad	The organization aims at coordinating efforts for the emancipation of women, empower women economically through vocational training and capacity building and raise public awareness on women's rights issues. The organization has set up 8 shuras, connected 40 women to the market and trained more than 1,000 youths, including 260 young women.
4	Educational and Training Center for Poor Women and Girls of Afghanistan	ECW	Kabul	The NGO offers trainings, workshops and conferences in the fields of Advocacy, Peace Building, Capacity Building for CSOs, Vocational Training, Literacy and Education. Activities are especially focused on women but can include all members of a given community.
5	Khadija Kubra Women’s Association for Culture	KKWAC	Kandahar	The stated goal of KKWAC is to “fight injustice against women and protect women’s rights.” The organization offers academic, healthcare and vocational training programs to women of Kandahar province. More than 3,000 women have benefited from these programs.
6	Radio Merman	-	Kandahar	Radio Merman is the first and only women-focused radio station of Kandahar province. The station broadcasts 12 hours a day across the province and employs 18 full time staff.
7	Radio Rabia Balkhi	-	Mazar	Radio Rabia Balkhi is the first and main women-centered radio outlet of the Northern region and broadcasts across eight provinces of the North. The outlet has set an example in media advocacy of women's rights. It employs more than 20 full time staff.
8	Training Human Rights Association for Afghan Women	THRA	Jalalabad	The main objectives of the organization are to promote civil justice and equality, to implement and support the constitutional law, to encourage the establishment of the rights of women and to raise public awareness on gender and human rights issues. The organization has set up five female shuras and trains 20 grass roots CSOs.
9	Women Activities and Social Services Association	WASSA	Herat	WASSA is the first women's rights organization of Herat. The NGO has engaged in peace building training, multimedia production, women's rights advocacy as well as income generation and academic training for women. The organization counts 54 employees.
10	Women Economy Empowerment Organization	WEEO	Kandahar	The organization implements training programs including vocational training, literacy courses, health education, women’s rights awareness. WEEO has trained around 240 women since its creation in 2010.
11	Women and Youth Support Centre	WYSC	Mazar	The center offers classes in agricultural and vocational training for women, in order to empower them economically. Courses on the rights of women are also organized and opened to men and Ulema. The organization employs around 10 staff and operates in Balkh and Jawzjan provinces.
12	Young Women for Change	YWC	Kabul	This organization established in 2011 has been engaged in street demonstrations and advocacy for women's rights. It is also responsible for the creation of the first women-only internet café of Afghanistan. Relying on the engagement of 45 volunteers, the association has managed to attract increasing attention from the media.

Table 3: Women's rights organizations in the sample of CSO case studies

## 2 Youth

### 2.1 Context

With 68% of the Afghan population below the age of 25, youth is emerging as an important group within the Afghan civil society context. Unfortunately the potential idealism and zeal of youth is currently hampered by the lack of educational and employment opportunities, disenfranchisement, and the lack of opportunity to participate in meaningful decision-making at the community, provincial, and national level. However, despite this, the potential for Afghan youth to contribute to the reconstruction of the country by growing into the political and civil society spheres, both as individuals and organizations, is becoming more and more apparent.

In recent years, there has been a significant movement of youth from rural to urban areas in search of opportunities for employment and education, with educated youth often moving to Kabul in search of higher salaries and employment with international organizations.

University campuses have become hubs of activity for young people, with many of them gathering in social and cultural clubs on university campuses in both the capital and the provincial centers. These groups are often informal assemblies with no (or limited) budget that organize small events on campus. These events are fast becoming fertile ground for the spreading of key messages and the encouragement of activism among this demographic.

There has been an increase in more sophisticated forms of communication among this demographic in recent years with the growing usage of mobile phones, Internet, and social media.

Youth are fast becoming meaningful participants in civil society, not just through youth movements or organizations, but also by providing human resources to other CSOs.

## **2.2 Current Landscape**

The youth sector is a vibrant segment of the Afghan civil society that is made up of mainly small, yet very active, organizations. Many of the organizations and movements of this sector are either grassroots and informal, or at least developed out of a grassroots movement.

The traditional big players have been organizations such as Afghanistan Youth National and Social Organization (AYNSO) and Mediotheck. However, a newer generation of organizations has formed a new group of outliers, such as Afghanistan New Generation Organization (ANGO) and Young Women for Change (YWC). This new generation of outliers tends to be based in Kabul and appeals to the middle-class, educated young people. They have proven unable to appeal to other segments of the youth community (for example, rural, uneducated youth). They are driven by educated youth managers and tend to be freer from religious and political influence, and more removed from ethnic tensions, when compared to the previous generation, because of their exposure to other ideas and ways of thinking (mainly coming from the media). However, there are some youth movements in the provinces that have managed to appeal to a wider representation of young people, such as the Afghan Community Foundation in Mazar-e-Sharif.

Networking within the sector remains largely informal and there is a visible lack of coordination, both within youth organizations and between them and the rest of civil society. There is currently no affiliation to larger CSO networks.

There is a strong sense of philanthropy in this sector, with staff working mainly voluntarily and out of a sense of purpose, which is then passed on to new members, allowing the organizations and movements to spread organically. For example, the Afghan Community Foundation has no permanent staff, but there are 7,000 youth members across the country. The Foundation operates on a number of levels: the street, the neighborhood, the city, and the province. Youth members residing in the same street elect a representative, then all the street representatives come together in a given neighborhood and elect one representative for the neighborhood. All the neighborhood representatives in the same city come together to elect a city representative, who goes on to elect a provincial representative, and eventually, all the provincial representatives elect the Leadership Committee. The guiding principle of the foundation is to motivate youth to take ownership of their

own development and to become agents of change in their communities. As such, the organization encourages activity from the grassroots, so there is no centralized programming. The youth in each area organize activity organically among themselves and in a manner that would suit the context. There are no budgets, no salaries, and no money involved.

There are also strong links with the media sector and journalism training. Almost all youth activists and youth group leaders have received journalism training or have experience working with the media. “I learned the power of media while working for Tolo,” (Anita Haidari, YWC).

### **2.3 Obstacles**

Geographic coverage is high, with most of the country represented. However, a major obstacle that was pointed out by a number of informants takes the form of “old forces” within the government that are concerned about the rise of the youth. One NGO staff member describes this as their biggest obstacle. “They [government personnel] are worried about losing their power to the new generation who are not corrupt and not affected by previous ethnic and political boundaries, and ideological poisons of the past.” During the 2011 youth conference in Kabul, President Karzai urged youth to stay away from politics, saying, “Until the country becomes self-sufficient, I would not encourage you to do anything except educate, and I would not encourage you to become involved in political activities.”<sup>7</sup>

Also, fundamentalist groups, like every other political group, are seeking young faces to replace the old ones and renew their base. For example, after the Quran burning incident in early 2012, protests were led by youth groups, but orchestrated by political religious parties. Some youth groups pre-exist these organizations but are supported by them, while others are started specifically by these fundamentalist groups to push their agendas.

A total of seven youth organizations were included in the sample of case studies, as delineated in Table 4.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/3869-education-for-youth-the-only-way-for-progress-karzai->

	Organization	Abbreviation	Location	Description
1	Afghan Community Foundation	ACF	Mazar	A grassroots youth movement that encourages youth to become agents of change in their own communities. Currently hosts 7000 volunteer members across the country.
2	Afghanistan New Generation Organization	ANGO	Kabul	ANGO is a platform that encourages and enables youth to volunteer in a variety of community service, public awareness and development projects. It was born out of the Afghan Voice Project and has benefited from donor support since inception.
3	Afghanistan Youth National & Social Organization	AYNSO	Kabul	A grass roots organization that empowers youth to become good citizens and advocates of positive change in their communities, and promotes national unity amongst youth of various ethnic backgrounds. There are 35,000 to 40,000 volunteer members across the country.
4	Benawa Cultural Organization	Benawa	Kandahar	A grassroots cultural association that publishes books and magazines and supports talented youths to become writers and poets. The organization counts around 150 - 200 members who participate regularly to poetry readings, poetry festivals and to informal literature workshops organized by the founders.
5	Hindara Media and Youth Development Organization	Hindara	Kandahar	The aim of the organization was first to promote and preserve media and cultural activities in Afghanistan with the intention of participating to the reconstruction of the country. It has progressively developed a strong focus on youth empowerment through several journalism training programs and events.
6	New Andishan	New Minds	Herat	A social and cultural organization with a new approach to advocacy using cultural and artistic activities to both build the confidence and capacity of women, as well as challenge current ways of perceiving the role of women. The association gathers around 40 regular members.
7	Society Empowerment Organization	SEO	Herat	This organization provides academic and vocational training to youth and women and promotes youth participation in local governance and the reintegration of Afghan returnees from Iran and Pakistan. Around 500 youths, boys and girls, participate every year to its general assembly.

Table 4: Youth organizations in the CSO case study sample

### 3 Human Rights

#### 3.1 Context

The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) was established at the Bonn Conference in 2001, as a national institution to protect and promote human rights and to investigate human rights abuses and war crimes. It was subsequently entrenched in the Afghan constitution in 2004.

The main areas of human rights that are currently monitored by Afghan civil society are:

- The right to fair trial, which involves monitoring the work of judicial organs and ensuring principle such as habeas corpus, as well as the actual carrying out of a fair trial, are safeguarded;
- Freedom of speech, which has become a fundamental concern for journalists and the independent media sector;
- Freedom of the media;
- Rights of minorities which is especially relevant for ethnic minorities, and to a lesser extent, religious minorities;
- Women’s rights;
- Rights of children;
- Rights of the disabled.

### **3.2 Current Landscape**

Human rights is the most diverse, yet well served sector of civil society. There are numerous organizations focusing on human rights, particularly the rights of the disabled and women's rights. The strong coverage of the sector is linked to donor prioritization and the subsequent increase in donor funding flowing into the sector.

However, despite the large number of actors, capacity for human rights advocacy is still very limited. CSOs have developed strong skills in raising human rights issues and drawing attention to them, however, a clear understanding of the advocacy cycle, and appropriate ways to position an advocacy campaign, are still skills in development.

Opposition to human rights advocacy is also strong and comes from the conservative forces in government, as well as the religious community. Human rights organizations have learnt to overcome such opposition by creating an "Islamic" human rights. That is, organizations have shifted their focus to proving the legitimacy of this body of law through the Quran rather than adopting the mainstream interpretations of human rights, which tend to reflect a largely western mindset.

The AIHRC is the official body tasked with human rights monitoring but it is assisted by a network of CSOs that report human rights abuses. The AIHRC effectively collaborates with CSOs at a number of levels. Firstly, it provides capacity building training on human rights issues, awareness raising and advocacy. Secondly, it uses its NGO/CSO connections to identify human rights breaches. Thirdly, it organizes or participates in civil society meetings to advocate on key issues such as the last media law on freedom of speech, the individual Shia law on child marriage or the family law on women rights.

### **3.3 Obstacles**

The lack of rule of law and the lack of political will to prosecute human rights breaches means that often when the commission passes cases on to the Attorney General's Office, they remain untouched. Moreover, human rights issues are more difficult to address outside of Kabul, and require strong coordination by local civil society actors, which is sometimes hampered by the lack of capacity in the more remote provinces. There is still a lot of work to do in promoting human rights among the populace and ensuring that the community understands that it is not just a foreign concept and is, in fact, safeguarded in the Quran.

A total of three human rights organizations were included in the sample of case studies, as delineated in Table 5.

	Organization	Abbreviation	Location	Description
1	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission	AIHRC	Kabul	AIHRC appears as the "official voice" on human rights in Afghanistan. It promotes human rights through capacity building of CSOs, citizen civic education programs, control of living conditions of prisoners, refugees, hospitalized people and advocacy at both the national and international levels. The organization employs more than 500 permanent staff.
2	Bamiyan Activists	-	Kabul	The group consists of an informal gathering of activists in Bamiyan city. It relies on the voluntary involvement of a core group of 20 activists who take the lead on civic actions, including protests and campaigns largely using humor as a way to convey their message more effectively.
3	Better Afghanistan Organization	BAO	Mazar	The organization calls for honesty and integrity in the work of reconstructing Afghanistan, and focuses on human rights and democracy. It covers five provinces of the Northern Region including Balkh and employs around 15 permanent staff.

Table 5: Human rights organizations in the CSO case study sample

## 4 Independent Media

### 4.1 Context

Under Taliban rule television was prohibited, antennas and transmitters were destroyed and the only radio station in operation was Radio Shariat. Since broadcasting in the capital restarted in November 2001, however, the independent media landscape has experienced incredible growth; from one non-governmental radio station in 2001 to over 75 terrestrial television channels, 175 FM radio stations and 800 publications as of September 2010. The independent media sector is now fulfilling a number of important roles for the Afghan populace, including: education; entertainment; advocacy; monitoring of the government; and the establishment of culture and identity.

### 4.2 Current Landscape

The sector has been experiencing very high growth rates over the past 10 years, with growth really picking up from 2006. Since then, annual growth in the number of outlets per year has been at more than 20%, with nine TV channels and 20 radio stations being created per year. Although international funding and international NGOs played a key role in the first phase of media development (2001-2005) the growth of the sector in the last 5 years has occurred with very limited input from the international community. This has resulted in a very dense media landscape, as described in the figures above.

The sector is also a positive example of sustainability with outlets covering costs mainly through commercial activity, and demonstrating a very low level of dependency on donor funding. Currently, over 50% of the entire sector is driven by advertising revenue.

In previous years, the sector has seen the emergence of serious investors and the development of strong networks. The outliers are a group of large and diversified media groups such as Moby, Killid, and Ariana. A number of outlets have also turned into networks, providing content for smaller outlets under their umbrella (e.g.: Killid). A number of stronger outlets have also started extending their model into the region and appealing to audiences outside of the country (e.g.: Pajhwok, Moby, Arzu TV).

The main urban centers of the country are now close to saturation with Kabul containing over 30 TV channels and over 40 radio stations; and most provincial capitals having at least one, and sometimes a handful, of local TV channels. Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif are the exceptions, with over 15 TV channels in

each. Many rural areas are still underserved, however, with lack of transmitters that can reach long distances being one of the biggest obstacles to coverage in rural areas.

The high levels of competition in the sector, resulting from the race for advertising revenue, has led to many of the more successful outlets focusing on a niche position in order to differentiate themselves in the market.

Many CSOs have opened up media branches or plan to do so, underscoring the strong role of media in the civil society sector and an increasing consciousness of how to best utilize it to further the aims of the sector.

### **4.3 Main obstacles**

Human resource issues remain a big obstacle for the sector, both in terms of journalistic skills (for example, weak investigative journalistic skills lead to most outlets reporting facts with little analysis) and technical skills for the maintenance of equipment. These limits in technical capacity also limit the ability of outlets to expand their coverage.

The small, concentrated pool of advertisers also raises concerns for the long-term sustainability of the sector, especially in light of a possible economic downturn resulting from 2014 transition. The bigger players, however, have already started to plan for such a scenario.

Lack of security for journalists, caused by a lack of freedom of speech and rule of law in the country, is also a major obstacle for the sector, particularly in the south of the country, but present everywhere.

The emergence of media outlets that are used by insurgents and local power brokers to consolidate their support among the population, and the proliferation of outlets aligned on ethnic lines, poses likely challenges for the future of the sector.

A total of nine independent media outlets were included in the sample of case studies, as delineated in Table 6.



Organization	Abbreviation	Location	Description
8AM	-	Kabul	Hasht-e Sobh is an independent media outlet promoting democracy, human rights, transparent and accountable governance as well as freedom of speech for media. The outlet distributes 15-18 000 printed newspapers every day across 12 provinces.
Badloon Radio (kunar)	-	Jalalabad	This independent radio station of Kunar province aims at informing citizen on the government, at voicing concerns of local communities and at raising public awareness about human rights and democracy. It employs 10 permanent staff and broadcasts across the Kunar province.
Kandahar Press Club	KPC	Kandahar	This organization provides a platform to the government, to citizen and to CSOs to maximize the diffusion of their messages through media. It is also active in democracy and human rights advocacy.
Killid	TKG	Kabul	TKG is comprised of eight radios and supports 28 other local radio outlets with programs focusing on cultural topics. TKG also produces two weekly magazines that are distributed nationwide, TKG and Morsal, providing articles in Dari, Pashto and English, on current Afghan politics, local and international news, sports and cinema. It employs around 250 staff across eight key provinces of Afghanistan.
Mediothek	-	Kabul	This organization, established in 1993, focuses on strengthening civil society structures, peace and nation building processes, democracy and non-violence. The organization has set up several community centers, four "Media Houses" and has provided training programs to around 400 journalists across the country.
Pajhwok	-	Kabul	Pajhwok is a News agency which provides information to most of the national and international media and has a strong reputation for integrity and professionalism. It counts 300 subscribers and employs around 170 staff across 10 regional offices in the country.
Shaiq Media Group	SMG	Jalalabad	The Shaiq Media Group is comprised of a regional TV channel (Sharq TV), a regional radio station (Sharq Radio) and a regional radio for women (Nargis radio). The aim of the group is to raise awareness among uneducated populations. The group is present in eight provinces of the East and South Eastern regions of Afghanistan.
TV Asia	-	Herat	TV Asia was established in 2009 with the aim of creating a profitable business that would not rely on donor funding and of raising awareness about the state of the Afghan government and the development of the country. It employs 11 staff based in Herat.
TV Herai	-	Herat	This TV outlet was created in 2005 in an attempt to create an outonomous media outlet that could provide unbiased news and contribute to the raising of awareness in Afghan communities. It is currently focused on culture building and the promotion of the Afghan culture in response to the influence of Iranian media.

Table 6: Independent media organizations in the CSO case study sample

## 5 Government Accountability/Anti-Corruption

### 5.1 Context

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, in 2011 Afghanistan was ranked as the third most corrupt country in the world. Corruption is endemic, and has increased exponentially over the last 10 years in parallel with the massive amount of aid money that has entered the country (260 billion USD since 2010).

The issue of corruption or transparency and accountability has recently become a priority for donors, which, until recently, had not allocated budget lines to this issue, considering it to be "too political". However, during the Tokyo conference in June 2012, for the first time, aid pledges were tied to "a mutual accountability" between donors and the Afghan government. Parallel to this evolution in donor funding, anti-corruption organizations have emerged and the sector is becoming more structured.

### 5.2 Current Landscape

The outlier in the anti-corruption sector is Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA), launched in 2005. The organization spent a number of years devoted to research to understand the sector and the real issues at hand. Since then it has launched a model referred to as "social accountability," which consists of

selecting volunteers among influential locals, who can monitor abuses and bribes and then bring the issue into the open. This approach of “shaming and blaming” seems to be much more effective than prison sentences and prosecutions in deterring corrupt behavior.

In 2006, President Karzai established an inter-ministerial committee tasked with assessing corruption in the judiciary, and methods for combating it. This process led to the abolishment of the General Independent Administration for Anti-Corruption (GIAAC) and, later on, through a presidential decree, to the creation of the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption (HOOAC). HOOAC sets up corruption monitoring and asset reporting mechanisms, yet its capacity is challenged by reduced donor funding, mainly from UNDP, and by the re-allocation of funds to more recently emerged organizations.

### 5.3 Obstacles

As the biggest cases of corruption are perpetrated by high ranking and very influential officials within the Afghan government, exposing these cases can carry significant risk. There is also a lack of political will to punish perpetrators of corruption, which makes any effort in this sector challenging.

A total of five anti-corruption/government accountability organizations were included in the sample of case studies, as delineated in Table 7.

Organization	Abbreviation	Location	Description
1 Equality for Peace and Democracy	EPD	Kabul	EPD’s mission is to empower and strengthen civil society networks and associations at the community level to promote peace building, improve governance, as well as the quality and accessibility of education. The organization has developed two main programs focusing on gender equality and government transparency. EPD counts 21 permanent staff and around 60 regular volunteers.
2 High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption	HOOAC	Kabul	The HOOAC serves as the focal point for overseeing policy development and implementation of anti-corruption strategies. It oversees the coordination, supervision and support for all anti-corruption efforts in Afghanistan. It is funded by the government and employs around 450 staff.
3 Integrity Watch Afghanistan	IWA	Kabul	IWA’s current mission is to support the spotlight on corruption in Afghanistan by increasing transparency, integrity, and accountability through the provision of policy-oriented research, development of training tools, and facilitation of policy dialogue. A total of 500 volunteers support the implementation of programs in communities.
4 Mazar Civil Society Union	MCSU	Mazar	The union brings together all civil society actors in Mazar-e-Sharif to coordinate action and thereby create a stronger voice for civil society. It is not yet registered as an autonomous entity but gathers more than 80 registered NGOs of the Northern region under its umbrella.
5 Professional's Shura	-	Herat	The Professionals Shura acts as a think tank where members voluntarily monitor the activities of the Provincial Government and Herat Municipal Government and provide analysis on the state of democracy and statebuilding. The shura now counts 1,000 members, mainly skilled professionals.

Table 7: Anti corruption/government accountability organizations in the CSO case study sample

## 6 Elections Monitoring

### 6.1 Context

Democratic elections are a very new concept for Afghanistan, being established just eight years ago with the 2004 Constitution that created the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup> For this reason, the concept is still largely misunderstood by the populace.

The electoral law (last review in August 2010) states that seven types of elections shall be conducted in Afghanistan: elections for the president, the provincial council, the upper house of parliament (*Meshrano Jirga*), the lower house of parliament (*Wolesi Jirga*), district councils, village councils, and municipal mayors (or *Maleks*). The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) is the state body in charge of implementing these elections.

### 6.2 Current Landscape

There are very few organizations monitoring the elections organized by the IEC, with the main body being the Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan (FEFA). FEFA relies on a system of voluntary observers who report electoral violations at polling stations. These voluntary observers are supervised by two provincial observers, one man and one woman, who file cases of violations and send them to the Electoral Complaint Commission, a temporary State body in charge of monitoring elections. Outside of election times, FEFA works on electoral reform. Other players are smaller with fewer means and lack the coverage of FEFA.

Independent media is also very active in reporting on electoral abuses, especially the bigger national networks such as Tolo, Pajhwok, Killid, 8 am, and Saba TV. They also report human rights abuses linked to elections.

### 6.3 Obstacles

The novelty of the concept of democracy and democratic elections still brings with it a number of challenges. In remote areas it has been reported that warlords sabotage ballots by stealing ballot boxes and filling them with their own votes. In Balkh province, a suicide bombing in the constituency of a candidate opposing the Provincial Governor, Atta, caused the polling station to be closed so that the community could not vote for him.

Between 2004-2005 and 2009-2010, 260 fewer polling stations could be opened due to security risks. Moreover, in a number of provinces (Helmand was given as one example), the Taliban held checkpoints on the roads next to the polling stations, cutting people's fingers off if they had ink on them, and sometimes even killing them.

Another more micro challenge for the sector is the lack of sustained financial assistance. Donors tend to support elections as a sole event instead of funding an ongoing process of democratization that prepares a population for elections when they are due.

A total of four elections monitoring organizations were included in the sample of case studies, as delineated in Table 8.

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<sup>8</sup> Article 3 of the constitution states that the citizens of Afghanistan "shall have the right to elect and be elected"

Organization	Abbreviation	Location	Description
1 Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan	FEFA	Kabul	The organization is born in 2004 from the identified need to have an independent domestic organization to ensure that all democratic processes are implemented transparently through networking, citizen participation and good governance. The organization is engaged in election monitoring and advocacy in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan.
2 Independent Electoral Commission	IEC	Kabul	Created by the constitution of 2004, the aim of the organization is to administer and supervise elections as well as to refer to general public opinion in accordance with the provision of the law. It employs around 170 staff and operates nationwide.
3 New Line Social Organization	NLSO	Mazar	New Line Social Organization is a grassroots organization that is focused on responding to the real needs that exists in their communities out of a sense of service to the nation. It has noticeably engaged in providing information on candidates so as transparent elections. It operates across the nine northern provinces.
4 Paktia Women's Shura (Gardez)	-	Jalalabad	Eight women's shuras have been set up in different districts of Paktia. The aim of the shuras is to encourage more female participation in elections and presence in the government.

**Table 8: Elections monitoring organizations in the CSO case study sample**

## E CROSS ANALYSIS

This section contains a cross analysis of the factors of success in the Afghan civil society sector, as determined through 40 case studies conducted with CSOs, NGOs, activists, and representatives of movements. It also contains a cross analysis of the factors of success currently driving the Afghan private sector, as determined via 10 case studies with a variety of private sector firms.

While the private sector is arguably one component of civil society in a country, the civil society case studies and the private sector case studies were analyzed separately. This is because it was found that an analysis of factors of success produced largely different results across the two bodies of research, that did not always overlap, thereby warranting a separate analysis.

### 1 Sample Description: Civil Society Sector

The following diagrams plot the sample of 40 case studies against two criteria: outreach and advocacy. In terms of outreach, the scale looks at the extent to which the entity is able to penetrate rural communities. In terms of advocacy, a scale is created where pure service delivery constitutes one pole, and pure advocacy constitutes the other pole.

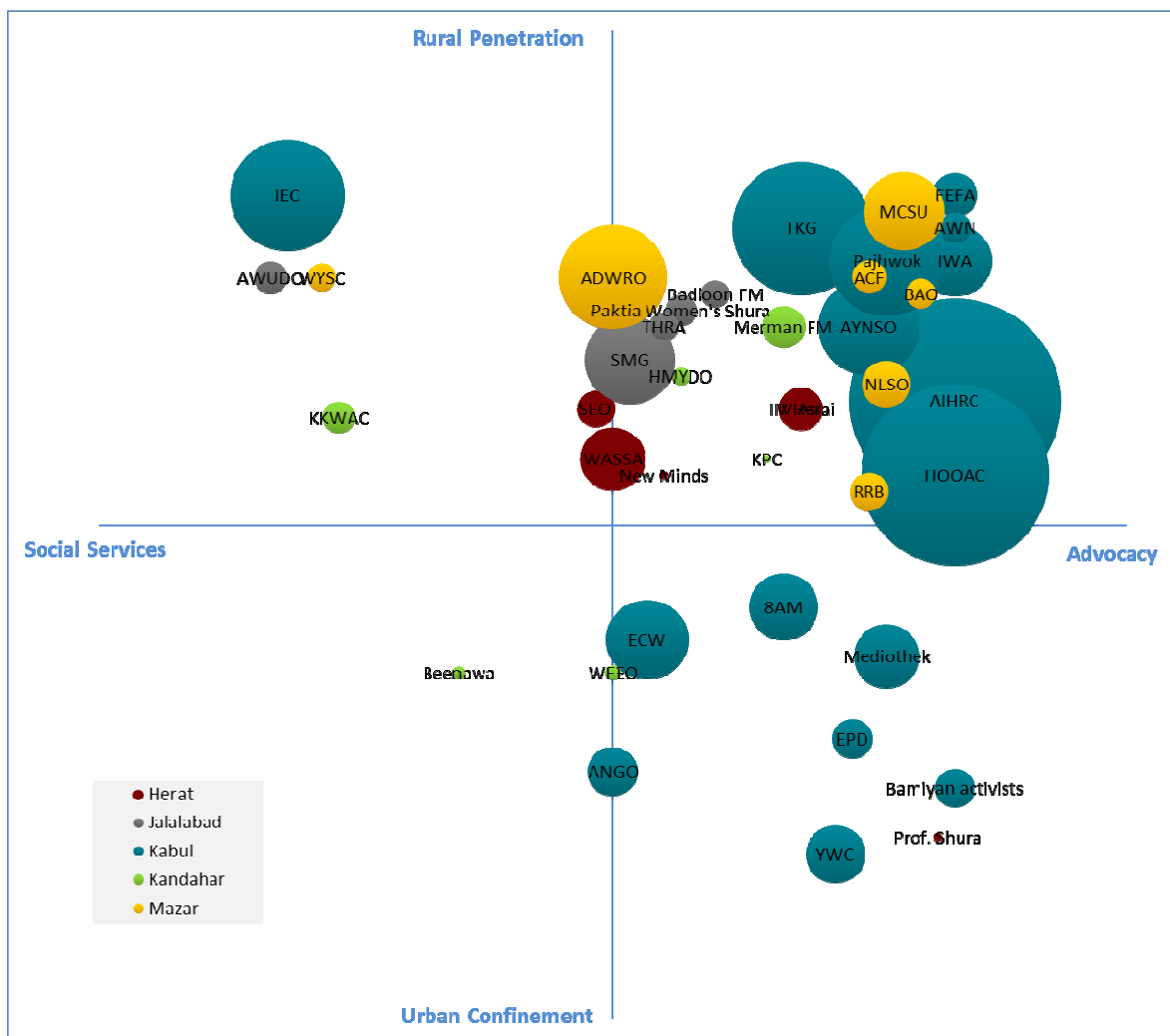


Figure 1: CSO case study spectrum according to size of entity (number of staff)

Each entity is plotted somewhere along this range according to the types of projects they are most involved in.<sup>9</sup> In Figure 1 the size of each entity in the diagram is determined by the number of staff in the entity; that is, the higher the number of staff, the bigger the circle that represents the entity. In Figure 2 the size of the each entity in the diagram is determined by the number of provinces covered by the activities of the entity; that is, the more provinces covered, the larger the circle that represents the entity. These diagrams give a visual representation of the spread of the sample of civil society islands of capacity for this study.

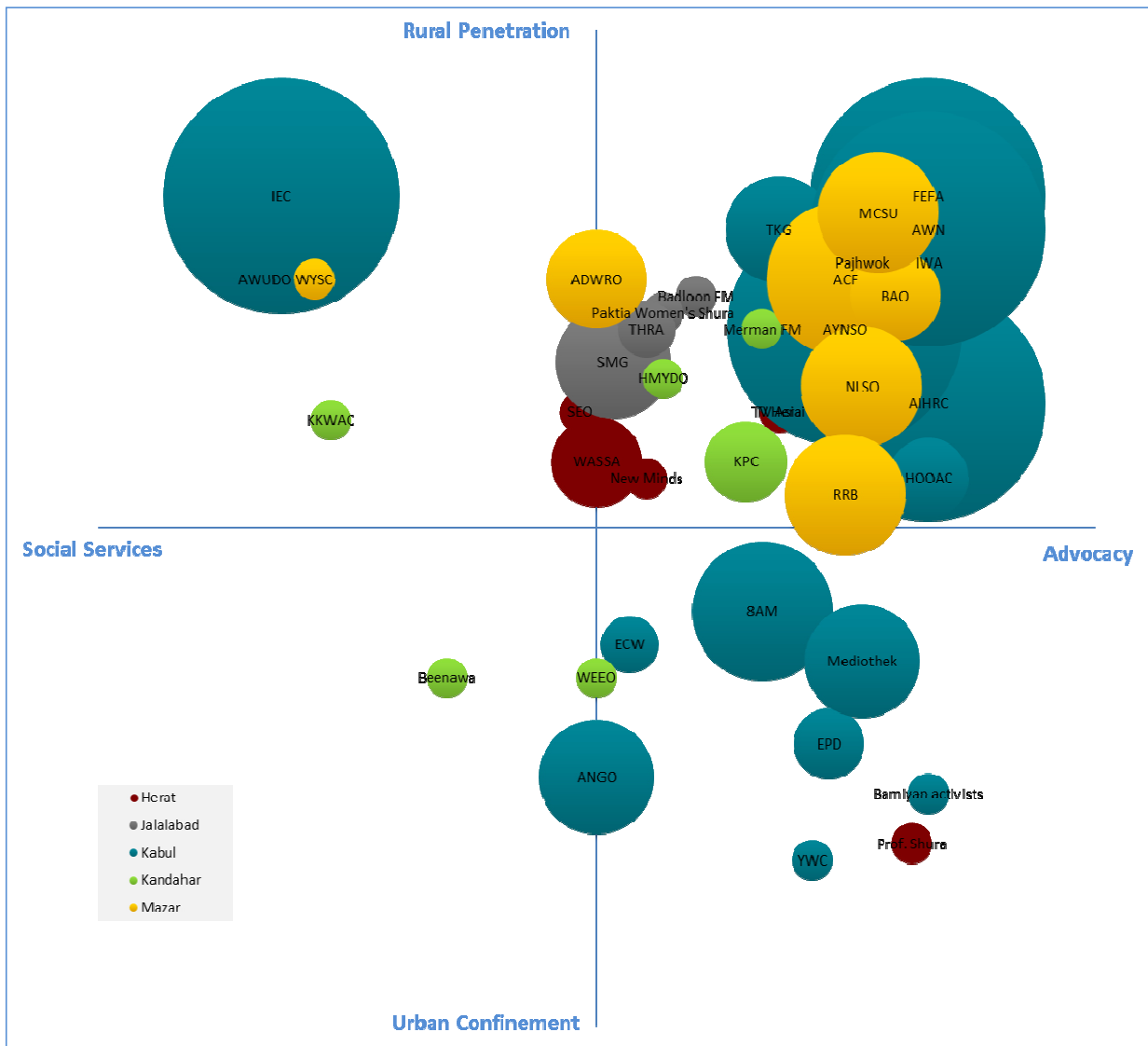


Figure 2: CSO case study spectrum according to number of provinces covered

Figure 1 and Figure 2 demonstrate that the majority of the islands of capacity in the sample of the CSO case studies fall in the top right quadrant of the matrix; meaning most CSOs in the sample are more

<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this exercise, service delivery included any projects that offered services, including literacy classes, vocational training, income generation activities etc.; and advocacy refers to activities such as lobbying the government, protesting, etc.

involved in advocacy than service delivery, and have good rural penetration. It also demonstrates that the majority of the CSOs in the sample that are involved in advocacy and have good rural penetration also had covered a high number of provinces and tended to be larger in terms of number of staff. While this data cannot be used to extrapolate any conclusions about the state of the civil society sector in Afghanistan, it does suggest that successful entities in the sample are moving in this direction.

It should also be noted that the majority of independent media in the sample also fell within this quadrant; there were a number of smaller grassroots organizations that also fell within this quadrant; and that many of the ‘elite’ NGOs fell in the bottom right quadrant, meaning that although they were involved in advocacy related activity they were not very successful in penetrating rural communities (which may be a result of ‘elite capture.’)

A full list of all 40 civil society case studies, with a brief description of their activities and their location and sector of activity, is attached to this report in Annex A.

**2 Common Factors of Success in the Afghan Civil Society Sector**

In the 40 case studies that were conducted with representatives of NGOs, CSOs, movements, and coordinating bodies, 10 specific factors of success were explored. These 10 factors created a standard notion of success against which all organizations could be analyzed, thereby creating a form of systematization in a highly abstract and qualitative piece of research. While all 10 factors were explored within each case study, not all of them proved relevant for every organization, and only the relevant ones were highlighted in each case study. The 10 factors of success explored in each case study are represented in Table 9 with a brief explanation of what is meant by each one.

	Factors of Success	Explanation
1	Niche positioning / strategy	How the organization positions itself.
2	Team / HR/ Management	Organizational structure of the organization.
3	Visibility / Reputation	The levels of visibility of the organization and the kind of reputation it has developed.
4	Sustainability / funding	The economic model of the organization and how this lends itself to sustainability.
5	Outreach/geographic coverage	The level of coverage that the organization has managed to achieve and how it manages to do so.
6	Influence / Success in advocacy	How successful the organization is in advocacy and how it manages to be successful in this regard.
7	Replicability	How much does the model allow the success of the organization to be easily replicated.
8	Network / Synergies	What kind of networks the organization has established and how this has allowed it to take advantage of synergies.
9	Dynamism / Resilience	How well the organization has been able to adjust to changes.
10	Addressing roadblocks	How the organization manages to overcome obstacles in their work.

Table 9: Factors of success explored in the CSO case studies

Upon cross analyzing the information that came out of the case studies, certain trends emerged and not all 10 factors of success proved relevant to the sample in its entirety. For this reason, this cross analysis section deals with seven of the original ten factors of success for they were found to denote success among the 40 organizations in the sample. The seven factors of success that are included in the cross analysis are represented in Table 10 with their sub-divisions.



	Factors of Success	Sub-Division
1	Niche Positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The nexus between positioning and funding</li> <li>- Adopting a Strategic Role</li> <li>- Carving out a Niche</li> </ul>
2	Organizational Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong Leadership</li> <li>- An Inclusive Managerial Style</li> <li>- Recruitment and Retention of Staff</li> </ul>
3	Reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community Acceptance</li> <li>- The Reputation of Staff and Managers</li> <li>- Financial Independence</li> <li>- Maintaining a Low Profile</li> </ul>
4	Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Dynamics of Donor Funding</li> <li>- Income Generating Activity</li> <li>- Volunteerism</li> </ul>
5	Geographic Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community Involvement</li> <li>- Keeping a Local Focus</li> <li>- Partnerships</li> <li>- Use of Media to Increase Coverage</li> </ul>
6	Influence and Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Networking and Strategic Partnerships</li> <li>- Advocacy and Media</li> <li>- Obtaining Results</li> </ul>
7	Synergies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Networking within sectors</li> <li>- Networks between CSOs and the Media</li> <li>- Coordination for security</li> </ul>

Table 10: Factors of success explored in the cross analysis of the civil society sector

## 2.1 Niche Positioning

### 2.1.1 The Nexus Between Positioning and Funding

In general, when it came to the positioning of the organization, the NGOs studied fell within two categories: those that operated strategically and according to a defined mission, regardless of the desires of donors; and those whose work was shaped by the requests of the donor community and the pursuance of donor funding.

For example, Women Activities and Social Services Association (WASSA) is a successful NGO focused on women’s rights, operating in the Northwest of the country. While the founders intended to open an NGO that would contribute positively to the gender dynamic in the country, the particular lines of action that WASSA has followed have been donor-driven. They have been supported by a number of donors over the years (including the US Institute of Peace, UNICEF, Rights & Democracy, the European Commission, Counterpart International, World Vision, DAI, USAID, and WFP), which has ensured their financial stability up until now but has also dictated the kinds of projects they pursue. It also means that organizations like WASSA are now dependent on donor funding.

Other organizations, such as Equality for Peace and Democracy (EPD), for example, are more focused on what they perceive the needs to be on the ground. Since its inception, EPD has focused its energy on drafting a strategic plan with a clear set of goals, so as to be, in its founder’s terms, “visionary as well as missionary”. They purposely refuse to apply for certain types of funding, as they believe that it would consume too much of their time and energy and distract them from their identified goals. On the contrary, the organization identifies the areas it would like to focus on and then pursues funding for those. The Afghan Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA), which monitors the



national budget, is one example of such a project, which EPD managed to successfully “sell” to the US Embassy.

While WASSA and EPD represent two extremes, most CSOs in the sample fell somewhere between the two, where they occasionally implement donor funded projects, and then find their own ways of keeping activities alive in between official projects. There were, of course, some CSOs that were completely inactive in between projects (e.g. Better Afghanistan Organization (BAO)), and some CSOs that have never received donor funding but are still active (e.g. New Line Social Organization (NLSO)).

Afghan Women United Development Organization (AWUDO) is one example of an organization that manages to strike a happy balance between the two opposing models mentioned above. It tends to operate in a manner that allows it to strategically incorporate donor-funded and driven projects into its own activities by seeing such projects as one step in a bigger process. For example, in 2011 AWUDO implemented a project that focused on leather-sewing vocational training for 40 women in Laghman province, through funding from the US Embassy. Once the project was completed, AWUDO continued to work with the women, without funding, to connect them with markets and ensure that the training had the intended effect of empowering women through income generating activity. They located a merchant in Laghman that was willing to buy the goods from the women in order to sell them in Kabul. Moreover, a long-term relationship was created whereby the merchant would ask the women to fulfill his orders for him, whenever they came through from Kabul. Such a long-term approach to a donor-funded project was not commonly observed.

The ability of media outlets to source revenue outside of donor funding often allowed them to operate more independently and on a more strategic basis. For example, in the case of Radio Rabia Balkhi, the first women’s radio in the northern region, strategic staff meetings are held on a weekly basis whereby the organization decides what issues it will focus on that week, and journalists are then sent out to find stories on those topics, rather than focusing on topics identified by donors.

The examples demonstrate that there is a spectrum of examples of success. In this spectrum, there tends to be a clear demarcation between CSOs that are operating according to a strategic purpose, and those that are operating according to the priorities of donors. It is generally a lack of sustainability that encourages CSOs to focus on donor requests rather than determining their own focus. However, the more strategic organizations of the sample manage to incorporate donor funding (and thus, donor priorities) into their own strategic plan.

### **2.1.2 Adopting a Strategic Role**

A demarcation also appeared between organizations that focused on their own personal contribution to the sector, and those that were focused on building the capacity of the sector in general. In terms of the latter, only a handful of examples emerged, including the Professional’s Shura in Herat and the Mazar Civil Society Union. The Professional’s Shura is a network of over 1,000 professionals who come together to use their capacities to promote a more equitable society. Likewise, the Mazar Civil Society Union brings together representatives from 84 NGOs in Balkh province to coordinate efforts with the intention of strengthening civil society in the region. The Civil Society Union has very successfully campaigned on human rights breaches in Mazar-e-Sharif by capitalizing on the louder voice that they can have as a group of NGOs coming together. For example, during the ongoing case of Parviz

Kambakhsh<sup>10</sup> the union protested the action of the government via the media, which eventually led to Kambakhsh's release.

Both organizations emerged through an informal movement from the grassroots and have remained quite grassroots in nature, notably remaining outside of donor influence. In the case of the establishment of the union, a number of NGO heads came together and decided to establish it as a means of making a difference between actual NGOs or civil society organizations and construction companies which were engaged in profitable activity under the label of non-profit and non-taxable organizations. From there, its aims and objectives developed organically. While the decision to remain outside of donor influence has not always been an intentional one, there is evidence to suggest that it has contributed to the success of these organizations. For example, one member of the union mentioned that the union members were interested in attracting funding sources from the donor community in order to be able to work more effectively. However, when asked what they might do with such funding the responses usually corresponded with a desire to implement projects, which gave the impression that introducing donor funding might distort the aims of the organization and distract it from its role as a "meta" organization.

Radio Rabia Balkhi is another example. While it views raising awareness on women's issues via the radio as an important aspect of its work, the outlets primary aims are not tied to the radio itself. Rather their primary purpose, as stated by the director, is to build the capacity of women and send them to other radio stations: "We don't want to be one successful radio, we want to build the capacity of many radios." This demonstrates the very long-term vision of the director and her ability to think strategically and position the radio strategically. She believes that Afghan society currently doesn't want women to raise their voices via the media because they are afraid that it will give ideas to other women and it will disrupt the status quo, so the way to deal with this is to increase the number of women that are raising their voices, and the number of outlets that are raising the voices of women. While Radio Rabia Balkhi has not been devoid of donor funding, the outlets ability to generate income has allowed it to operate somewhat independently of donor direction and pursue its own aims strategically.

In general, organizations that are focused on building the capacity of the sector in general, rather than just on their own individual contribution, tend to see their role very strategically and in a longer-term perspective, which leads to their success. Many of them emerged organically and from the grassroots and have remained outside of donor influence or support, which has allowed them to remain focused on their purpose as a "meta" organization. Even those that have received some forms of donor assistance have other forms of income generation, and so are not dependent on donor budgets, thereby having more freedom to set their own priorities.

### **2.1.3 Carving Out a Niche**

In some organizations, it was found that focusing on an underserved or salient aspect of a sector, and thereby carving out a niche in operations, was responsible for much of their success. This was most commonly observed among media outlets.

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<sup>10</sup> A journalism student at Balkh University, who was sentenced to death on blasphemy charges, accused of downloading, doctoring, and distributing among friends an article about the role of women in Islam in January 2008.

For example, Pajhwok, which is headquartered in Kabul but has the largest network of journalists of any media outlet in the country and is currently serving all 34 provinces, prides itself in focusing on standards of investigative journalism. There is a focus on providing analysis and opinions, rather than just the retelling of facts. This is currently rare among media outlets and journalists in the country, and Pajhwok is, arguably, the only network that has this capacity. TV Asia in Herat, while seeing its role as an independent media outlet to be one of monitoring the work of the government, has chosen to focus on doing this in relation to community development (which public services has the government fallen short of delivering and why, for example), rather than the usual focus on corruption or abuse of power. This unique focus has earned it a reputation of representing the people and their everyday needs. TV Herai, also in Herat, has developed a niche in focusing on the promotion of Afghan culture and language, in the face of the abundance of Iranian media being broadcast from over the border.

The national daily paper, Hasht-e Sobh, or 8am, which is based in Kabul but covers the entire country through four main offices, is also a strong example of capitalizing on a niche in an underserved area. The role of national dailies in Afghanistan is currently limited. Of those that do exist, they are generally of rather poor quality (i.e. a non-professional layout, articles copied and pasted from websites such as BBC Farsi or Pashto, etc.), have extremely low circulation rates, and are of limited size (four to eight pages). Dailies published outside Kabul are rare and even smaller. Thus, 8am stands out as an example of success in an underserved area. Moreover, its efforts to produce rigorous in-depth analysis of social and political issues from an Afghan perspective seems to have gained the trust of high-level political actors who recognize Hasht-e Sobh as an important vector of opinions. This is demonstrated by the fact that subscribers are mostly state institutions, embassies and political parties, which underscores its resilience in the future.

It is likely that the higher levels of competition among media outlets, stemming from the need for continuous funding (as opposed to project-based funding) and the subsequent race for advertising revenue, encourages the various outlets to position themselves strategically, as a means of appealing to both audiences and potential clients.

Outside of the independent media, there were fewer examples. Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) was a rarity in that it was also focused on a strategic position. The organization believes that combating corruption, and thereby strengthening the Afghan state, can only be achieved through homegrown efforts, and therefore invests heavily in building the capacity of Afghan researchers, and avoids the recruitment of international experts.

In some areas of the country, it was found that it was much easier for organizations to capitalize on a niche position due to the lack of active NGOs in the area. This was particularly so in the south where NGOs were few, and of those that were active, even fewer were native to the area (they were usually headquartered in Kabul and only implementing projects in the area from time to time). Radio Merman is one such example; as the first and only women's radio in Kandahar, it was very quickly supported by a number of donor agencies and has enjoyed steady support since.

The examples suggest that media outlets are more prone to focusing on a niche and positioning themselves in a certain way. It is likely that this comes from the high levels of competition for advertising revenue in this sector that causes outlets to be more innovative and to find a way to differentiate themselves. This in turn, enhances their ability to fulfill their mission, serve their audiences, and to achieve financial sustainability, thereby increasing their chances at survival.

## 2.2 Organizational Structure

### 2.2.1 Strong Leadership

#### *Foreign-educated Managers*

A factor that was common across almost all of the organizations and movements studied, was strong leadership. The presence of a visionary and enigmatic leader was paramount to the achievement of success. Most often, leaders had been foreign educated or had spent large amounts of time abroad and brought back fresh perspectives and methods to Afghanistan. For example, in the case of the New Line Social Organization, the fact that the founder lived much of his life abroad, but also the fact that he had lived in a number of countries and witnesses a number of systems and models of governance, gave birth to his desire to rebuild Afghanistan. He spent six years each in Pakistan and Iran, a year in Tajikistan, and six months in Istanbul.

It was common for NGO founders in the east and south to have spent the Taliban years in Pakistan. In fact, all NGO heads interviewed in the east had lived, and been educated, in Pakistan; and all NGO heads interviewed in the south, with the exception of one who never left the country (Beenawa), and one who had grown up in Iran (KKWAC/Radio Merman), had spent the Taliban years in Pakistan. It was just as likely for NGO heads interviewed in Herat to have spent some years living in Iran (three out of five NGOs) or other foreign countries (Germany and Pakistan), with the exception of only one that had never lived abroad. On average, NGO heads that had lived in Iran tended to have spent a greater number of years in Iran (in some case, up to 20 years) when compared to those that lived in Pakistan (usually only for the duration of the Taliban regime).

A number of NGO heads that had not lived abroad did mention having travelled abroad for further studies (a number of them had completed masters programs in the USA) or for training programs provided by the NGOs they worked for or by donor agencies. For example, Mobina of Radio Rabia Balkhi has traveled to the USA, Germany and Dubai on separate occasions for training programs supported by donor agencies.

In many cases, this phenomenon of innovative, foreign educated managers proved problematic in the short term because, until they were able to build the capacity of staff to operate without them, the organizations seemed to be fully dependent on the director and likely to fall apart without them. It also means that many of these 'success stories' are difficult to replicate. This was particularly the case for organizations observed in the south where it is presumed that the relative lack of capacity in the civil society sector there means that NGOs are more prone to relying on a strong leader. However, a small number of the organizations observed were found to be conscious of these risks and were working against them. For example, Sanjar at 8am (Hasht-e Sobh) was very focused on building the capacity of his staff to ensure that the model functioned in his absence. He stated "Now, [Hasht-e Sobh] is not dependent on me anymore; all of the editors have the ability to run things if something was to happen to me."

#### *Motivational Managers*

A number of organizations and movements that relied heavily on volunteers and were more grassroots in nature (in the fact that they empowered people to work from the bottom-up) were found to derive much of their success from the ability of the manager to motivate the masses. For example, the

Afghan Community Foundation is a youth movement that motivates young people to be agents of change in their communities. The organization encourages activity from the grassroots, so there is no centralized programming; the youth in each area organize activity organically among themselves and in a manner that would suit the context. Much of the success of this movement lies in the personality of Najib Paikan and the leadership that he provides. He presides over the foundation (and has done so since its inception) and sees his role as one of leadership and guidance. He stated, "If I ask you to imagine yourself at home, you can; then if I ask you to imagine yourself with your family, you can; however, if I ask you to imagine yourself in Lithuania, you cannot because you have never been to Lithuania so it is hard to imagine what it would be like. This is the problem in Afghanistan; people need to be given a vision to strive towards." He holds meetings and conference regularly where he gives motivational talks to the youth and inspires in them a sense of responsibility towards the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

A similar pattern was observed at New Line Social Organization. As mentioned above, the time the founder spent living abroad opened him up to a number of influences and modes of thinking so that now he wishes to inspire Afghan youth through a number of role models and examples, not just religious figures (although not discounting them either). He uses a number of means to motivate volunteers, including conferences and talks and the publishing of books and pamphlets.

Grassroots organizations that were run on volunteers and headed by a motivational manager who was responsible for much of its success, seemed less at risk of becoming dependent on the strong manager as they functioned on a model of decentralization where members were empowered to become agents of their own development and help the movement flourish in their own areas.

*Exemplary Women*

In the case of organizations focused on women's rights and gender equality, it was found that the reputation of the woman in charge had the potential to impact the reputation of the organization in general. For example, at Radio Rabia Balkhi, many of the employees and volunteers are young women from conservative families and many of them have only been allowed to leave their homes for the purpose of employment because their families are comfortable with them working under the supervision of the director specifically. This is because she has a solid reputation in the community for being active in terms of women's rights but still being a devout Muslim that adheres to her responsibilities under Islam.

A similar pattern was observed with the Paktia Women's Shura. As part of their work, the women in senior management would meet with families, religious clergy, and elders to garner their acceptance of initiatives that promote education and participation in elections. For many of the families and traditional elders, the fact that the women are themselves active but yet strong Muslims with solid reputations in the community, is the greatest evidence that such activities can be beneficial.

Such a phenomenon underscores the importance of having Afghan women lead women's movements in Afghanistan as, beyond just providing skills and education, such organizations also provide an example of what a progressive, educated Afghan woman looks like. This is a factor of success for these organizations as it allows them to demonstrate that increasing women's rights is not at odds with Islam, thereby curtailing criticism of their work. It also raises the potential risk of gender equality being seen as a fundamentally Western concept and losing legitimacy if donor bodies are too involved in the

setting of priorities for women's organizations and too visible. Anita of Young Women for Change (YWC) said that earlier this year, Noorin TV had reported that YWC was a Christian organization supported by the West and accusing it of spreading Christianity. This example highlights the risks of internationals being perceived as too involved in such matters.

### **2.2.2 An Inclusive Managerial Style**

A number of examples emerged of organizations with an inclusive managerial style that decentralized authority and built the capacity of staff over time. This led to success in these organizations because it prevented reliance on a strong manager and led to a skilled workforce.

For example, YWC possessed a unique managerial style where all decisions were made by committees of people, rather than by individuals with authority. There is also a definite lack of hierarchy in the organization, which contributed to a strong sense of ownership among the staff and consequently high levels of motivation.

EPD also managed to encourage a strong sense of ownership in the work of its staff by giving them the authority to make decisions as they pleased. In fact, the organization is made up of a group of activists, rather than professionals, so staff see their role as one of raising issues and working for change, rather than one of fulfilling responsibilities delegated by a supervisor. This has fundamentally changed the nature of the organization and the culture that it is steeped in.

The AIHRC, which, as a state institution, represents one of the more formal organizations in the sample, also possessed a highly inclusive process of strategic planning. Strategic plans are prepared every three years via a collaborative process that brings together a number of actors. It is drafted by the Executive Director in collaboration with three Commissioners and an international expert. It is then shared with senior staff at headquarters and in the provinces for comments, provided to civil society organizations to flag any potential shortfalls, distributed to donors as a preparation for fundraising, and eventually distributed to the public through print copies and bilingual versions on the website.

At Rabia Balkhi, the director explained that she adopts a highly participatory management style where all decisions are made in a consultative manner and all staff are involved. She gives the staff the opportunity to make decisions and take ownership for their work, rather than simply following directions. "I do this because our overall aim is to create capacity," she said. She also explains that she has learned to manage this way because she previously worked under the supervision of others who managed her in the same way. She also feels that her time abroad (she has traveled to USA, Germany and Dubai on separate occasions for training programs provided by donor agencies), and the things that she saw and learned there, shaped her ideas about management and leadership.

The examples suggest that successful organizations understand that creating a situation where staff rely on a strong superior will not ensure long-term success. Instead, they focus on building the capacity of staff and teaching them to take ownership for their own work, thereby creating a decentralized organizational model that will be resilient to human resource changes in the future.

### **2.2.3 Recruitment and Retention of Staff**

In terms of human resources (HR), two models are apparent in the CSOs surveyed. One where staff are recruited at the start of each project, with the intention of finding those that are most suitable for the position; and one where staff are invested in over time and an effort is made to retain them.



There was a group of relatively smaller NGOs, which functioned almost completely off of donor funding but did not manage to secure donor-funded projects continuously, and thus, experienced periods of time between projects where there was no work and no funding. During this time, employees often worked voluntarily on the promise of being offered jobs once funding was secured again. While this allowed the organization to retain staff, it meant that a rigorous recruitment policy was not followed at the commencement of projects and staff did not always possess the best expertise required for the position. On the positive side, this allowed the organizations to have skilled staff working with them voluntarily even when they were in between projects, and staff grew within the organization to understand its way of working.

On the contrary, within these smaller NGOs, there were examples of some that would focus on rigorous recruitment and undertake a recruitment process at the commencement of every project. For example, Nilofar Sayar, the Director/Founder of Women and Youth Support Centre (WYSC), in Mazar-e-Sharif, believes that each project requires particular skills and she therefore seeks the most qualified person for each role. For this reason, she always advertises positions. Previous employees are encouraged to apply, but will always be considered among all applicants for their suitability for the position. In only 20% of cases are previous employees hired for future projects, and this is usually in cases where their work on previous projects has led to high levels of capacity that makes them the best person for the position. However, such examples were rare.

In general, these smaller NGOs experience a high turnover of staff, due to their inability to pay regular salaries, and to match the higher salaries of bigger Afghan, and international NGOs. Moreover, this high turnover serves as a disincentive to engage in capacity building, or to invest in staff in any way.

Among the larger and more established organizations that have continuous funding (either via donors or their own initiatives), there is a tendency to take the capacity building of their staff very seriously and to focus on their retention. For example, at the Shaiq Media Network, the preference is to hire sharp recent graduates, focusing on their training and capacity building, and then providing them with opportunities that will encourage them to stay and dedicate themselves to the growth of the company and to take ownership of its success.

Assistance to Defend Women's Rights (ADWR), a Mazar-e-Sharif based NGO, also takes the recruitment and training of staff very seriously. Malalai, the founding director, explained that staff members are often sent to Kabul for training and then treated as master trainers who come back and disseminate their learning via internal training programs. Moreover, great effort is made to tailor internal training programs to the needs of employees, even if it means that only a small handful of employees in charge of specific activities will participate.

A perceivable lack of technical skills among NGO staff and civil society actors also poses a problem for the sector and acts as an incentive for bigger NGOs to retain staff and work on building their skills and capacities over time. For example, Shaiq's preference for graduates, and his strategy of building their capacity over time and providing them with incentives to stay with the organization, was clearly a response to such a reality.

In summary, the examples demonstrate that there is a classification between the smaller NGOs that experience a high turnover of staff, due to their inability to pay regular salaries, or to match the high salaries of international (and bigger national) NGOs; and bigger NGOs that have more liberties in this

regard and thus are more prone to invest in the long term capacity building of staff. The common trend for smaller successful NGOs was to pay staff salaries when they had donor-funded projects and then to rely on their volunteerism in between projects with the promise of a paid job once donor funding came through. Staff did not always possess the best expertise required for the position but this allowed organizations to have skilled staff working with them voluntarily even when they were in between projects. The ability of bigger NGOs to retain staff and work on their capacity over time allowed them to address the problem of poor technical skills in their human resources, which led to long-term success for these organizations.

## **2.3 Reputation**

### **2.3.1 Community Acceptance**

The ability of an organization to anchor itself within the community has proven to be a fundamental aspect of success, and to have a strong influence on the reputation of the organization. This usually takes a number of forms, from linking with traditional governance structures, to working with individuals from the communities within which projects are being implemented.

For example, WYSC finds that its greatest asset is its ability to mobilize communities through a strong local network on the ground. When implementing projects, they work with a network of volunteers who are sourced from within the community/village and who work out of their gratefulness for projects in their area. The presence of these local volunteers not only brings legitimacy but also allows WYSC to ensure that their projects and activities are well suited to the local context, which further improves their reputation.

Educational and Training Center for Poor Women and Girls of Afghanistan (ECW) has also demonstrated an ability to include local communities in their own development and to position itself as a local organization, even at the village level. The director and founder explains, “For our rights and community mediation trainings we partner a local master trainer with an elder or Mullah from within the community. This helps in gaining community buy-in.”

Sometimes this community buy-in is facilitated from the top down. For example, in the case of Mediotheck, the organization’s ability to foster dialogue and solve local conflicts via its community centers<sup>11</sup> has earned the respect of religious and traditional elders, which has trickled down to local inhabitants and enabled them to work effectively.

The Paktia Women’s Shura in Herat takes the concept of community engagement one step further. The fact that the shura is an indigenous concept that is rooted in tradition, and in the community, has allowed it to more easily find its place in the community. Currently, the district governments of the areas where the shuras are active are sending all cases related to women to the shura to resolve. Over time, the shura has become acknowledged as a legitimate dispute resolution institution. The district government also prefers to send cases to the shura, instead of to the courts, out of a desire to keep claims involving women private.

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<sup>11</sup> Set up with the aim of promoting tolerance, reconciliation and understanding through cultural and educational programs and dispute resolution mechanisms.



The ability of CSOs to work with local volunteers not only brings legitimacy and local knowledge, it also lends itself to the sustainability of their initiatives. When community members are encouraged to play a role in initiatives they start to take ownership of their own development and see the process as one that they are involved in, as opposed to something that is done for them.

**2.3.2 The reputation of Staff and Managers**

The reputation of the manager of an organization, or that of its staff, can have a strong effect on the reputation of the organization itself. In general, a distrust of CSOs has started to take form in communities and has stemmed from the initially large number of CSOs, which were, in fact, for-profit organizations which sought to take advantage of the tax benefits that accrued to non-profit enterprises, and the large donor budgets that were available to NGOs. For this reason, it is, generally, evidence of NGO staff and civil society actors working with an altruistic motive that leads to higher levels of trust in the organization.

This was touched upon in the previous section on strong leadership where it was demonstrated that the reputation of a woman that headed a women’s organization affected the way in which the work of the organization was perceived in the community. This was primarily because the head of the organization was judged as an example of the standard to which they hoped to raise all women. In the case of Radio Rabia Balkhi, it was found that many of the girls that worked at the organization had only been allowed by their families to take a job because their families felt comfortable with them working under the direction of Mobina (the director) specifically.

The Shaiq Media Network in Nangahar is an example of a non-women’s rights organization where the reputation of the manager has affected the reputation of the organization. It was found that the founder/director of the organization, Shafiqullah Shaiq, makes a lot of ancillary efforts to build his standing in the community. For example, through his construction company he paid for the renovation of two of the main intersections in Jalalabad city. Efforts such as this have turned him into a well know figure in Nangahar and positively affected his reputation. This in turn, has affected the reputation of his media outlets.

Some organizations, such as FEFA, understand this fact and, consequently, take staffing issues very seriously. Understanding that much of its good reputation is derived from the good work of the voluntary observers, the recruitment of observers is taken very seriously. The selection criterion for observers includes educational qualifications, activism or CSO experience, political non-affiliation, and reputation, and they also sign a MoU with FEFA agreeing on a code of ethical conduct. Their work is monitored by provincial coordinators as well as partner organizations in all provinces.

The examples demonstrate that NGO staff and civil society actors working with an altruistic motive tend to garner high levels of trust, which positively affects the reputation of their organization. Successful organizations understand this and focus on initiatives that will conduce to a positive reputation.

**2.3.3 Financial Independence**

The decision to remain financially independent, and thereby have full control over activities (or content, in the case of media outlets) is also a strong driver for success that bears great influence on the reputation of organizations.

For example, in the case of media outlet Killid, an intentional decision was made to become financially independent by generating income via radio and print advertising, in order to maintain local ownership over editorial content and to not have to adhere to someone else's agenda. The director explained: "In Kandahar, we were once contacted by a US security company; they wanted to offer us their services, putting our antenna in a PRT to protect it. We rejected the offer. TKG is an Afghan organization. If we accept the offer we would go to the other side, we would be perceived as 'the enemy'".

In addition to the solid reputation of the director of the organization, Radio Rabi Balkhi has also managed to develop a strong reputation for independence. The radio has intentionally refused funding from certain tycoons because of the fact that they did not want to have to adhere to someone else's agenda.

WASSA (women's rights) has also achieved a position where its good standing among the donor community now allows it to be more selective in terms of which donors it accepts money from. For example, PRT funding has been rejected in the past in order to avoid any linkages to the military.

The evidence suggests that as NGOs increase in size and influence, they become more acutely aware of the importance of reputation and focus their attention on establishing full control over their activities and content through financial independence. This also indicates that financial independence has effects more far reaching than just sustainability, and can allow NGOs to remain 'local' in their aims and vision and therefore responsive to the needs of communities.

#### **2.3.4 Maintaining a Low Profile**

In some cases, it was found that organizations intentionally maintained a low profile, and pursued low levels of visibility, in order to avoid potential complications and maintain successful operations. For example, IWA has purposely limited its visibility in order to reduce the risk of political pressure against its activities. As Yama explained: "IWA's strength lies in its judgment of knowing when to work behind the scenes and when to work directly." Especially when it comes to advocacy, IWA specifically maintains a low profile in order to avoid security incidents.

New Minds in Herat has also been very strategic about the types of linkages it creates in its work. For example, a strategic decision was made not to link with the religious leaders for it was believed that they would only criticize the work of the organization and would not be helpful to their aims.

The Beenawa Cultural Association in Kandahar has also chosen to remain independent of the government. Apart from occasional administrative formalities that are required from time to time, the organization maintains no links with the government and does not seek its support as a matter of principle.

At times, organizations need to make strategic decisions about what kind of visibility they seek, and the successful organization is able to clearly delineate when it is in its best interest to be visible and when it is in its best interest to maintain a low profile.

#### **2.4 Sustainability**

Financial sustainability emerges as a key issue for CSOs, and the biggest concern that civil society actors have for the period of transition. There are a number of ways in which the issue of sustainability and funding is approached, with a number of examples emerging of organizations that have achieved

financial security outside of donor funding. Those that have not managed to secure donor (or alternative sources of) funding seem to have found their own ways of keeping activities afloat in the immediate term, though sustainability in the long term is questionable.

**2.4.1 The Dynamics of Donor Funding**

One of the biggest challenges for local organizations is the inability to speak the language of international donors. This is more than just the ability to communicate effectively in English (which is in itself a major obstacle), and relates to the ability to write proposals and develop concepts in the manner in which the (predominantly Western) donor community expects projects to be structured. For a large proportion of organizations studied, this was the biggest obstacle to their work, and almost all organizations mentioned it when asked what their biggest challenge was.

There were a handful of examples of NGOs that had managed to develop the skills required to attract donor funding, including ECW, WASSA and AWN. Most of them would subsequently build their financial model solely on this source of funding. While this strategy is viable in the current international aid climate, it is questionable whether these NGOs would be able to adjust appropriately to a landscape of decreased international support. In any case, the ability of these organizations to speak the language of the donor community and to prove their ability to effectively implement projects in Afghan communities, has allowed them to attract ongoing financial support of international donors, which has been a major factor of their success. For most other organizations that depend on donor support, their inability to effectively attract continual donor support means that they spend time in between projects without funding, which limits their ability to function.

On the contrary, a surprising proportion of organizations mentioned that they sometimes purposefully avoided donor funding because it distracts them from their aims. For example, EPD mentioned that they avoided certain types of donor funding because it was too time-consuming and dispersed their focus to include tasks that they perceived to be unimportant (e.g. reporting, procurement, etc.). YWC also refused funding from donors because they believed that it limited their work to funding cycles and to sectors prioritized by donors. NLSO also strives to remain responsive to the needs on the ground, rather than implementing donor-driven priorities.

The examples demonstrate that there are essentially three categories of NGOs when it comes to donor funding. The first is the elite organizations that are completely donor funded and have managed to build financial stability based purely on this one revenue stream. There are doubts about the long-term sustainability of such organizations, particularly post-2014. The second group contains those organizations that manage to secure donor funded projects from time to time but experience periods of inactivity in between projects. Much of their time and energy is poured into trying to attract donor funding. The third group includes those that purposefully avoid donor funding because they believe it distracts them from their aims by requiring time consuming reporting practices and the assumption of donor priorities.

**2.4.2 Income Generating Activity**

Organizations that were not dependent on donor funding developed mechanisms for income generation that allowed them to cover some of their costs. Only a few of the media outlets interviewed were able to generate enough income to not need further income from other revenue

sources, (e.g.: Killid and Shaiq) the rest typically combined their own income with some level of donor funding.

Other media outlets typically raised funds by selling advertising slots to private sector companies (e.g.: Radio Rabia Balkhi, Pajhwok, Radio Merman, and TV Herai), and sometimes to donors, which would use these slots for public education campaigns (e.g.: TV ASIA). At Radio Rabia Balkhi, Pajhwok and TV Herai, donor funding currently only accounted for 30% of the total budget, which alleviates concerns of donor-dependency.

Other types of organizations most commonly generated income via membership fees or by charging fees for courses provided. For example, AWUDO conducts computer and English courses for men and women, with classes being separated according to gender (to facilitate greater female participation). Male students are charged a fee in order to be able to attend classes and the income generated from fees collected from the male students is used to cover the expenses associated with both male and female classes. Such forms of income, however, generally remain small and tend to only cover the costs of the activity that they are generated from. Therefore, media outlets were the only types of organizations that managed to generate income at levels that made financial sustainability a foreseeable achievement.

Income generating activity is very much the domain of media outlets. Many of them manage to cover half or more of their required budget from income generating commercial activity, and a handful in the sample were currently completely funded by such activity. Other organizations did manage to generate some level of income but nowhere near enough to allow sustainability.

### **2.4.3 Volunteerism**

For almost all organizations observed (with the exception of the sustainable media organizations), the gaps in funding were absorbed by volunteers. While volunteerism was an almost universal phenomenon, it took on differing characteristics in different organizations. For the organizations that were dependent on donor funding, yet did not manage to always secure it, the work of the organization was maintained in between projects by volunteers. For example, BAO does not receive any core funding, nor does it have any income generating activity. The organization, subsequently, has two types of employees; project staff that are hired and let go according to projects, and permanent staff who work as volunteers in between projects. This model emerged as quite typical for organizations in the sample.

Some organizations relied completely on volunteers and did not need, nor seek, funding. For example, one of the most notable achievements of the Afghan Community Foundation is its ability to motivate action at the grass roots. Rather than organizing activities and assigning youth with a role in these activities, youth are encouraged to come up with their own ideas and projects. Moreover, youth are encouraged to rise to action out of a sense of responsibility for the future of their communities. No one is compensated financially and no budgets are required. NLSO, Mazar Civil Society Union, and the Kandahar Press Club also function completely off of volunteerism. In most of these organizations, staff members maintain paying positions at other organizations, which enables their volunteerism.

Outside of the two examples above, almost all CSOs maintained volunteers in one way or another, including local community members working with project teams voluntarily to assist the

implementation of the project, to university students and youth being accepted as volunteers for a period of time.

**2.5 Geographic Coverage**

Most CSOs and movements in the sample had achieved broad coverage; if not nationwide, at least regional coverage. CSOs based in Kandahar constituted an exception to this trend as security concerns made wide coverage difficult, with most Kandahar-based CSOs being limited to the urban center, and then their own neighborhoods within the urban center.

**2.5.1 Community Involvement**

It was found that working in partnership with communities often allowed organizations to increase their reach. For example, WASSA maintains an informal network of informants in all project districts, who are usually former staff or beneficiaries. This creates a network of individuals on the ground that can provide information on the local context and security, and thereby assists the organization to implement projects more successfully.

WYSC also maintains a strong local network on the ground, which allows it to work deep within communities. Typically, the NGO works with a network of volunteers who are sourced from the community within which the project is being implemented. This brings legitimacy, local knowledge, and a greater ability to mobilize the community, thus allowing WYSC to increase its coverage and move into new areas.

FEFA, which is currently operating in all 34 provinces in its elections monitoring work, is able to achieve nationwide coverage by working with volunteers from the local community. The organization conducts a careful selection of 7,000 volunteer observers who are supervised by two provincial coordinators in each province.

IWA takes this approach one step further by involving local powerbrokers in the selection process of volunteers. When moving into a new area, traditional and religious leaders are gathered and the aims of the organization and its projects are explained. The community as a whole then elects volunteer monitors from among its membership.

While working within the community allows organizations to more easily increase their coverage, it also has positive effects on security, which in turn assists the process of increasing coverage. Typically, certain parts of a province, or certain districts, will be cut off from civil society actors or NGOs because of poor security. The presence of anti-governmental elements often means anyone foreign to the area is denied access. In such a context, working with local volunteers can circumvent the problem. SEO is one example of an NGO that has used this approach; while a number of districts in Farah province remain closed to most Afghan CSOs, thanks to its high level of integration in communities, SEO is able to reach out to typically unstable districts such as Pur Chaman.

Many successful organizations manage to increase their coverage by working with communities. This is usually by maintaining an informal network of informants on the ground that are former staff or beneficiaries, sourcing volunteers from the communities where projects are being implemented, or hiring from the local community. This not only allows expansion in coverage, but also allows organizations to circumvent security concerns.

### **2.5.2 Keeping a Local Focus**

It became clear that maintaining a local focus in each area, as organizations expanded their coverage, enabled success. For example, 8am has found that the establishment of seven offices across the country has allowed content to be adapted to local realities, thereby proving relevant to local communities while still reflecting national level debates. Similarly, Radio Merman's efforts to expand its outreach have also focused on adapting content to local realities. Maryam (founder and director) explained that she would constantly try to keep herself informed of the issues and events happening across the province and send a journalist as soon as possible and report on the situation from a local point of view.

In the case of the AIHRC, whose outreach is nationwide, local offices are systematically located away from local government and Police departments, and guards at the entrance are on AIHRC payroll instead of Police payroll, in order to allow members of the community to feel comfortable approaching the organization and sharing their concerns. This allows the organization to monitor issues of human rights across the country.

The examples demonstrate that success often rests on the ability to maintain a local focus when expanding into new areas. This is usually facilitated by opening offices in the area and working with individuals from the local area, whether they be volunteers or staff hired in the local area. Keeping a local focus enables organizations to demonstrate that they are relevant to the community and that they understand their concerns and needs.

### **2.5.3 Partnerships**

For a large proportion of the organizations observed, outreach was increased by working in partnership with other CSOs, which often allowed them to access remote and inhospitable areas. For example, WASSA has partnered with Coordination Of Rehabilitation And Development Services For Afghanistan (CRDSA) to act as a support center in Farah and Badghis, providing technical resources such as computer and Internet facilities, library and proposal-writing training. WYSC also partnered with RASA Advocacy and Skills-Building Agency (RASA) at one point to increase their coverage in the north.

In the case of media organizations, content is sold to partner outlets that broadcast it on their TV or radio outlet, thereby increasing the coverage area of the producer of the content. For example, the network of radio outlets supported by the Killid Group contributes to the broad diffusion of its programs, and the outreach of Pajhwok is also assisted by the 300 subscribers who broadcast its content on their own media channels.

Building collaborative relationships with other CSOs allows organizations to not only increase their coverage but also to access remote and inhospitable areas that the other organization may be better positioned to access.

### **2.5.4 Use of Media to Increase Coverage**

There was apparently a strong consciousness among civil society actors of the importance of the media in carrying messages and increasing coverage. A large number of examples emerged of strategic partnerships between CSOs and media outlets, with a particularly strong relationship being observed between women's rights NGOs and the media.

In Kandahar, Radio Merman has been broadcasting the messages of Khadija Kubra Women’s Association for Culture (KKWAC), and by doing so, has been reaching out to some of the most secluded communities of the area to convey messages on women’s rights and democracy that are rarely heard outside of the provincial center and the districts in its vicinity. This is a big achievement in Kandahar, where organizations typically have low levels of coverage due to poor security and high levels of conservatism. AWDR in Mazar has also been producing round-table programs for television and radio to increase its community outreach via the media. The Mazar Civil Society Union, the Bamyan Activists, and BAO are other examples of CSOs successfully using the media to spread a message.

Moreover, a smaller group of CSOs were found to be experimenting with different forms of media. For example, YWC sees the media as its primary means of increasing its exposure and has started using social networking sites such as Facebook. Other organizations have started establishing and maintaining websites in both English and Dari to achieve the same purpose.

Overall, there is a rising consciousness of the utility of the media in spreading a message, with examples of CSOs using the media in different ways for this purpose. There are a number of examples of women’s rights organizations using radio as a means of raising awareness, particularly in rural areas where access to women is complicated. The more elite organizations have started using new forms of media, such as creating their own websites and utilizing social media websites. A number of organizations have also learnt to use the media strategically in their advocacy efforts to increase attention being given to a particular issue.

**2.6 Influence and Advocacy**

**2.6.1 Networking and Strategic Partnerships**

A trend that has emerged as a driver for success in advocacy is the ability to network with people of influence and capacity. Most of the organizations or CSOs that have been actively advocating on behalf of vulnerable groups cited the establishment of strategic networks as a cause of their success.

For example, the Kandahar Press Club (KPC) has managed to develop strong ties across different levels of society in Kandahar, and in the southern region in general. The first layer of KPC’s network is comprised of most of the journalists of Kandahar, ranging from reporters from Radio Azadi to journalists of some of the more conservative outlets. The director stated, “All the journalists working in media of Kandahar, Zabul, Helmand, Uruzgan, work voluntarily with me.” The second layer brings together civil society organizations; the KPC has arranged press conferences for women’s rights NGOs and IFES, and it has joined Pajhwok in condemning violence against journalists and promoting freedom of speech. Beyond activist CSOs, KPC has also developed strong ties with private sector actors as well as with the religious leadership of Zabul and Uruzgan, by inviting several mullahs to speak about women’s rights from the perspective of Islam. Finally, KPC has given the government a means to maximize the diffusion of its message, and thereby its outreach, by working with KPC, which represents a powerful political tool.

Malalai from AWDR, a women’s rights NGO in Mazar that provides legal assistance to women (among other programs), also highlighted the strong links AWDR maintains with governmental actors, including provincial governors, provincial security forces, district court personnel, and line ministry officials. AWDR’s legal investigations in cases involving women usually begin with an authorization



letter obtained at the provincial level, which is facilitated by the organization's good relations with the governor's office. Local officials and security forces have supported the work of the organization on several occasions by providing information, advice, vehicles and escorts when security conditions prompted it. Moreover, previous opposition from the religious community was countered by specific training programs for religious elders, which progressively generated support from the Ulama. The fact that a mullah is now a member of the executive board further supports the successful outreach of the organization among religious circles.

8am, the national daily based out of Kabul, has also found that ties with the international community, and with certain government bodies, have ensured its safety and security when actively undertaking advocacy work. As an example, when the Ulama Council demanded that the government shut the outlet down for criticizing fundamentalist madrasas that had opened in Kunduz, 8am received the support of international NGOs (e.g. Center for International Journalism, Amnesty International and Reporters without Borders) as well as the AIHRC and the Ministry of Information and Culture. In this case, the Ministry proved itself instrumental in protecting the existence of the newspaper against the attack of the Ulama Council.

The Mazar Civil Society Union represents an example of networking at the CSO level. This formal approach to networking<sup>12</sup> allows the NGOs of Mazar-e-Sharif to work together in order to create a louder voice and thereby be more effective in their advocacy efforts. The other important consequence of working together as a group is that it ensures the security of all the NGOs involved. That is, if the NGOs spoke out individually against government decisions, then they would expose themselves to significant risk, however, when they speak out as a group, the opposition cannot be traced back to an individual person or NGO, which ensures their safety.

To demonstrate the importance of networking, Shinkai Karokhel (MP) of AWN is cited. When speaking about the changes that took place in relation to the Shia Family Law, she stated, "I took the proposal to Parliament and, additionally, I had an interview, which was much talked about, in the Guardian. It was a combination of convincing and exerting pressure and only then did Karzai promise he would review the law. For this I was helped by civil society, because I myself do not have the knowledge. They had expertise; I had power. We need to use women in Parliament to push issues at the political level, and we also need civil society to provide ideas from the ground."

These examples demonstrate the importance of networking with people of capacity for success in advocacy. Successful organizations maintained links with journalists, government bodies and staff, private sector companies, the religious leadership, and other civil society organizations. Linkages with international organizations were often crucial for ensuring security in advocacy work.

### **2.6.2 Advocacy and Media**

Once again, many of the CSOs studied understood the power of the media to facilitate advocacy and to spread a message. The media emerged as a powerful tool for advocacy for a range of organizations. For example, as a response to the lack of journalists and media organizations covering issues related to elections, and in an effort to increase awareness of these things in communities, FEFA has established

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<sup>12</sup> By formal it is meant that actors have come together and established a union of NGOs. However, the union is informal in the sense that it came together out of a grassroots process and has not received any donor support to date.



a working group of journalists, where they are trained as observers, and also encouraged to place electoral issues on news headlines. As another example, Pajhwok, which sees its role as one of raising issues, has also managed to use the media itself as a tool to counter the threats against it in its role as whistle blower.

It also became clear that the vast majority of youth activists or youth working with CSOs, or in youth-focused CSOs, came from a journalism background (e.g. AYNSO, ANGO, the Bamyan Activists). This has interesting implications for the overlap between media and advocacy/activism, and the role of journalists in advocacy.

**2.6.3 Obtaining Results**

It has also been found that CSOs that achieve results in their advocacy work tend to have a lot more influence among their constituency, as well as powerbrokers, because of their demonstrated ability to affect change. That is, a solid track record of successful advocacy increases the influence CSOs can potentially have.

For example, In 2011 Pajhwok reported on a barber in Daikundi who had refused the request of the head of the High Court to go to his residence and provide his barbering services. The Head of the High Court consequently sent policemen to arrest the barber and jail him. Pajhwok reported on the story, even though the reporter was also threatened with jail. Their decision to continue reporting on the story created enough of a buzz to lead to the eventual release of the barber. There have been numerous other examples of Pajhwok bringing attention to the abuse of power by government officials. Another example occurred in Gardez in 2011 when Pajhwok uncovered allegations of batchabazi by the head of the provincial Attorney General’s office.

This is often seen as Pajhwok’s strength and another reason for the high levels of trust that the populace places in its journalism. It also seems that when a journalist continues to work in the face of security threats, its legitimacy is compounded in the eyes of the populace and so this has worked in Pajhwok’s favor and set it apart from other news agencies. Moreover, the fact that its journalists do not back down, and are thus, able to produce results, also sets it apart from other agencies and gives it a reputation as an organization that is not only based on high ethical standards but is also able to make a change. TV Asia, Killid, and TV Herai provide numerous other examples.

**2.7 Synergies**

In addition to the role of strategic networks in effective advocacy (as explained in section 2.6.1 “Networking and Strategic Partnerships”), CSO have been networking in a number of other ways in order to take advantage of synergies. It is worth noting that relatively higher levels of coordination were detected among NGOs in the south, indicating that the fragile nature of civil society there has prompted the active CSOs to take advantage of the synergy that lies in working together.

**2.7.1 Networking Within Sectors**

Strategic partnerships within sectors that see organizations with similar purpose also sharing resources and coordinating efforts have the ability to strengthen the impact of their work. Some examples include FEFA and IEC, both of which are involved in elections, coming together in their efforts to ensure free and fair elections. Relationships were reportedly initially tense, since the former aims at monitoring the elections that the latter is responsible for organizing them. Nonetheless, FEFA has

managed to enhance positive interactions by proposing suggestions for the reform of electoral law and the structure of the IEC. As a result, the IEC has invited FEFA and other civil society organizations to present their reform suggestions to the Ministry of Justice. However, such sentiments are not mirrored by all actors in the sector. While a part of the mandate of the (High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption (HOOAC) is to provide oversight, coordination, supervision and support to all anti-corruption efforts in Afghanistan, Dr. Luddin is reluctant to collaborate with civil society, as he believes that all funding, and anti-corruption efforts, should be channeled through the state institution, in order to facilitate its maturation.

Radio Rabia Balkhi is an example in the women's rights sector. The radio's focus is to build the capacity of women in media in order to increase the number of radio stations and media outlets that have a gender focus. In addition to capacity building among their own staff, the Radio also takes on a handful of volunteers each year and trains them to become valuable human resources in the media sector. The volunteers are not seen as a body of people to assist the work of the radio, but rather, are trained up and sent out to find work with other organizations. In this way, Radio Rabia Balkhi hopes to contribute to the growth of the women's rights sector.

The AIHRC effectively collaborates with civil society organizations at various levels in its efforts to promote human rights. Firstly, it provides capacity building training on human rights issues, awareness raising and advocacy. Secondly, it uses its NGO and CSO connections to receive information about human rights cases. Thirdly, it organizes or participates in civil society meetings to coordinate advocacy on key issues such as the last media law on freedom of speech, the individual Shia law on child marriage or the family law on women rights.

In order to strengthen the independent media sector and encourage its sustainability, Pajhwok, Killid Group and Sabha TV have created a consortium and decided to act collectively on several levels. In terms of infrastructure, they have agreed on the creation of a "Media Plaza" where different outlets will establish their offices and thereby share costs on security, studios, and technical resources. In terms of action to strengthen civil society, apart from drawing attention to human right abuses in the news, Pajhwok, Killid and Sabha have launched a joint weekly 1-hour program on civil society, called "Your Voice." This program consists of a roundtable discussion every Thursday on a chosen issue (e.g. "civil society demands for the Tokyo conference"). It is then broadcast on each outlet in this consortium at the same time. The creation of the consortium allows the individual outlets to cut down costs by taking advantage of synergies, while also increasing their individual impact by acting collectively.

In conclusion, it was found that within the sample there were a number of examples of strategic partnerships within sectors that allowed organizations to share resources and increase their impact by coordinating their work, which ultimately contributed to success. This sometimes took the form of coordination efforts; focusing on building the capacity of human resources for the entire sector, rather than just for one's own organization; or sharing technical equipment to reduce the costs flowing to each individual organization.

### **2.7.2 Networks Between CSOs and the Media**

As mentioned in other segments of the cross analysis, one of the most strategic means of networking currently occurs between CSOs and the media. The above-mentioned example of "Your Voice," and

the creation of a consortium, was described by one of the interviewees as the creation of a “communication branch for civil society”.

As another example, in order to enhance their ability to advocate, TV Heraï (in Herat) regularly coordinates its work with various NGOs and donors, including WASSA and World Vision. It also produces programs for the AIHRC as a means of raising awareness on human rights and women’s rights. Badloon, in the east, is also working closely with the local office of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission on a project-by-project basis to broadcast their human rights awareness raising programs. It also works very closely with the local office of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs when formulating its gender programming.

While the advocacy work of media outlets has often put them at risk, many of them see this as their primary role, and as such, have learnt to use the media itself as a tool to counter security threats (see Pajhwok case study). However, such risks are still present and perceived by many to increase during the period of transition when the international presence wanes.

Thus, while many independent media outlets see advocacy as one of their primary roles, those that have achieved success tend to build partnership with CSOs as a form of fact finding and a means of keeping up to date on the most important issues that require advocacy.

### **2.7.3 Coordination for Security**

The precarious situation of civil society in Afghanistan, and the risks that are necessarily taken by CSOs in order to effectively act as a monitor of the government, sometimes put CSOs in danger. A number of positive examples emerged of CSOs learning to circumvent security threats via local networks, by learning to use the media as a tool against such danger, or by learning to work together. It was found that coordinated efforts often alleviated security concerns because of the power that exists in numbers, and the fact that individuals and individual NGOs could remain anonymous when speaking out as a part of a much larger group. As explained by Sanjar Sohail, founder and director of 8am, “When information is really sensitive, we share it with as many independent media outlets as we can, since it provides additional protection: we coordinate the release, to prevent people from knowing who raised the issue first and as such, avoid targeted attacks”. The Mazar Civil Society Union has also taken advantage of such protection that comes from coordination and has managed to speak out more strongly and frequently.

### 3 Current Obstacles to Success in the Civil Society Sector

The case studies revealed a number of common challenges faced by CSOs, some structural and some circumstantial, which prevented them from reaching their potential. As the CSO landscape has changed fundamentally at least twice in the last 10 years, the challenges faced by organizations in the sector has also evolved in response to the changing climate and the improved capacity of organizations over time.

#### 3.1 Security

Security poses a problem for the CSO sector in a number of ways. Firstly, the mere fact of working with, or being supported by, the international community can open CSOs up to a high level of risk. Secondly, security can limit the areas of the country that are accessible by CSOs as a high insurgent presence in an area prevents CSOs from moving in easily. As Arezo of ECW explained, “Sometimes when the situation gets bad, we have no choice but to move. In Chardara district of Kunduz, for example, it became too dangerous for ECW staff to work, so we closed down our operations there.” Thirdly, the role of civil society as a monitor of the government and a promoter of human rights and civil liberties can also open its actors up to severe risk. This is mainly due to the lack of rule of law, enabling scrutinized politicians to “make the problem go away” and also to opposition by the more fundamental and conservative elements of society to changes in the status quo (as facilitated by efforts to promote women’s rights and human rights). In this respect, women’s rights NGOs, journalists, and anti-corruption institutions have been most at risk, with some managers of such organizations finding their personal safety being directly compromised (for example, see the Shaiq Network case study).

Women’s rights and human rights actors have found themselves at higher risk in more conservative areas of the country (such as the south and south east, and in some parts of the north, such as Kunduz) and have experienced significant criticism from the religious community who claim that their concepts are Western and un-Islamic. This has prompted the sector to work within Islamic guidelines and to find justifications for their work in the Quran itself. It has also prompted coordinated action between organizations in order to limit the ability to trace opinions back to an individual specifically or to an individual CSO, thereby limiting the potential of targeted attacks.

In the media sector, and among journalists specifically, limitations imposed on freedom of speech by those powerbrokers who are likely to suffer from journalists speaking out and the complex nature of the right of access to information under the Afghan constitution, underscored by the precarious nature of the rule of law, has led to grave security ramifications for journalists and media managers.

The majority of CSO actors interviewed felt that the security situation was likely to deteriorate in the period of transition, especially if more conservative or fundamentalist segments of the population gained increased representation in the government. There was also an acute concern that without a foreign presence, and the subsequent international pressure, the government would be unlikely to prioritize human rights and democratic values, thereby creating a grave situation for civil society actors; women’s rights/human rights activists and journalists specifically.

### **3.2 Funding**

As explored in section E2.4, sustainability and funding issues consume much of the time and energy of CSOs. As was touched upon previously, the more 'elite' group of NGOs that have managed to build lasting relationships with donors and now implement numerous projects simultaneously with large budgets (e.g. AWN, ECW) have developed a situation of donor dependency, which will make sustainability problematic in the period of transition or in any context of decreasing donor funding.

Moreover, the pursuance of donor funding has created a situation where priorities are set by donors, rather than coming from information obtained on the ground. For example, While WASSA's ongoing ability to deliver on project implementation can be considered a major success; this should not hide the related drawback of donor-dependency. Despite being close to the ground, WASSA claims that it is unable to set its own priorities. Zahra, the director, mentioned having asked local communities what they needed and being told that a health facility and irrigation solutions were the most pressing issues. However, she ended up choosing to implement projects that donors were ready to support (in that case, women's rights training programs). A number of CSOs in the sample also took strategic decisions to not pursue donor funding because of the problem of donor priorities being at odds with community priorities.

Financially sustainable CSOs that had managed to secure funding through income-generating activity, while not concerned about decreasing international financial support, per se, were concerned about the potential economic downturn that would result from the transition. This was a particular concern for media outlets that feared that any resulting economic downturn would jeopardize their ability to secure contracts for advertising, which would subsequently affect their sustainability.

There was also a concern, again more predominately among media outlets, that donor intervention distorted market realities and made it difficult for fully sustainable organizations to compete with organizations that had been artificially propped up by donors.

### **3.3 Professionalism and Leadership**

As strong leadership emerged as one of the factors of success for CSOs, the ancillary concern of over dependence on a strong manager also emerges. For many of the organizations, the strong leader holds them together, so in the absence of said leader, the organization is at risk of collapsing. Some organizations were found to be countering this risk by decentralizing decision making power and investing in the capacity building of staff.

Professionalism was an overall challenge for most CSOs. In general there seemed to be an elite group of NGOs and CSOs, which had pushed through an invisible barrier and achieved a level of professionalism that contributed to their popularity with donors. They were usually NGOs that had been established some time ago and benefited from much assistance from international donors; not just financially in the form of budgets, but also in terms of training, assistance with strategic planning, or some level of donor coordination (e.g. AWN, WASSA). The rest of the CSOs remained at a level where no matter how much their capacities for project implementation improved professionalism was a far-off goal. This related to their inability to effectively develop concepts into proposals, liaise with donors, conduct high quality reporting, and establish solid internal processes and procedures.

### 3.4 Corruption and Internal Accountability

Corruption in the government was a problem encountered by almost all CSOs, although some had learnt to circumvent the problem through their strong connections. The archaic process of obtaining authorization for projects from the responsible ministry created a range of opportunities for government staff to seek “bakhsheesh” or bribes. Most NGO staff were faced with one of two options, pay the requested bribe or wait for approval, thereby delaying project commencement and sabotaging commitments to donors. On this note, one CSO manager stated “We are now experienced in vocational training but, in order to further our work, we would need connections within the line ministries, as well as with powerful people, or at least the capacity to pay for the bribe they ask for.”

Moreover, the complex process of registering CSOs, and the cumbersome responsibilities that it places upon them, led to a number of organizations making the strategic decision of not registering in order to avoid complications.

The lack of mechanisms to ensure internal accountability has also been identified as a setback for the sector. This problem arises particularly in the case of the “elite” organizations that have the right connections in government. While these connections facilitate much of their work, and allow them to avoid the paying of bribes, it does also represent a risk for the ongoing professionalism of the organization as approval is easily granted on projects, and project implementation and balance sheets are not properly scrutinized. Moreover, this lack of accountability has at times created perceptions of nepotism and corruption within NGOs among the community (whether it be true or not), which has led to distrust in NGOs.

**4 Common Factors of Success in the Afghan Private Sector**

The purpose of this section is to conduct a cross-analysis of Afghan private sector companies interviewed to identify commonalities of success, contrasts, and future inhibiting factors so that private sector success in Afghanistan can be better conceptualized. This will then provide a set of best practices that could potentially assist the development of the civil society sector.

In total, ten case studies were conducted and consisted of businesses with operations in Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, Jalalabad, and Herat to understand shared and unique success factors across different geographic areas. Profiles were also chosen to represent small, medium, and large businesses as well as famous vs. unknown and internationally influenced vs. entirely home-grown to have a broader spectrum of success stories.

The case studies were generally conducted with the founders, owners, and/or CEOs of the companies chosen, or, at a minimum, senior executives when the aforementioned were not available. The key informants have asked to remain anonymous due to business confidentiality and potential repercussions from speaking frankly, and as such, no names will be attributed to quoted information in the following cross analysis.

A multitude of shared drivers of success were found among the ten profiles chosen, irrespective of the size of the company or the industry. These are delineated in Table 11.

	Driver of Success	Explanation
1	Managed Growth Model	-Reinvestment of profit earned for growth, limited use of loans, outside equity or grants for rapid expansion
2	Market Awareness	-Sophisticated market research prior to entering sector
3	Innovation, Diversification, and Adaptation	-Creating and changing business is necessary to adapt to ever-changing business environment. Diversifying products/services is necessary to safeguard longevity
4	Long-term Decision-making	-Clearly articulate long-term business plans to guide short-term tactical decision making
5	Corporate Social Responsibility	-Ethically-driven decisions provide a social license to operate
6	Forward Thinking HR Decision Making	-Retaining staff and positive working culture a priority
7	Foreign Education	-Provided competitive advantage over others in market
8	Sector-specific Work Experience	-Previous work experience in sector essential to understand all aspects of sector and potential business
9	Network of Contacts	-Procuring clients is much easier to attain
10	English Language	-Competence in English opens up doors for success

**Table 11: Factors of success explored in the private sector case studies**

**4.1 Corporate Strategy**

**4.1.1 Managing Growth: Reinvestment of Revenues Earned and Avoidance of Third Party Funding**

Most of the business owners stated that the slow growth model was, and continues to be, critical to the success of their respective companies. By slow growth is meant a model where revenues earned are re invested and third party loans are avoided. This is especially important during the start-up phase and during the first few years of operation as it allows organizations to build both their managerial and technical acumen while the company is smaller, and build the systems and processes required by a larger organization more organically and methodically.

The volatility of the banking sector, crippling interest rates, and a weak legal system are key reasons why managers tend to not seek funding from financial institutions or outside investors. One owner stated, “The recent near collapse of Kabul Bank is an indication of the level of corruption and



negligence ingrained in financial institutions in Afghanistan. At the same time, given the lack of enforcement in the judicial system for those that default on loans, banks rarely approve a line of credit or significant business loans for large and established companies, let alone small start-ups.” Moreover, since the judicial system fails to provide protection, banks charge heavy interest rates of 15-20% per annum to protect against default.

The same principles apply to seeking loans from an individual source, as the law almost always does not protect the interest of either party. One manager states, “unless you are completely certain you can trust the individual loaning you money, one should not risk entering into an agreement as a contract means nothing in Afghanistan. The private investor could change the rules at any time, and there is little a dependent businessman can do about it”.

Grants and contracts with the donor community were also highlighted as a source of funds that need to be carefully managed. Business owners generally felt that donor assistance advances the growth of the companies in an unsustainable fashion, as the companies do not have the time or resources to build the institutional processes and procedures required to absorb the growth. There was also a feeling that donor support distorted the market. That is, often a donor-funded competitor can hinder the growth of other Afghan businesses because it offers products or services at a lower, or non-existent, price point.

Thus, successful businesses only re-invest profits earned as they understand the risks associated with loans and do not risk dependency on a third party to expand the business in an unsustainable fashion.

#### **4.1.2 Market Awareness**

Research suggests private sector successes are dependent on systematic and methodical market research prior to entering business markets. Successful businesses are aware of the different competitors, entrance barriers, start-up costs, potential profit margins, and had well informed guesstimate of where the market was heading in the future. “What may seem as a given in the west, market research by entrepreneurs is seldom happening in Afghanistan due to a lack of education and understanding of its importance. Young entrepreneurs must have a clear understanding of what they are getting into before investing any money,” one owner states.

In addition, successful businesses in Afghanistan continue to study the sector in which they operate after establishment and initial success. Research found that the majority of successful owners, CEO’s and Presidents continue to read articles, attend conferences, and seek advice from those perceived to be more knowledgeable or successful than themselves.

In addition, some firms employed a board of advisors or directors to provide an outside perspective to strategic decision making, a mainstay of western companies but something very seldom seen in Afghanistan. “Someone out there is always more successful or has more knowledge. To think you know the most or know best is bad practice. It is important to never be comfortable.”

#### **4.1.3 Innovation, Diversification, and Adaptation**

While the majority of private sector successes started initially by specializing in providing one good or service, most have innovated and/or diversified products and services since their establishment.



Business owners understand the importance of “not having all of your eggs in one basket”, especially given the uncertainty of the security situation in Afghanistan. Moreover, the majority of successful businesses have introduced new products and/or services that are not dependent on the success of one another to avoid total financial collapse if the market suddenly changes. Typically, the diversification is funded by the earnings from the other businesses as a way to support both the initial capital investment as well as to provide a buffer to sustain short-term losses during start-up.

One business owner completely transformed his company from a local construction firm to primarily an international logistics and transportation operation. While the construction-related work continues, he understood some years ago that success in this sector is largely dependent on donor funds, which will likely diminish moving forward. Thus, he made the corporate decision to diversify business interests into several different related but independent ventures. The business owner leveraged revenue from the construction business to establish other companies under one umbrella. He states “Afghans must learn to foresee and adapt to the changing business environment before it is too late. Successful businesses anticipate and lead, they do not react and follow”.

In conclusion, successful businesses focus on a number of unrelated products to avoid total financial collapse if the market suddenly changes for one of their products. This is usually conducted in stages where initial profits are used to fund the diversification into other areas.

**4.1.4 Long Term Decision Making**

While the majority of businesspersons in Afghanistan are focused on short-term success given potential uncertainty in the post-2014 environment, a common trend among the successful cases studied is a long-term vision that creates contingency plans in case of market changes post-2014.

Many business owners have invested in business ventures that are low cost, made of raw materials readily available in Afghanistan, and are considered a necessity for daily living of Afghans in case the country descends into war once again. “No one can truly predict what will happen post-2014, one business owner states. Yet, people will continue to purchase goods and services even if full-scale war breaks out again. We have developed contingency plans for each possible scenario to make sure we survive whatever happens”.

In addition, the majority of successful profiles have clearly articulated business plans and current decision-making is aligned with their future vision. Companies, for example, have invested in manufacturing plants as they anticipate regulation changes in local and international markets, new and bold media programs as they foresee social changes in Afghan society, and have innovative new products and service offerings. In essence, success stories have always been ahead of the curve and are making changes now so that their businesses will flourish in the future.

The examples demonstrate that successful businesses ensure long-term success by looking ahead and anticipating changes and planning for them.

**4.1.5 Corporate Social Responsibility**

The majority of successful companies studied were not primarily commercially driven at the start-up phase, but rather recognized an opportunity to fill an unmet need in Afghan society, and ultimately increased the quality of life in Afghanistan. In addition, many of the needs met have significant follow-

on effects for other industries, providing increased income to a number of participants up and down the supply chain.

For example, one owner started the first private sector institute of higher education in Afghanistan because he realized quality educational opportunities were not available in the public sector to Afghans, and that opening a private institution would alleviate some of the financial strain put on the government. “My motivation was to provide my people quality education, so that they would have more tangible skills and as a result, more doors would open”. Most companies studied continue to make ethically driven business decisions even in the long term.

This social focus has had strong effects on the reputation of businesses and business managers, which has allowed them to enjoy greater success. One manager stated, “Beyond price, image and reputation are everything in business and we understand our consumers will react positively or negatively based on how we are perceived”.

Research suggests that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is also an important element of the reputation of Afghan businesses when expanding into international markets. The perception of Afghanistan abroad is that of a corrupt society and as a consequence, Afghan businesses are perceived as untrustworthy. Therefore, making ethically driven decisions can affect the reputation of the business and facilitate its international expansion.

Thus, a social focus, rather than a purely commercial one, beyond having a positive impact on the standard of living in Afghanistan, can have positive effects on the reputation of business both locally and abroad, and thereby drive their success.

#### **4.1.6 Forward-Thinking Human Resource Decision Making**

An important element of a successful business is human resources. A major commonality among success stories, therefore, is the importance placed on building the capacity of staff over time and exerting effort to retain them.

The majority of businesses assessed prioritized retaining their staff despite incremental increases in the cost of doing so in the short-term. Business owners offer a number of financial incentives such as year-end bonuses, increases in salary, and even shares in the company (profit sharing).

More important than financial incentives, however, is staff empowerment. That is, the creation of a “family culture”, social benefits, and regular professional development opportunities has been instrumental in retaining top-talent. While the majority of owners are self-professed micro-managers, they had to make a strategic decision to “step back” and empower senior staff members to take on a more active role; both for the growth of the company and for retaining talented staff members. Research suggests that investing in regular training opportunities for staff not only increases productivity, but also reduces staff-turnover because employees do not feel complacent in their jobs and believe there is opportunity for promotion.

Some companies found that creating a culture in which staff members become emotionally invested in the company allows them to retain talent. Business owners suggest staff turnover is much lower when staff members feel they are part of something greater than just an ordinary job.

Business owners believe finding ways to keep employees happy and retaining their services has been a critical component of their respective success because in the long-term, it saves them money and promotes a positive image of the company. "Training, salary increases, and bonuses all cost money, one informant states. However, so does hiring new staff as they often arrive as unskilled labor and require vast amounts of training at the beginning. Even though new staff cost less in terms of salary, they cost a lot more in terms of time and productivity." Moreover, business owners agree that having a positive work culture attracts top talent because word spreads that the company treats staff well.

**4.2 Individual Factors**

**4.2.1 Foreign Education**

Most of the managers of the cases studied were foreign educated, which suggests that foreign education and time spent abroad have led to new ways of doing things, which is responsible for success. Education in Afghanistan has never been sufficient, and is of lower quality even in comparison to neighboring countries. "You can graduate from Kabul Medical University as a surgeon without ever performing a surgery. Much work needs to be done to bring education up-to-par with other countries," one business owner states.

While foreign education opportunities have been limited to the elite in the past, donor bodies have been awarding more undergraduate and graduate scholarships to top students from across the country in recent years, which has allowed all types of students to have access to foreign education. As one informant explained, "It would seem the donor community has finally figured it out. Education will perhaps be the only sustainable element of ten years of work by the donor community. War can destroy infrastructure such as roads and schools, but cannot take away personal education." Until education in Afghanistan is up-to-par with other countries, it is hoped the donor community will continue to devote funding to scholarships that allow Afghans to educate abroad, as better education will certainly positively impact the reconstruction of the country.

**4.2.2 Previous Sector-specific Work Experience**

The majority of successful business owners were already well versed in the sector in which they established their start-up, and where they were not, they possessed significant transferable management skills.

Previous work experience was predominantly with foreign companies or donor agencies. Business owners suggest that time spent working with foreign entities was critical to the success of their businesses because they each had foreign superiors who mentored them, increased their competence in English language and analytical skills, and ultimately allowed them to become experts and recognize gaps in the sector that needed to be filled.

Moreover, managers suggest having work experience prior to starting their own company was instrumental in understanding the perspective of employees, and inspired them to be more compassionate towards their staff members.

Finally, the previous work experience of managers with foreign companies or organizations often allowed them to secure relatively high salaries, which was instrumental in them saving enough capital to launch their own business later.

In conclusion, successful entrepreneurs tend to have worked in their sector for a minimum of 2 years prior to starting their own company, which allowed them to gain valuable sector-knowledge, save money, and better conceptualize how organizations operate, thereby allowing them to more be more successful in their own company.

#### **4.2.3 Network of Contacts**

Another outcome of the previous work experience of business owners was the reputation they had managed to develop, and the networks they had managed to forge, with other stakeholders and actors in the sector, prior to starting their own business. This was significant because it meant that business owners were already well known, and had a large network of contacts through which they could try to gain potential clients, during the start-up phase of their business. Managers suggest, however, that simply knowing people is not good enough. Successful managers have built their reputation as a credible player in the sector in order to convince contacts to become clients.

#### **4.2.4 English Language**

The majority of informants state that command of the English language has opened up many doors, especially in the later growth years of the company when looking to expand internationally or attract international clients.

While a solid command of English may not be necessary during the initial years of a business, it becomes significant in later stages of growth because it allows companies to expand into international markets. This drives success because it allows companies to expand their markets, thereby having a contingency plan in case the business environment in Afghanistan changes in coming years. Moreover, English skills build the resilience of the company in allowing the manager to be able to engage in his own negotiations for this purpose, rather than having to rely on a middleman.

### **4.3 Key Contrasts**

Research suggests that the key drivers for success for large international conglomerates are quite different to the factors that drive success in relatively small and homegrown businesses. This relates mainly to the ability of large and established businesses to access senior government officials and thereby fast-track bureaucratic requirements, as well as decisions by the same category of companies to establish an international headquarters (typically in Dubai) to overcome operating challenges in Afghanistan.

#### **4.3.1 Access to Senior Government Officials**

A common trend among successful large businesses is their connections within government, which allows them to fast-track bureaucratic requirements. Some successful managers that are relatively unknown stressed the amount of time it took to get a license, or change regulations in order to operate their business. In contrast, the elite usually have immediate access to the highest office and bureaucratic processes are often overlooked or kept to a minimum. Thus, it is much easier for the wealthy and well established to get land rights, building permits, and business licenses, among other things, which means much time and resources are saved in this process allowing the business to focus its energy on other areas of the operation.

#### **4.3.2 Dubai Headquarters**

When financial success reaches a certain threshold, a typical trend is for the elite to shift their business headquarters to Dubai. Managers suggest this decision is based on the potential instability in the post-2014 environment, the lack of rules and regulations protecting businesses in Afghanistan, and the high levels of corruption in the banking sector in Afghanistan.

This proves the dynamism of many of these larger companies in being able to adapt to the poor regulatory environment for business in Afghanistan, and ensures their resilience. However, as this option is not available to the smaller players, the “Dubai barrier” puts smaller successful profiles at a disadvantage, as their business is more likely to collapse if the security situation deteriorates in Afghanistan.

## **5 Current Obstacles to Success in the Private Sector**

Beyond security, the future success of businesses is dependent upon three major factors: improved governance, a skilled Afghan workforce, and the international donor community focusing on development of the private sector.

### **5.1 Governance**

Businessmen suggest the lack of trustworthy and efficient government is suffocating business in Afghanistan and that while rules and regulations are in place, they are rarely enforced and corruption is almost necessary to operate. “A lot of time is wasted without the right people, the right institutions, and the right policies in place to protect one’s business from government interference”, one informant states. “It is unfortunate, but unless you want to wait months and years to potentially never receive your license, one must pay to receive certification”. Moreover, taxation rates seem to be arbitrarily applied, as informants suggest tax collectors make-up new figures each year.

Moreover, additional government systems and structures need to be put in place for Afghan products to compete on the international scene and Afghanistan needs legitimate organizations that certify products so that they can be exported and compete with neighboring countries. “Right now, most sectors are without a QC/QA process which hurts Afghan products marketability,” one manager reports. “Essentially it comes down to the producer’s word and foreigners do not have a positive perception of Afghan businesses and businesspersons given our governance track record”.

The examples suggest that while local business have learn to work around the limitations imposed by a weak regulatory environment and corruption within the government, these obstacles do prevent the growth of companies to some extent and have the potential to become significant barriers to entry and growth in the long term.

### **5.2 Skilled Afghan Workforce**

Valuable resources go to hiring international experts to fill voids left by an unskilled Afghan workforce and business owners are often forced to pay double or triple for international consultants to build capacity, set up systems, build and fix equipment, among other things. While companies understand this has been and will continue to be a necessity in the short-term to remain competitive and offer a quality product/service, the majority agrees that the Afghan workforce must become more competent for their businesses to survive in the long-term.

It is acknowledged that the situation has improved greatly over the past 10 years. While hiring a locally educated Afghan for skilled positions was not possible in 2002 or 2003, now some companies are starting to hire locally and promote from within because there are more skilled Afghans due to vocation trainings put in place by the international community and by the overall improvement of the education sector. Yet, Afghan employees still require much on-the-job training.

### **5.3 Donors Helping or Hindering the Private Sector**

As mentioned, the majority of managers interviewed agree that donor agencies have not historically assisted the growth of the private sector. Yet, in recent years, donor agencies have indirectly supported the growth of local businesses by providing higher education scholarships to Afghans abroad, which has helped generate a skilled workforce.

However, there has also been evidence to suggest that donor bodies can hinder the success of businesses by artificially propping up uncompetitive companies through financial support, which affects the ability of sustainable competitive business from being able to compete and remain in the market.

The evidence suggests that the greatest contribution of the donor community would be one of facilitating access to education while following a policy of non-interference otherwise.

## 6 Concluding Remarks: Islands of Capacity in the Afghan Private Sector and Civil Society

The cross analysis of 40 civil society entities has revealed a set of common factors of success for Afghan CSOs in the field of advocacy. These factors are broken down into seven major themes that are illustrated with examples from the work of actual CSOs currently in operation throughout the country.

The cross analysis demonstrates that there has been a lot of innovation and creativity in the development of CSOs, in terms of strategy and structure over the last ten years, and this spectrum of creative models reveals a number of emerging best practices on each of the seven factors.

What becomes apparent from this spectrum is that there is no one model of success, or one formula that can be extrapolated. In fact, the successful strategies and structures denoted by this spectrum of examples, rest on a fine balance between a numbers of different factors. This balance can be described as a strategic vision coupled with strong management, anchorage within the community through strong links and community participation, strategic management of linkages with the donor community and donor funding, and strong coordination and networking with other CSOs. While different organizations may have approached these factors differently, the presence of each proved imperative.

This balance of factors is delineated in Figure 3.

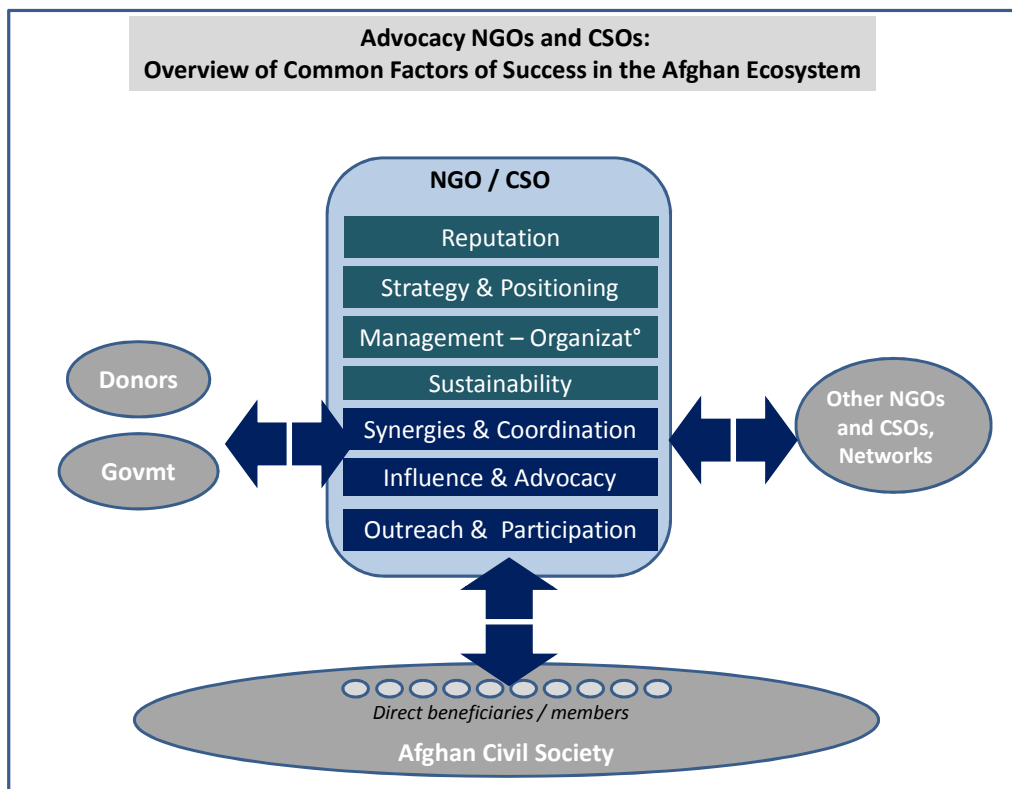


Figure 3: Common factors of success among afghan NGOs / CSOs

The analysis of 10 private sector case studies has revealed a number of common factors that drive success among the sample of 10 case studies. While some of these drivers of success reflect findings in the civil society sector, some of them introduce new ideas and thereby, have the potential to shed greater insight on drivers for success for Afghan civil society.



Examples of success in the Afghan private sector confirmed the importance of investing in staff by building their capacity over time; the role of foreign educated managers; the importance of networking with government and other companies; and anchorage in the community through corporate social responsibility. These points, therefore, represent common drivers for success in the private sector and civil society sector.

However, beyond these commonalities between the two sectors, the private sector introduces a number of new ideas. Firstly, the islands of capacity in the private sector demonstrated greater success in achieving financial stability than their civil society counterparts. Successful companies followed a managed growth approach where they were conscious of not risking dependency on a third party to expand the business in an unsustainable fashion. In practice, this means that most companies only re-invested profits rather than sourcing funding through third parties (whether it be donor budgets or loans).

Secondly, private sector successes are dependent on systematic and methodical market research prior to entering business markets. Most successful businesses demonstrated a strong knowledge of the sector that was maintained by staying abreast of latest developments in the relevant sector.

Finally, private sector companies demonstrated a long-term vision that resulted in much more strategic action and an ability to look ahead and plan for possible changes. For example, a number of successful companies had already made contingency plans for post-2014.

In terms of the successful models emerging from the civil society sector, when looking forward post-2014, it is not clear how resilient these models will be in a period of transition, nor what characteristics of the current models of success will assist CSOs to adapt to the new civil society environment and remain successful.

## **F PERSPECTIVES**

The purpose of this section is to explore the possible nature of the civil society sector in a period of transition, in order to reflect on the resilience of the current models of success and structures.

### **1 The Benefits and Risks of Withdrawal**

#### **1.1 Risks**

Beyond the risks that potentially emerge out of decreasing international financial assistance and decreasing donor budgets for NGOs, there is a potential that more fundamentalist elements of the population will find increased representation in the government, or a louder voice in the future political landscape of Afghanistan, thereby silencing voices for democracy. This will have implications for the working environment for civil society and is likely to move it back to a place of service delivery where it moves out of the more traditional NGO areas (advocacy, gender, human rights) and into the delivery of public services like education and health (in partnership with the government). There is a strong concern among civil society actors that without the pressure of the international community, the Afghan government will not prioritize democratic values.

There are also concerns that a withdrawal of the international presence will have negative effects on the economy, which will in turn affect the ability of media outlets to remain sustainable. However, it is likely that such a situation would also even out the playing field, meaning that the lack of donor assistance to new, or smaller, media outlets will allow sustainable outlets to remain competitive and the market will naturally weed out those that are unable to compete without assistance. The flowing implications of this are explored below in ‘sustainability.’

Another potential risk of withdrawal relates to the secondary effects of unemployment that may arise in a period of transition. It was observed that a majority of the young activists who engaged in informal grass roots movements or organizations were, in fact, part of a young elite and employed by international organizations that offered generally high salaries. This allowed them to continue working voluntarily in their activism and grass roots work, while recovering a salary elsewhere. Indirectly, it ensured the sustainability of their ‘voluntary’ organizations. In fact, many of the individuals who ran or worked with grassroots NGOs such as BAO and NLSO were employed by international organizations, or large donor-supported Afghan organizations, which allowed them to continue working voluntarily with their own organization. Whether these activists will be able to continue in their grass roots activism without the security of a well paid job elsewhere, remains to be seen.

#### **1.2 Benefits**

There are however, a number of benefits that could potentially arise from an international withdrawal, beyond the opportunities to alleviate donor dependency. The feeling that has evolved in the civil society sector of activists becoming the voice of donors, rather than the voice of the community, will surely be addressed in a situation of decreasing donor support. It is likely that a withdrawal will allow civil society to develop in Afghanistan on its own terms without being influenced by foreign ideas about the role that civil society should play.

There is also a widespread desire among the Afghan populace for peace. For many, the mere presence of an international force lends itself to instability for some insurgent groups see them as the enemy that needs to be ousted. For this reason, a military withdrawal is not seen as a necessarily negative development. However, these same individuals feel that a withdrawal of the aid community would abandon Afghans at a time when they are not yet ready to take complete ownership of the reconstruction of the country.

## **2 The Elite v. the Grassroots**

### **2.1 Elite NGOs**

The previous sections of this report have marked a number of demarcations and means of categorization within the civil society sector. One demarcation that emerged naturally was that between 'elite' CSOs and those that develop from the grassroots.

It has been demonstrated that the elite organizations are those that have been in operation for some time and have benefited from high levels of donor assistance in the form of training, assistance with strategic planning, coordination, and of course, project budgeting, among other things. This has created a situation where these NGOs have expanded operations according to donor priorities, which has so far guaranteed their development in terms of budgets, coverage, and the development of competence. However, a possible diminution of assistance may require a reassessment of the strengths and priorities of such organizations to focus on more sustainable activities and to redirect priorities to those expressed by the community.

Another risk that was observed among the elite was the inability to reach out to the non-elite. For example, ANGO, which is a youth organization that was born out of the Afghan Voices Project (a year-long youth development training project in media and journalism which was funded by the US Department of State) and is prized for its grass roots outreach, has a very small socio-economic representation, mainly confined to the educated middle class in Kabul and has not been as successful in reaching out to other youth demographics. The Afghan Community Foundation, on the other hand, (another youth movement that developed completely at the grass roots) is representative of the common Afghan youth and is currently spreading across the country rapidly.

### **2.2 Grassroots CSOs and Movements**

While such grassroots organizations are responsive to the real needs of the average Afghan, and have strong mechanisms for receiving feedback from the community, they lack a level of professionalism that allows them to develop into more than just a grassroots movement, and to attract funding streams. The lack of budgets and salaries in such organizations means that staff are motivated by altruism, and their belief that they are making a difference, rather than for the salary or job security. Often, the founders and managers of such organizations (and presumably staff too) maintain day jobs with elite NGOs or international NGOs as a source of revenue so that they can continue working with their grassroots organization without a need for financial compensation.

This crossover between the two types of organizations has, at times, created friction. One youth activist who worked voluntarily with a grassroots NGO explained, "I also work for an international NGO and my provincial director is good friends with a Member of Parliament. He firmly asked me

to stop being a social activist.” This request stemmed out of his fear that his activism could affect the organizations relationship with the local government.

The real question surrounding such grassroots organizations is how to best harness their comparative advantage. How can such organizations be assisted to develop professionalism while remaining grassroots oriented? Introducing assistance to such organizations in the form of budgets may distort their sense of purpose and motivation and distract them from their ground level focus. New methods of support are required that assist them while respecting their independence.

### **3 Civil Society Organizations and Service Delivery**

Between 2002 and 2004, after the fall of the Taliban, the number of NGOs active in the country rose sharply as many NGOs started to come out of the woodwork after having worked behind the scenes from Peshawar. During this time, as the needs were great, NGOs began to partner with the government in the delivery of traditionally public services (such as health and education).

In 2004, as the country moved from a state of emergency relief to development, the public sector was restructured and a private sector began to emerge, CSOs moved back into the more traditional sectors of support (such as advocacy, human rights, etc.), with the exception of some public services which they continued to assist the government in delivering (such as education and health).

This is the general nature of the sector now, with CSOs and NGOs working in the more traditional civil society sectors as well as some public services that are delivered through major national campaigns, such as the Basic Package of Health Services, which sees NGOs partnering with the Ministry of Public Health in the delivery of health services. However, in the sample of CSOs that operated in these traditional areas, some service delivery was also detected within the traditional areas of advocacy. For example, many women-focused NGOs provided education and vocational training courses, and youth-focused NGOs also provided education for young people.

It was found that combining advocacy with service delivery often allowed CSOs to have more influence. The provision of public services such as the education of young girls or the medical assistance provided to women through a provincial hospital run by women, often helped the implementing organization increase the buy-in of the population who would benefit from such services, and of the government which received a partner in its service delivery. This then created inroads for the organization to engage in advocacy work more easily.

It was also found that coordinating bodies often played this role more easily for NGOs, by coordinating their advocacy work under its own umbrella. For example, the Mazar Civil Society Union is comprised of over 80 NGOs based in Mazar-e-Sharif, which span a number of sectors, most of which are engaged in some form of service delivery. The role of the union, in bringing them all together, is to determine a strategy for advocacy that they could all be involved in, and in effect, to take over this role of advocacy for them and in their name. AWN also performed a similar role for women’s rights NGOs. Most of the NGOs under its umbrella were engaged in some form of service delivery for women and girls, but AWN created a coordinated approach for advocacy for them.

#### **4 Links Between Civil Society and Universities**

Universities appeared a number of times in the research as supporters and partners of civil society. They also emerged (not surprisingly) as fertile grounds for the assembly of youth and thereby provided avenues for youth to engage in collective activism.

A number of grassroots organizations partnered with the Faculties of Law at the universities in their respective regions, for advice on human rights and women's rights and for assistance in the creation of human rights training manuals. For example, at BAO in Mazar-e-Sharif, both the AIHRC and Balkh University are partners which not only have members sitting on BAO's board, but who also offer technical and expert assistance.

It was also discovered that most of the youth who were now involved in activism and worked within civil society, had come from a journalism background or were currently students of journalism. This identifies a niche to be explored at universities in Afghanistan. A number of organizations were also found to distribute information and gather support through informal networks of young people on university campuses.

#### **5 A Global v. Local Approach**

This section explores the demarcation between CSOs that maintain a local and global approach, in terms of levels of specialization, as well as geographic coverage.

##### **5.1 Specialization**

In respect to specialization, it was found that most NGOs and CSOs moved in any direction where there were needs, or where donors were willing to spend money. There were few examples of NGOs focusing on one thing and on doing it well. The lack of technical expertise also contributes to this scenario, as there is no one area that they possess a competitive advantage in, so there is a disincentive to specialize. While there were some occasional exceptions (e.g. IWA), this was the general trend. The lack of focus on one area also prevented the ongoing development of skills or specialization in any one area.

This was observed to be a particular problem in the south of the country where the lack of CSOs in operation and the high levels of conservatism and poor security levels forced the few active NGOs to move in many operational directions. While this increased their coverage of issues it was usually accomplished at the sake of professionalism and the development of expertise (e.g. Hindara).

The major exception to such a trend was in the media sector. The high levels of competition in the sector, resulting from the sustainability of the sector (that is, media outlets were typically self sufficient by capturing advertising revenue, which became a source of competition among them), forced outlets to carve out a niche, and to specialize, in order to develop a comparative advantage.

The private sector firms also worked on a "managed growth" approach, much like the media outlets, which became a driver for success.

## 5.2 Geographic Coverage

There is also a perceived rush to achieve national coverage, arguably, too quickly. Most organizations, when asked about their future plans, stated that they wanted to expand into other provinces, even if they had not yet developed a sustainable model locally. For example, New Minds in Herat had not yet perfected implementation skills and had not managed to obtain any funding for its projects, but was already planning to export the model to Kabul and open an office there. While increasing coverage can be considered an element of success for CSOs, it is debatable whether increasing coverage too quickly, and a time when attention should be focused on perfecting skills and processes, is desirable. Moreover, it is also debatable whether increasing coverage to already well-served urban centers is an achievement. It is proposed that increasing coverage by moving into remote and underserved areas would constitute success on the part of a CSO.

Media outlets, once again, strayed from the general CSO trends in this regard. Efforts to expand coverage usually followed successful content creation and audience capture locally. This was usually because geographic expansion necessitated the purchase of expensive equipment, such as transmitters, which meant that outlets needed to achieve some level of fiscal success before having the means to expand geographically.

## 5.3 Regional Focus

There is some evidence of bigger media outlets moving into regional coverage. For example, the Moby Group had started launching regional focused TV channels, such as Farsi 1, which broadcasts content in Iranian Farsi. Pajhwok has also started to focus on an exogenous economic model where it is targeting foreign media outlets (by providing content) and focusing on the Afghan diaspora abroad as an audience, driven by the lack of a large local audience. Even Arzu TV, which is a provincial media outlet based in Mazar-e-Sharif has started broadcasting via satellite to capture the Afghan diaspora living in the region. This phenomenon represents a model of success where bigger and more established organizations are planning for future changes to the local climate by creating bases in the region and attempting to capture advertising revenue in more vibrant markets. This is a phenomenon that is also shared by the larger, more successful private sector companies.

## 6 Sustainability and Transition

Sustainability is still an elusive concept for most CSOs and emerges as one of the biggest challenges for the future, particularly for the period of transition. While the private sector demonstrated its ability to create sustainable economic models, and the ability to plan ahead for any economic changes that may occur as a result of transition, the CSO fails to demonstrate long-lasting solutions in this regard.

A number of financial models emerged from the CSO case studies.

- The elite CSOs have managed to capture regular donor funding that provides sustainability in the short term but raises questions for sustainability in the long term.
- Grassroots NGOs and movements work with volunteers and thus require no, or minimal, budgets. Staff tend to maintain jobs with bigger CSOs and international NGOs as a source of

income, which enables the sustainability of the grassroots movements' projects in the immediate term. However, the long-term sustainability of such a model is questionable, especially if staff find themselves unemployed as international NGOs move out of the country during transition.

- A group of smaller NGOs manage to secure donor funding from time to time but sustain operations with volunteers in between projects. It is likely that in a climate of decreasing donor funding, such NGOs would be the ones to suffer most as the elite are likely to capture what decreased budgets remain.

While this demonstrates the ability of CSOs to adjust to their environment and find ways to survive, there is not much evidence of sustainability. Moreover, it is difficult to discern what sustainability would look like in the sector. Media outlets, as discussed, provided the only examples of sustainable models that were based on the inclusion of commercial activity (selling of advertising slots, selling of content to other outlets, or broadcasting content for others at a fee). They also provide the only examples of CSOs that were planning ahead for possible changes resulting from transition (e.g. Exogenous economic models).

### **6.1 Subsidization of Non-profitable areas of Activity**

One question that emerges out of any debate about the possible transition and the consequent need for financial sustainability is whether certain important areas of civil society would be neglected due to their lack of profitability, and whether that would necessitate subsidization and support for these areas. In other countries, for example, cultural media channels and programs are often supported by the government in order to allow them to remain active (e.g. Arte in France, PBS in the USA, SBS in Australia). In Afghanistan there are already suggestions of public education and awareness-raising programming suffering in such a climate. The director of TV Asia explained that there was doubt that such programming would continue without donor support as such content is currently seen as a source of income for most outlets, rather than a vehicle to bring about change.

Another concern in the independent media sector is the risk of a proliferation of media aligned on ethnic or political ideologies. As Danish of Pajhwok explained, "when people have the choice between 50 newspapers, if only 10, or 5 of them are independent media, the normal Afghan will pick whichever is cheaper, and will not be aware of their editorial line."

Outside of the media sector there is also concern that the decline of non-profitable CSOs may create a void that opens the door to other types of actors. For example, in 2009, the head of the Professional's Shura, Rafiq, was elected as an MP and left for Kabul for a year. While this lack of leadership left the shura inactive it also, in turn enabled the Islamic Civil Society Association to emerge and absorb much of the previous influence of the shura. It seems that Herat's intellectual life had been channeled through the Professional's Shura and that Rafiq's stepping back allowed for the emergence of other organizations that are more ideological in nature, causing a fundamental shift in the nature of Herat's intellectual life.



## **G AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY**

This section combines the findings of the cross analysis, and the best practices that emerged, with the perspectives developed on the future nature of the sector in transition. This section seeks to develop a number of areas of opportunity that could be explored in order to better prepare current civil society actors for future changes, and to ensure that the successes of the last 10 years are nurtured.

### **1 Addressing Sustainability**

#### **1.1 Target specific important but non-profitable sub sectors**

Some important sub sectors that are not profitable may be neglected in a period of transition, such as cultural media, elections monitoring, women's rights, and anti-corruption. Subsidizing such sectors will allow them to continue operating.

#### **1.2 Combine public service delivery and advocacy**

As public service delivery is likely to still be funded and provides a means of income for NGOs, encouraging them to combine advocacy with service delivery may ensure the continuation of advocacy efforts. Such a dynamic would benefit from partnerships between elite and grassroots organizations as the grassroots organization would provide the ideas and the voices coming from the communities, whereas the elite organizations would provide the power (in terms of the right government connections) and technical skills.

### **2 Building Management Capacity**

#### **2.1 Provide training programs for CSOs in marketing**

In order to prepare CSOs for the period of transition, training in marketing that teaches organizations methods for income generation, and how to position themselves and their services, will be conducive to their long-term sustainability. This should be coupled with training on management, creative collaborative approaches, building middle management, and efficient use and retention of volunteers.

### **3 Supporting Certain Networking and Coordination Mechanisms**

#### **3.1 Promote partnerships between elite and grassroots organizations**

Encouraging partnerships between elite and grassroots organizations will allow grassroots organizations to be supported without interfering with their greatest asset; their grassroots nature. It allows grassroots organizations to have greater opportunity for impact through the opportunities offered by elite organizations, and it also provides elite organizations with a voice from the ground, an authentic connection to its constituency and an ability to redirect priorities to what is coming from the community rather than the donor.

In essence the grassroots organizations would provide the ideas and the elite organizations would provide the power, allowing each to focus on its greatest asset. Much like the manner in which Shinkai of AWN explained the relationship between civil society and government, the relationship between the elite and grassroots organizations would work in the same way. She said "They had



expertise; I had power. We need to use women in Parliament to push issues at the political level, and we also need civil society to provide ideas from the ground.”

Organizing forums whereby such organizations can come together and identify patterns for collaboration would assist such a process.

### **3.2 Adjusting the role of coordination bodies created by international donors**

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the international community in the period of transition would be to lobby the government where necessary to avoid the loss of political will to promote human rights and democratization in the absence of international pressure. Re positioning coordination bodies to assume this role could assist this process.

### **3.3 Encourage the development of networks among independent media at a number of levels**

Encourage the development of **social and political networks among independent media** through the organization of specific events, workshops, and roundtables, to make their structure more resilient and less vulnerable to targeted attacks. This could also contribute to the long-term sustainability of these outlets if this allows them to connect with potential sponsors.

Explore the possibility of fostering **dialogue between independent media and the religious leadership**. Non-media organizations in the study have gained an unexpected and powerful support from accepting to engage with religious figures that were first opposed to them (See for instance case study on Assistance to Defend of Women’s Rights Organization). This can contribute to the strengthening of the legitimacy of independent journalism in Afghanistan.

Explore the possibilities for developing **partnerships between Afghan independent newspapers and international newspapers**. This could allow international papers to capitalize on local capacities to obtain information and deliver content, as well as building the capacity and networks of local papers. Such a model has already worked successfully for 8am and Pajhwok.

**Supporting the establishment of consortiums** such as the one currently being established by Pajhwok, Killid, and Sahba TV. This may ensure that the sector is supported without interfering with the sustainability of independent outlets. To provide support to the nascent consortium, explore the possibility of creating a media trust fund that could be administered by Afghan media themselves. Providing one-time core funding to help launch the initiative and giving it the strength to then grow on its own may help accelerate efforts to establish a viable structure. Supporting the expansion of the consortium by facilitating discussion with potential members through an independent media workshop could be a decisive first measure to accelerate the process and define means and steps forward for the establishment of structures for editorial production, marketing and business planning within the consortium.

Supporting such consortiums also ensures that donor support does not distort the market, and rather, provides a level playing field for all involved. Moreover, it would help prevent the rise of independent media aligned on ethnic or political lines.

#### **4 Develop Avenues for NGOs/CSOs to Participate in Public Debate**

##### **4.1 Prioritize women's rights in any peace talks and in the transition**

Mainstreaming women's rights in the peace talks and in the transition would ensure that it is prioritized. As Fawzia Koofi of AWN explained, "Women, at any level, have never been trouble-makers, they have never had their hands stained with blood. They should be a crucial aspect of the peace process. Some people say the Taliban have changed, that they would take a different stance on women's issues this time, but they have always claimed to abide to 'women's Islamic rights,' which has never worked in favor of equality of opportunity for men and women. The transition and peace talks should concentrate on this, making sure they would respect women's actual rights."

##### **4.2 Support grassroots coordinating bodies by including them in high level negotiations**

Coordinating bodies that have developed organically from the grassroots, such as the Mazar Civil Society Union and the Professional's Shura in Herat, are playing an imperative role in civil society in their respective areas and would benefit from support, but in a manner that does not interfere with their grassroots or organic nature.

Including such bodies in high-level donor and GIRA negotiations, as representatives of civil society, may contribute to the recognition of the bodies, as well as to their sense of purpose, which will consequently allow them to more effectively fulfill their roles of representation and coordination.

#### **5 Promote the Status of NGOs/CSOs in Afghan Society**

##### **5.1 More Efforts to Educate the Populace on the Role and Function of Civil Society**

Educating the populace on the role and function of civil society will cause the community to expect and demand more from civil society sector organizations and thereby act as a type of monitor of the activities of CSOs. This will provide one level of accountability, to counteract the lack of internal accountability of elite organizations. This will also enhance the image of the sector, and by showcasing organizations that are affecting change in their communities; it has the potential to inspire action in youth and other community members.

## H ANNEXES

### **Annex Plan:**

Annex A: List of CSO case studies

Annex B: List of private sector case studies

## 1 Annex A: List of CSO Case Studies

	Acronym	Name	Location	Sector	Description
1	8AM	Hasht-e-Sobh	Kabul	Media	Hasht-e Sobh is an independent media outlet promoting democracy, human rights, transparent and accountable governance as well as freedom of speech for media. The outlet distributes 15-18 000 printed newspapers every day across 12 provinces.
2	Afghan Community Foundation	Afghan Community Foundation	Mazar	Youth	A grassroots youth movement that encourages youth to become agents of change in their own communities. Currently hosts 7000 volunteer members across the country.
3	AIHRC	Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission	Kabul	H Rights	AIHRC appears as the "official voice" on human rights in Afghanistan. It promotes human rights through capacity building of CSOs, citizen civic education programs, control of living conditions of prisoners, refugees, hospitalized people and advocacy at both the national and international levels. The organization employs more than 500 permanent staff
4	ANGO	Afghanistan New Generation Organization	kabul	Youth	ANGO is a platform that encourages and enables youth to volunteer in a variety of community service, public awareness and development projects. It was born out of the Afghan Voice Project and has benefited from donor support since inception.
5	Assistance to Defend Women Rights	Assistance to Defend Women Rights	Mazar	Gender	The core mission of this NGO is to bring "positive change in the lives of all Afghan women by providing legal awareness, capacity building programs and legal service support." Since its beginning, the organization has trained around 5,000 women and 40 grass roots CSOs across the Northern Region.
6	AWN	Afghan Women's Network	Kabul	Gender	AWN focuses on raising awareness on women's issues, including representing gender in international conferences and supporting the empowerment of Afghan women. AWN comprises of approximately 3,000 individuals and representatives from 98 organizations.
7	AWUDO	Afghan Women United Development Organization	Jbad	Gender	The organization aims at coordinating efforts for the emancipation of women, empower women economically through vocational training and capacity building and raise public awareness on women's rights issues. The organization has set up 8 shuras, connected 40 women to the market and trained more than 1,000 youths, including 260 young women.
8	AYNSO	Afghanistan Youth National & Social Organization	Kabul	Youth	A grass roots organization that empowers youth to become good citizens and advocates of positive change in their communities, and promotes national unity amongst youth of various ethnic backgrounds. There are 35,000 to 40,000 volunteer members across the country.
9	Badloon Radio (Kunar)	Badloon Radio (Kunar)	Jbad	Media	This independent radio station of Kunar province aims at informing citizen on the government, at voicing concerns of local communities and at raising public awareness about human rights and democracy. It employs 10 permanent staff and broadcasts across the Kunar province.
10	Bamiyan activists	Bamiyan activists	Kabul	H Rights	The group consists of an informal gathering of activists in Bamiyan city. It relies on the voluntary involvement of a core group of 20 activists who take the lead on civic actions, including protests and campaigns largely using humor as a way to convey their message more effectively.
11	BAO	Better Afghanistan Organization	Mazar	H Rights	The organization calls for honesty and integrity in the work of reconstructing Afghanistan, and focuses on human rights and democracy. It covers five provinces of the Northern Region including Balkh and employs
12	Beenawa	Benawa Cultural Organization	Kandahar	Youth	A grassroots cultural association that publishes books and magazines and supports talented youths to become writers and poets. The organization counts around 150 - 200 members who participate regularly to poetry readings, poetry festivals and to informal literature workshops organized by the founders.
13	ECW	Educational and Training Center for Poor Women and Girls of Afghanistan	Kabul	Gender	The NGO offers trainings, workshops and conferences in the fields of Advocacy, Peace Building, Capacity Building for CSOs, Vocational Training, Literacy and Education. Activities are especially focused on women but can include all members of a given community.

Acronym	Name	Location	Sector	Description
14 EPD	Equality for Peace and Democracy	Kabul	Govt	EPD's mission is to empower and strengthen civil society networks and associations at the community level to promote peace building, improve governance, as well as the quality and accessibility of education. The organization has developed two main programs focusing on gender equality and government transparency. EPD counts 21 permanent staff and around 60 regular volunteers.
15 FEFA	Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan	Kabul	Elections	The organization is born in 2004 from the identified need to have an independent domestic organization to ensure that all democratic processes are implemented transparently through networking, citizen participation and good governance. The organization is engaged in election monitoring and advocacy in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan.
16 Hindara	Hindara Media and Youth Development Organization	Kandahar	Youth	The aim of the organization was first to promote and preserve media and cultural activities in Afghanistan with the intention of participating to the reconstruction of the country. It has progressively developed a strong focus on youth empowerment through several journalism training programs and events.
17 HOOAC	High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption	Kabul	Govt	The HOOAC serves as the focal point for overseeing policy development and implementation of anti-corruption strategies. It oversees the coordination, supervision and support for all anti-corruption efforts in Afghanistan. It is funded by the government and employs around 450 staff.
18 IEC	Independent Electoral Commission	Kabul	Elections	Created by the constitution of 2004, the aim of the organization is to administer and supervise elections as well as to refer to general public opinion in accordance with the provision of the law. It employs around 170 staff and operates nationwide.
19 IWA	Integrity Watch Afghanistan	Kabul	Govt	IWA's current mission is to support the spotlight on corruption in Afghanistan by increasing transparency, integrity, and accountability through the provision of policy-oriented research, development of training tools, and facilitation of policy dialogue. A total of 500 volunteers support the implementation of programs in communities.
20 Kandahar Press Club	Kandahar Press Club	Kandahar	Media	This organization provides a platform to the government, to citizen and to CSOs to maximize the diffusion of their messages through media. It is also active in democracy and human rights advocacy.
21 Killid	The Killid Group	Kabul	Media	TKG is comprised of eight radios and supports 28 other local radio outlets with programs focusing on cultural topics. TKG also produces two weekly magazines that are distributed nationwide, TKG and Morsal, providing articles in Dari, Pashto and English, on current Afghan politics, local and international news, sports and cinema. It employs around 250 staff across eight key provinces of Afghanistan.
22 KKWAC	Khadija Kubra Women's Association for Culture	Kandahar	Gender	The stated goal of KKWAC is to "fight injustice against women and protect women's rights." The organization offers academic, healthcare and vocational training programs to women of Kandahar province. More than 3,000 women have benefited from these programs.
23 Mazar Civil Society Union	Mazar Civil Society Union	Mazar	Govt	The union brings together all civil society actors in Mazar-e-Sharif to coordinate action and thereby create a stronger voice for civil society. It is not yet registered as an autonomous entity but gathers more than 80 registered NGOs of the Northern region under its umbrella.
24 Mediothek	Mediothek	Kabul	Media	This organization, established in 1993, focuses on strengthening civil society structures, peace and nation building processes, democracy and non-violence. The organization has set up several community centers, four "Media Houses" and has provided training programs to around 400 journalists across the country.
25 New Minds	New Andishan	Herat	Youth	A social and cultural organization with a new approach to advocacy using cultural and artistic activities to both build the confidence and capacity of women, as well as challenge current ways of perceiving the role of women. The association gathers around 40 regular members.
26 NILSO	New Line Social Organization	Mazar	Elections	New Line Social Organization is a grassroots organization that is focused on responding to the real needs that exists in their communities out of a sense of service to the nation. It has noticeably engaged in providing information on candidates so as transparent elections. It operates across the nine northern provinces.

Acronym	Name	Location	Sector	Description
27 Pajhwok	Pajhwok	Kabul	Media	Pajhwok is a News agency which provides information to most of the national and international media and has a strong reputation for integrity and professionalism. It counts 300 subscribers and employs around 170 staff across 10 regional offices in the country.
28 Paktia Women's Shura (Gardez)	Paktia Women's Shura (Gardez)	Jbad	Elections	New Line Social Organization is a grassroots organization that is focused on responding to the real needs that exists in their communities out of a sense of service to the nation. It has noticeably engaged in providing information on candidates so as transparent elections. It operates across the nine northern provinces.
29 Professional's Shura	Professional's Shura	Herat	Govt	The Professional's Shura acts as a think tank where members voluntarily monitor the activities of the Provincial Government and Herat Municipal Government and provide analysis on the state of democracy and statebuilding. The shura now counts 1,000 members, mainly skilled professionals.
30 Radio Merman	Radio Merman	Kandahar	Gender	Radio Merman is the first and only women-focused radio station of Kandahar province. The station broadcasts 12 hours a day across the province and employs 18 full time staff.
31 Radio Rabia Balkhi	Radio Rabia Balkhi	Mazar	Gender	Radio Rabia Balkhi is the first and main women-centered radio outlet of the Northern region and broadcasts across eight provinces of the North. The outlet has set an example in media advocacy of women's rights. It employs more than 20 full time staff.
32 SEO (Farah)	Society Empowerment Organization	Herat	Youth	This organization provides academic and vocational training to youth and women and promotes youth participation in local governance and the reintegration of Afghan returnees from Iran and Pakistan. Around 500 youths, boys and girls, participate every year to its general assembly.
33 Shaiq Media Group	Shaiq Media Group	Jbad	Media	The Shaiq Media Group is comprised of a regional TV channel (Sharq TV), a regional radio station (Sharq Radio) and a regional radio for women (Nargis radio). The aim of the group is to raise awareness among uneducated populations. The group is present in eight provinces of the East and South Eastern regions of Afghanistan.
34 THRA	Training Human Rights Association for Afghan Women	Jbad	Gender	The main objectives of the organization are to promote civil justice and equality, to implement and support the constitutional law, to encourage the establishment of the rights of women and to raise public awareness on gender and human rights issues. The organization has set up five female shuras and trains 20 grass roots CSOs.
35 TV Asia	TV Asia	Herat	Media	TV Asia was established in 2009 with the aim of creating a profitable business that would not rely on donor funding and of raising awareness about the state of the Afghan government and the development of the country. It employs 11 staff based in Herat.
36 TV Herai	TV Herai	Herat	Media	This TV outlet was created in 2005 in an attempt to create an autonomous media outlet that could provide unbiased news and contribute to the raising of awareness in Afghan communities. It is currently focused on culture building and the promotion of the Afghan culture in response to the influence of Iranian media.
37 WASSA	Women Activities and Social Services Association	Herat	Gender	WASSA is the first women's rights organization of Herat. The NGO has engaged in peace building training, multimedia production, women's rights advocacy as well as income generation and academic training for women. The organization counts 54 employees.
38 WEEO	Women Economy Empowerment Organization	Kandahar	Gender	The organization implements training programs including vocational training, literacy courses, health education, women's rights awareness. WEEO has trained around 240 women since its creation in 2010.
39 WYSC	Women and Youth Support Centre	Mazar	Gender	The center offers classes in agricultural and vocational training for women, in order to empower them economically. Courses on the rights of women are also organized and opened to men and Ulema. The organization employs around 10 staff and operates in Balkh and Jawzjan provinces.
40 YWC	Young Women for Change	Kabul	Gender	This organization established in 2011 has been engaged in street demonstrations and advocacy for women's rights. It is also responsible for the creation of the first women-only internet café of Afghanistan. Relying on the engagement of 45 volunteers, the association has managed to attract increasing attention from the media.

## 2 Annex B: List of Private Sector Case Studies

Organization	Location	Main Sector of Activity	Description
1 Arzu Radio & TV	Mazar; broadcasts nationally and internationally	Media	Arzu Radio & TV, based in Mazar-i-Sharif, is a small but growing media outlet that promotes socially conscious programs and is the first provincially based television channel to broadcast internationally.
2 Herati Cashmere and Skin	HQ in Herat; suppliers from across Afghanistan	Manufacturing	Herati Cashmere and Skin (HCS) is an internationally recognized manufacturer of cashmere products for export to international markets.
3 Kainaat Group of Companies	Afghan offices: Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Mazar-i-Sharif, Badakhshan, and Baghlan	Multi-sectorial	Kainaat Group of Companies (KGC) is an international logistics and transportation, construction, operations and maintenance, and land cultivation organization with offices in Dubai and across Afghanistan.
4 Kardan Institute of Higher Education	Kabul	Education	Kardan Institute of Higher Education (KIHE) was the first private sector education institution in Afghanistan and now offers diplomas and undergraduate degrees to approximately 8,000 students.
5 Khurasan Ice Factory	Kandahar	Manufacturing	Khurasan Ice Factory in Kandahar is a small but successful ice manufacturing company providing an essential service for businesses and households during the summer months.
6 MOBY Media Group	Offices in Kabul & Dubai; broadcast nationally and internationally	Media	MOBY Media Group is the largest and most successful Media outlet in Afghanistan with popular broadcast brands such as Tolo TV, Lemar TV, Farsi1, and Arman FM
7 Netlinks	Kabul	IT	NETLINKS is a 100% Afghan owned IT company offering services in Software development, web development, database development, web design, web hosting, e-mail hosting, IT consulting (business to business), and online services such as jobs.af.
8 Sanaizada Cooking Oil Company	Mazar; products available across Afghanistan	Manufacturing	Sanaizada Cooking Oil Company, with headquarters in Mazar-i-Sharif, manufactures edible oil to market nationally and the company directly and indirectly employs thousands of Afghans.
9 Tanweer Investments	Kabul, Dubai, London, Abu Dhabi, Geneva	Multi-sectorial	Tanweer Investments is a reputable 100% Afghan-owned company encouraging foreign direct investment into Afghanistan, in sectors that are crucial to the economic growth and development of the country such as agriculture, handicrafts, energy, and food exports.
10 Noma Consulting	Kabul	Consulting	Noma Consulting is a 100% Afghan-led and operated medium-sized consulting firm with a vast network of enumerators in rural and non-permissive areas which gives the firm a competitive advantage in field research, data collection, and data processing.





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