

Documentation

Dataset A10. Organisational Ethnography Case Study: the Afghanistan Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development Facility (CARD-F)

Data collection resulting from a series of interviews and observations of CARD-F stakeholders including, the programme staff in Kabul, implementing partners, provincial government officials, private investors, and direct and indirect beneficiaries of CARD-F at district and village levels.

Dataset owner: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU)

Context

CARD-F phase 1 (2009-2014) was funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) at a level of £26.8 million. A second phase of the project (2015-2018), by which time the project had moved away from its explicit Counter Narcotics (CN) grounding, was co-financed by the UK (£30 million) and the Danish government (£21 million).

CARD-F was implemented in both phases in Badakhshan and Nangarhar. These are both study provinces of the GCRF Project.

Badakhshan has had a long history of poppy cultivation, particularly in Khash, and cultivation never disappeared completely, despite the potato project of CARD-F. In contrast, in the two districts of Nangarhar, Kama and Bihsud, opium was only briefly cultivated during the peak price years of 2002-07. Moreover, the two most important CARD-F Economic Development Projects (EDPs), i.e., greenhouses and poultry farms that were allocated some 75% of CARD-F's total budget, were also implemented in these two districts.

The first phase of the project aimed to provide economic alternatives to opium poppy cultivation and was explicitly geared to areas where opportunities for alternative crops were greatest. The three intervention areas were: (i) strengthen national systems to support the commercialisation of Afghanistan's agricultural sector; (ii) implement economic development packages (EDPs) in specific crops to increase local incomes and jobs; and (iii) support the EDPs by strengthening the linkages between agricultural production, processing and marketing following a value chain approach.

In the second phase, the project sought to build on the EDP model, increasing production of high-value agricultural products, increasing licit incomes for producers and processors, and contributing to agricultural growth. The project expanded to work in 14 provinces, many of which had no history of opium poppy production, illustrating the shift of the project to an agribusiness focus.

The project was implemented through an independent project management unit in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), staffed by a group of well-paid Afghan technical

experts and funded outside government channels. It directly contracted implementers, thereby bypassing government structures at provincial and district level. The existence of this project enclave in MAIL over which key ministry officials had no control or influence was also a key point of friction between the management unit and these officials. It was reinforced by the rivalries between partner ministries.

A core assumption of the project concerned the role of agricultural growth in driving Afghanistan's economic development. It followed a so-called value chain approach, assuming that technological change, price and competition would fuel that growth. Assumptions were made about the competitive nature of Afghanistan's agricultural commodity markets and the ability of farmers to engage in such markets.

Methodology

An extensive review was undertaken of CARD-F's key project documents, national policies designed for counter narcotics, alternative livelihood strategies, and past relevant research studies undertaken by AREU. Drawing from this review, separate questions were developed for each category of CARD-F stakeholders, including the programme staff, implementing partners, provincial government officials, private investors, and direct and indirect beneficiaries of CARD-F at district and village levels.

Key questions from the CARD-F programme staff and implementing partners concentrated on CARD-F's background; the way it was designed; how the programme objectives changed in phase two; the programme governance and management at different stages; the role and interest of different partners and ministries; and the programme content and the way it was implemented. The questions were designed to not only look at the formal technical aspect of the programme, but also to capture different views and stories that partners and key officials had in relation to the programme.

The key questions to the direct beneficiaries at village level focused on district economy before and after CARD-F; the way CARD-F EDPs did or did not bring positive changes to people's lives and to local markets; stories on how different categories of people were or were not selected for the EDPs; dynamics and functions of vegetable and poultry markets; and the way cross-border trading affected local market activities over time. The questions aimed to look beyond the narratives and stories formally reported by CARD-F officials. The questions further looked at how a highly technical programme such as CARD-F worked in a complicated context of power relations and patronage networks on the ground.

A total of 60 semi-structured in-depth interviews and one focus group discussion were conducted with a range of stakeholders: government officials at national and provincial levels, CARD-F project staff, representatives of implementing organisations, private investors and CARD-F beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries at local and village levels. Additionally, the team also directly observed local market activities during their fieldwork and provided observation notes.

Most interviews were transcribed and translated to English. However, for the first round of interviews in Nangarhar, only summary notes were taken.

Location

Field work was carried out in three provinces:

- in Kabul city for interviews with key project officials
- in Badakhshan, Khash district, for field assessments
- in Nangarhar, Bihsud and Kama districts, for field assessments.

Badakhshan and Nangarhar are two province where the CARD-F project was implemented.

Time period

Data collection took place in Kabul and Badakhshan from June to November 2020, and in Nangarhar from April to June 2021 over three rounds of fieldwork.

Sample selection

Informants were selected through snowball sampling using contacts and information collected from Kabul as entry points to the provinces. At the provincial, district and village levels, different types of informants were selected through snowball sampling.

Consent procedures

Verbal consent was obtained whereby it was agreed the identity of interviewees needs to be kept confidential.

Anonymisation steps

All names of interviewees have been removed from interview transcripts and notes.