



The Alan Shawn Feinstein International Famine Center

“Human Security and Livelihoods of Rural Afghans, 2002-2003”

Study Overview

This report by the Feinstein International Famine Center, Tufts University, documents and analyzes recent countrywide trends in the relationship between human security and livelihoods throughout rural Afghanistan from 2002-2003.¹ The study was funded by USAID. All countrywide information is generated by analyses of 2003 Nationwide Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) survey data. All references to “countrywide” data refer to 2003 NRVA data. All analyses of 2003 NRVA data, unless otherwise noted, are conducted by the Tufts University team. In addition, the report includes detailed analyses on six provinces based on primary research by the Tufts team in Badghis, Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar.

The report emphasizes the important links among four key aspects of human security in the livelihoods of rural Afghans and the prospects for peace and development in the country in the longer term. The four aspects of human security are:

- 1) Human rights and personal security,
- 2) Societal and community security,
- 3) Economic and resource security, and
- 4) Governance and political security.

The report also examines and analyzes the formal, traditional, and customary mechanisms that are in place to address injustice and mitigate security and livelihood threats for the rural Afghan population. Policy recommendations are made based on findings and analyses.

What Subjects the Study Covers: Country-wide and Provincial Data

Human Security data is presented and analyzed on the following subjects: International vs. Rural Afghan Perceptions of Security; Landmines and UXOs; Security in Villages and on Roads; Crime; Perceptions of and Interactions with the Police; Armed Political Groups, Commanders, Militias, and Security; Role of the Coalition Forces and ISAF in Security; Education; Health; Reproductive Health Care, Care during Pregnancy and Birth, and Family Planning; Women’s Participation in Political and Civil Life in Rural Afghanistan; Implications of Women’s Blocked Access to Political and Civil Participation; Rural Women and Decision-Making in the Household; the Rights of Women in the Formal and Traditional Justice Systems; Marriage and Marital Duties; Child Brides; *Badal* and the Exchange of Girls and Women; Sexual Violations against Girls, Women, and Boys; Peace and Disarmament.

Livelihood data is presented and analyzed on the following subjects: Water; Land; Livestock; Orchards and Vineyards; Fuel; Diversity among Income-Generating Labor of Rural Afghans; Rural Women and Labor; Migration and Remittances; Poppy; Markets; Debt and Credit; Humanitarian and Development Assistance.

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Justice data is presented and analyzed on the following subjects: The Court System; Police of Afghanistan; Detention Centers; and Traditional and Customary Systems of Justice in Afghanistan: *Jirgas* and *Shuras*.

Methods and Data Collection

The FIFC study has three main sources of data collection. Data was collected in Afghanistan from July-December 2003. All data is gender disaggregated.

1) Data generated from the 2003 inter-ministerial National Rural Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) countrywide surveys. The NRVA survey was carried out in July-September 2003 by the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), in collaboration with numerous other stakeholders, including FIFC. The 2003 NRVA survey teams conducted interviews in 1,850 villages, equating to approximately 1:20 villages throughout rural Afghanistan. Teams worked in almost every district in the country, surveying four to five villages in each district. The total database comprises information on approximately 1,850 villages, 5,600 wealth groups, and 13,000 households (approximately 150,000 persons). Much of the information collected by the 2003 NRVA has never before been available at the countrywide level.

2) In-depth interviews and quota sampling of rural populations by the Tufts team were conducted in Badghis, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar provinces. Findings given represent the entire rural populations within Balkh, Badghis, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar provinces within ± 0.12 percent (95% confidence interval).

3) In-depth interviews by the Tufts team were conducted with those involved in formal, traditional, and customary systems and bodies of arbitration and justice in Balkh, Badghis, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar provinces.

Main Findings

On human security and physical security:

1. The dominant perception of security and insecurity in Afghanistan reflects the experiences and orientation of the United Nations, the international community assisting in rebuilding the country, and the Afghan central government. This view of security is based largely on the ability of international and national relief and development staff to safely operate programs in certain areas. Areas or entire provinces where attacks and threats occur are considered “High Risk” or “Medium Risk.”
2. Countrywide, rural Afghans have very different views and experiences of security from those of the international community and the Afghan government. A vast majority of areas that are “High Risk/Hostile Environment” or “Medium Risk/Uncertain Environment” (i.e., highly insecure and essentially off-limits or areas where armed escorts are required) for the United Nations and international NGOs are often experienced as secure, with few reported conflicts, by the local rural populations. In contrast, regions that show up as “Low Risk/Permission Environment” (i.e., areas considered secure for operations) on United Nations security maps are areas where local populations often report high levels of conflict and are experiencing insecurity at the hands of armed political groups, warlords, commanders and their associates, including district authorities and police forces.
3. Rural Afghans in Badghis, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar provinces define security based largely on their levels of human security, not simply on the cessation of fighting or armed attacks. Rural respondents perceive themselves to be secure if they are free from physical violence or threat of attack *and* have essential elements of human security, including access to health care, education, and economic opportunities.

On political participation and the legal process:

4. The majority (>50%) of rural Afghans in Badghis, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar provinces had no knowledge of the constitutional process. Rural women were four times less likely to be aware of the constitutional process than rural men. No rural women interviewed in three of these provinces (Herat, Kabul, and Badghis) had ever heard of a constitution, while only 8% of women were aware in Kandahar and 26% in Nangarhar. After learning about the new constitution from the Tufts team, rural women primarily stressed the importance of education for both boys and girls, health care, and equal rights for men and women, boys and girls. Rural men primarily stressed the need for a re-enforcement of *Sharia* law and economic opportunities.
5. Countrywide, the almost complete lack of participation of rural women in political and civil affairs is a direct obstacle to their human security and to their political rights, as well as to the nation-building process. Overwhelmingly, rural women country-wide have no role in selecting local leaders and are not represented by local officials.
6. Formal and traditional justice systems play a direct role in undermining the human rights of women and girls. The formal justice system appears to be incapable of preventing forced marriages of young girls or protecting women from domestic abuses and other violence. Rural women in Badghis, Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar provinces have little or no access to the formal, traditional, or customary justice systems (which are dominated by men) and therefore have practically no means of redress when faced with human rights abuses and threats to their human security.

On access to education and health care:

7. There are almost no rural, school-age girls attending school in the south and south central regions of Afghanistan. The primary reasons that both boys and girls in rural areas are not in school countrywide is lack of school facilities and the distance of available facilities. The highest rate of school enrollment of boys and girls is found in the north and northeast regions of Afghanistan.
8. In 38% of rural districts, the majority (> 50%) of rural Afghans have no access to any form of health care. The majority (>50%) of rural Afghans in 62% of rural districts have access to only basic health care, including health posts, basic health care centers, and traditional healers. These basic facilities often lack well-trained personnel and adequate medical supplies or medicines.
9. Between 43-78% of rural Afghans in Badghis, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar provinces have no access to reproductive health care. When they are able to access care, the majority (>50%) report that the care is of poor quality. The majority of rural women have no access to trained care during pregnancy and birth. Most rural Afghan women have no voice in family planning within their families, although many women wanted to learn more about options for birth control.

On rural livelihoods:

10. Countrywide, the majority (>50%) of rural Afghans use surface water (rivers, lakes, and irrigation ditches) as their primary source of drinking water. Countrywide, 48% report that their primary water source is contaminated or polluted. Both water quantity and water quality has worsened since 2002 for many rural Afghans. For example, some areas of Afghanistan reported an end to the drought and a bumper harvest in 2003, but many rural Afghans in Herat, Kabul, and Kandahar provinces continue to see decreasing water tables.

11. Many Afghans in rural areas countrywide are not engaged strictly in agriculture, but rely on diversified livelihood strategies to generate household income. The type of non-agricultural employment differs by region. Women make contributions to household income in nearly all provinces in Afghanistan, but usually perform income-generating work literally within their homes, rather than in their villages. Almost no rural women generate income outside their villages. Rural women are paid significantly less than rural men for performing the same work, and in many instances are paid less than children. Children also contribute to household income in most areas of the country, and many families in Badghis, Herat, Kabul, and Kandahar provinces reported increasing the amount of their children's labor since 2002 due to economic hardship.
12. The effects of the drought continue to have a negative impact on livelihoods in much of rural Afghanistan. Rural populations countrywide reported continuing livestock reductions due to death or sale of animals, declining health of orchards and vineyards, and decreased access to fuel. Environmental degradation caused by conflict, drought, population movement, and deforestation exacerbates the problems of limited access to natural resources for many rural Afghans.

On formal and traditional justice systems:

13. The Afghan judiciary suffers from a severe lack of human capacity as well as material resources. Many judges lack adequate legal training. Public legal advocates and defense attorneys do not exist within the Afghan legal system. Of those judges who are trained, the judicial leadership is divided between graduates of the *Sharia* School and those of the Law School at Kabul University. These groups are often at ideological loggerheads with each other. The three organs of the judiciary, the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Court, and the Office of the Attorney General, lack effective coordination and communication and are often ideologically opposed.
14. The judiciary is highly susceptible to military and political influences at both the urban and rural level. Formal courts, including family courts, are either non-existent or barely functional in most rural areas. There are few women lawyers and judges in the urban areas and none in the rural areas, and rural women have great difficulty accessing the formal court system.
15. Armed political groups, commanders, and warlords have strategically targeted traditional and customary justice systems (*Jirgas* and *shuras*) throughout rural Afghanistan in attempt to control local populations. In many instances, these predatory forces have successfully positioned their loyalists within these groups, thus undermining this avenue of justice for rural Afghans—which is often the only avenue available in rural areas.
16. Very few police officers in rural areas of Badghis, Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar provinces have had any official police training. Many are still loyal to their former commanders, who often serve as the chief of police, army officers or district or provincial authorities. Police stations are extremely dilapidated and police officers lacked essential resources, including vehicles, communication equipment, and uniforms. Most police stations lack secure facilities for the storage of weapons. Most police officers use private weapons and take their weapons home after work hours.
17. The detention centers visited by the Tufts team in Balkh, Badghis, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar provinces were in very poor condition and lacked basic necessities such as secure structures, sanitation facilities, and blankets for detainees. Prisoners are occasionally held in metal shipping containers or in private detention centers, and signs of mistreatment were common in the areas visited. Juvenile offenders were mixed with adult offenders in a number of centers visited by Tufts.