

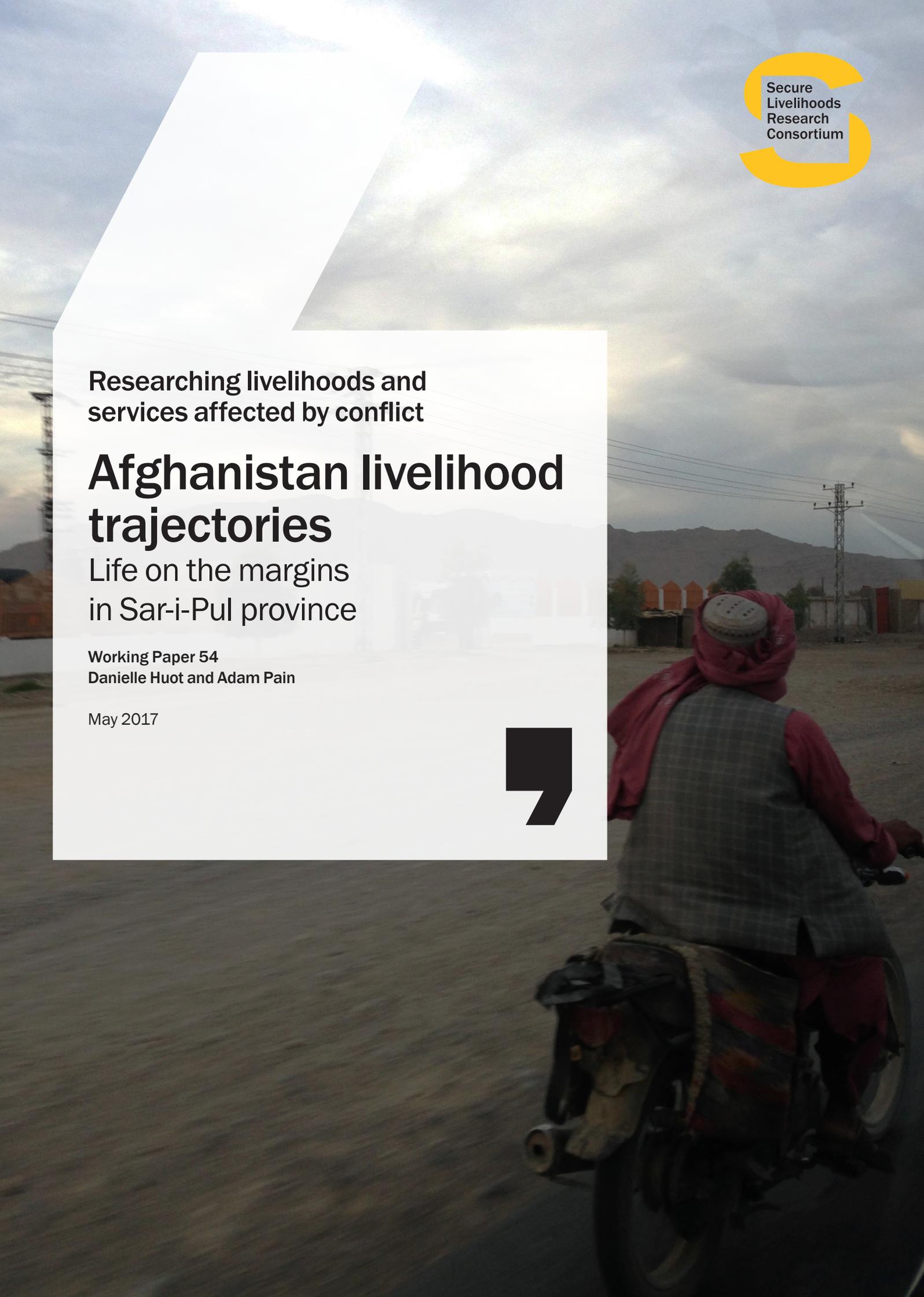
Researching livelihoods and
services affected by conflict

Afghanistan livelihood trajectories

Life on the margins
in Sar-i-Pul province

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Written by
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About us



The **Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC)** aims to generate a stronger evidence base on how people make a living, educate their children, deal with illness and access other basic services in conflict-affected situations (CAS). Providing better access to basic services, social protection and support to livelihoods matters for the human welfare of people affected by conflict, the achievement of development targets such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and international efforts at peace- and state-building.

At the centre of SLRC's research are three core themes, developed over the course of an intensive one-year inception phase:

- State legitimacy: experiences, perceptions and expectations of the state and local governance in conflict-affected situations
- State capacity: building effective states that deliver services and social protection in conflict-affected situations;
- Livelihood trajectories and economic activity under conflict

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the lead organisation. SLRC partners include the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in Sri Lanka, Feinstein International Center (FIC, Tufts University), the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Pakistan, Disaster Studies of Wageningen University (WUR) in the Netherlands, the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

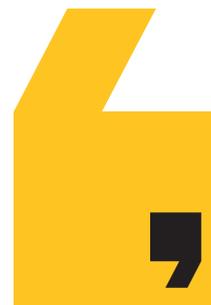
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Acronyms and glossary



Acronyms

AAN	Afghan Analysts Network
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANDMA	Afghanistan Natural Disaster Management Agency
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
CDC	Community Development Council
DDA	District Development Assembly
FHH	Female headed household
HH	Household
HHH	Household head
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
J	Jerib
Kg	Kilogram
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
SLRC	Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WFP	World Food Programme

Glossary

<i>Ailoq</i>	Pasture, place of seasonal migration of pastoralists
<i>Arbab</i>	Traditional village leader; literally means boss, master, or landlord
<i>Bai</i>	A wealthy man (regional term, equivalent to khan elsewhere in Afghanistan)
<i>Gilim</i>	Woven rug
<i>Imam</i>	Islamic leader
<i>Jammadar</i>	Wage labour broker, recruiting on behalf of employer (here, in reference to the brick kilns in Mazar-i-Sharif)
<i>Jallabi</i>	Livestock trader
<i>Jerib</i>	Land measurement roughly equivalent to one fifth of a hectare
<i>Kapa</i>	Small house in which female sharecroppers live during the harvest season
<i>Mujahedeen</i>	Rebel fighters during the Soviet war
<i>Mullah</i>	A man educated in Islamic ideology and law
<i>Peshkash</i>	Dowry or 'bride price'
<i>Poliz</i>	Melons
<i>Qarydar</i>	Traditional community figurehead responsible for village affairs; in some areas, a qaryadar is sometimes referred to as a malik
<i>Seer</i>	A measurement for wheat; one seer amounts to seven kilograms
<i>Shura</i>	Village council; a group of elders
<i>Ushr</i>	Islamic tax paid on the production of both irrigated and rainfed land
<i>Whitebeard</i>	A respected village elder

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Executive summary



This paper reports on the third wave of a longitudinal panel study tracing the livelihood trajectories of rural households in Afghanistan over a 14-year period in one of three sites. Drawing on a subset of the original panel households in Herat, Kandahar and Sar-i-Pul provinces from 2002 and 2008-09, this report focuses on household stories in Sar-i-Pul, one of the most impoverished provinces in Afghanistan. Sayyad, the particular site of the study, is considered to be one of the poorer districts in Sar-i-Pul province (Shaw, 2010).

Recent agricultural policy argues that agriculture has the potential to create jobs, raise labour productivity, benefit the poor and landless, and reduce poverty and food insecurity in rural areas (World Bank, 2014). However, our evidence suggests that conditions in Sar-i-Pul province make it virtually impossible to survive by agriculture activities alone. As can be seen from the household-level accounts detailed throughout this report, rural households engage in a number of coping strategies to deal with shocks such as illnesses and marriage costs, as well as larger environmental crises, like droughts and floods. While varied, these coping strategies are largely non-farm based; in almost no cases are households in a position to survive, let alone improve their circumstances, through purely agricultural pursuits.

Given that access to resources is governed by personal networks separate to the formal structure of the state, few public goods can be seen as accessible to all (Jackson, 2016). In the case of Sayyad, with a largely inactive and disengaged district governor and limited personal networks beyond the district, the Community Development Councils serve as the only channel for

making connections to the district and provincial level, yet they blend with pre-existing village governance structures.

Although many households appear to have moved on an upward trajectory since 2008-09, they have shifted between decline and partial recovery, locked in debt to brick kiln owners in Mazar-i-Sharif, selling assets, and migrating for work. Environmental shocks, lack of employment opportunities in the rural economy, and continuing insecurity have led to the permanent out-migration of many households. While a resurgent opium economy has had benefits for household economies through employment opportunities and higher rural wages, cultivators remain in the hands of both the Taliban and local government and their levying of informal taxes. And despite the need for income enabling women to broaden their income-generating activities and participate in the local economy through sharecropping, livestock grazing and brick-making, gender inequalities persist in terms of wages and independence within the labour market.

Sayyad remains a peripheral district within a marginal province, neglected by donors, under resourced in terms of the delivery of public goods, and agriculturally risky. These conditions have shaped household-specific dynamics; thus, although many households have recovered since 2008-09, life remains deeply uncertain with many moving in and out of poverty within seasons and between years – a classic form of poverty ‘churning’ – characterised by risk and uncertainty.

1 Introduction

This report explores rural poverty dynamics in Afghanistan, with a focus on livelihood trajectories in Sar-i-Pul province. It is part of a cross-country research programme on livelihoods under conflict led by the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC), and forms the third wave of a longitudinal panel study tracing the outcomes of rural Afghan households over a 14-year period. The Afghanistan panel was established in seven provinces¹ in 2002-03 and a second wave was carried out in Sar-i-Pul, Kandahar, and Badakhshan in 2008-09 (Shaw, 2010). This third wave draws on a subset of the original panel households in three provinces: Herat, Kandahar, and Sar-i-Pul.

Wave two of the panel study saw the Sar-i-Pul study households in a position of economic decline, suffering reduced food security and widespread asset loss as the result of a major drought that lasted from 2006 to 2008. At that time, households relied on domestic and international labour migration, women's income generation, and informal access to credit to survive. The 2008-09 report (ibid.) closed with questions of how households would recover.

The third study wave draws on a subset of the original panel households in Herat, Kandahar and Sar-i-Pul provinces, with this report focusing on livelihood trajectories in the latter (see Huot *et al.*, 2016 for Herat province, and Pain *et al.*, 2016 for Kandahar province). Sar-i-Pul has long been one of the most impoverished provinces in Afghanistan, and among the poorest performers for development indicators including health, water access, sanitation and education (Central Statistics Organization, 2014; World Bank, 2015). Sayyad, the site of the study, is considered to be one of the poorer districts in Sar-i-Pul province (Shaw, 2010).

In this report we outline what has happened to specific households in Sayyad since 2008-09, detailing the various shocks they have experienced, the coping strategies they have employed, and how and why conditions have improved or declined. As will be seen, it describes life at the physical and economic margins of Afghanistan, and seeks to contribute to a better understanding of Afghanistan's rural economy – how people make a living; how they access services; how they connect to district and provincial levels; and, importantly, how some households have been able to recover while others have not.

¹ The provinces were Herat, Kandahar, Sar-i-Pul, Faryab, Badakhshan, Ghazni, and Laghman

Recent agricultural policy argues that agriculture has the potential to create jobs, raise labour productivity, benefit the poor and landless, and reduce poverty and food insecurity in rural areas (World Bank, 2014). However, the degree to which the study households draw on the urban economy to survive brings into question whether rural households truly depend on agriculture, and if an agrarian economy can offer much in the future for those who live in its rainfed margins. Evidence suggests that conditions in Sar-i-Pul province make it virtually impossible to survive by agriculture activities alone, unless opium poppy is cultivated. Many households move between decline and partial recovery, locked in debt to brick kiln owners in Mazar-i-Sharif, selling assets, and migrating for work. Another major drought from 2010-11, followed by a smaller drought and then flooding in 2014, lack of employment opportunities in the rural economy, and growing conflict have led to the permanent out-migration of many households.

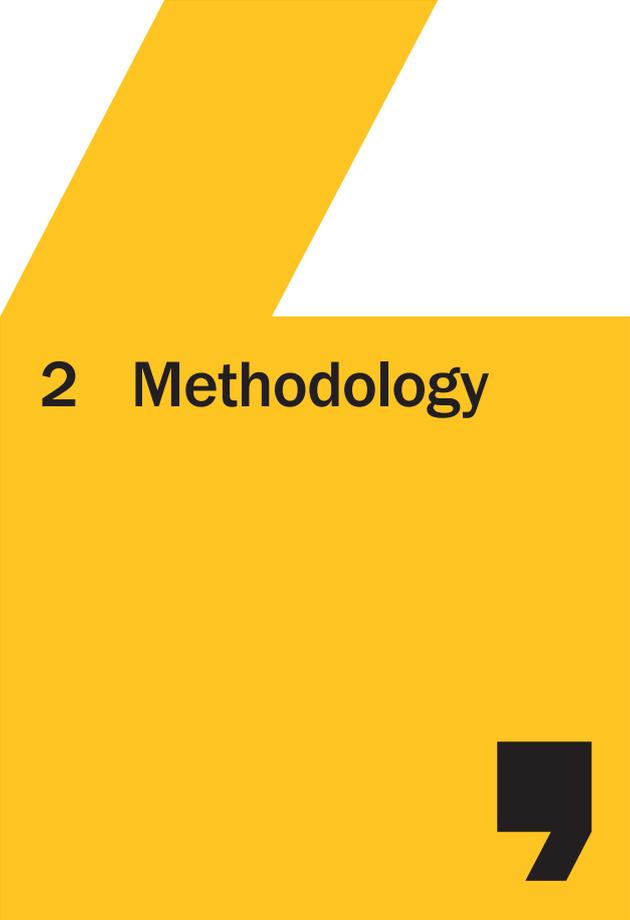
State-building in Afghanistan has largely focused on the establishment of introduced, formal institutions and little attention has been paid to existing traditional structures (Pain, 2016; Shaw, 2010). In the context of Sar-i-Pul – a province almost untouched by government or international assistance – this is seen through the effects of the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), which created Community Development Councils (CDCs) for service delivery as part of a process to build democratic institutions from the village upwards.

This third round of the household panel study focuses on five specific questions:

- 1 What are the livelihood trajectories and welfare outcomes of the Afghan case households over the last twelve years? How do gender, socio-economic position, community and context differentiate these?
- 2 What practices have these households under diverse contexts of conflict implemented in relation to market choices and use of social and human capital to cope with insecurity? To what extent have these practices mitigated or reproduced insecurity and contributed to or undermined resilience? How has insecurity affected household strategies and welfare outcomes?
- 3 What do these livelihood trajectories tell us about the meaning of local informal and formal structures and how households and contrasting communities have adapted to and engaged with government, aid agencies, markets and the private sector? What does this tell us about the nature of resilience, its scope, reach, and the inclusiveness of its mechanisms?
- 4 To what extent do trajectories of change reflect path dependency determined by pre-existing structures, or reflect the capacity of individuals or communities to bring about changes through collective action? If there have been shifts, where, for whom and how has it been possible?
- 5 How do village institutions (both customary and introduced) perform in relation to public-goods provision, and how do they relate to and engage with district and provincial authorities and external interventions?

Following this introduction, section 2 briefly describes the methodology used to conduct the research. Section 3 provides contextual information at the provincial and district levels, while section 4 discusses the economies, classes and governance structures at the village level. Section 5 explores changes in household composition between waves two and three, and section 6 considers the livelihood trajectories of the sample households. In section 7 we discuss the coping mechanisms used by our sample households to survive the various livelihood shocks and stresses that they have faced since 2008-09, and we conclude in section 8.

2 Methodology



This third wave of the livelihood trajectory study closely follows the methodology of the second wave conducted in three study villages of Sayyad district in Sar-i-Pul in 2008-09 (Shaw, 2010). With the support of the non-governmental organisation (NGO) ZOA, a team of eight researchers held three rounds of gender-segregated interviews between May and August 2016. Preliminary interviews were conducted with the original sample households (sixty in total) with the exception of a few that have left Sayyad, followed by two in-depth interviews with a sub-sample of eight households in each village (24 households in total). A full account of the methodology is detailed in Appendix 2.

While respondents generally spoke openly about opium production in Sayyad in the preliminary interviews, they were much more hesitant to answer detailed questions on this topic in the follow-up interviews. Therefore, although it is clear that opium production has become a key part of the livelihoods of these households, there is very little detailed information in the individual household stories. The timing of the research – during the summer season when many families leave their households to work elsewhere or to graze livestock – also made it difficult to reach certain respondents.

As far as was possible, contrasting households were selected for the in-depth study that were from different wealth groups and with different economic fortunes. The relative wealth group of each household was based on land and asset ownership, debt, and household composition, ranking from 1 (high – relatively wealthy) to 4 (low – relatively impoverished). The wealth group criteria largely corresponded to land ownership, with large and medium land owners in the higher wealth groups (1 and 2), and small and landless households comprising the lower wealth groups (3 and 4). Table 1 lists the codes of the 24 sampled households by village and wealth group. These wealth groups are relative to a specific village, and thus are not absolute measures. Household size and whether the household was joint (J) or single (S) is also indicated in brackets.

Sixty households (20 in each village) were interviewed in 2002 and again in 2008-09. In the third wave the field team was unable to interview five households in village A – one having permanently moved to Mazar-i-Sharif

Table 1: Composition of study households

Wealth group	Village A	Village B	Village C
1	A02 (18, J)		C02 (14, J)
	A03 (12, J)		C03 (11, J)
	A01 (10, J)		C01 (19, J)
2	A06 (18, J)	B01 (16, J)	C08 (7, J)
		B04 (8, S)	
		B05 (20, J)	
		B03 (7, J)	
3	A04 (4, S)	B02 (6, S)	C05 (11, J)
		B06 (10, J)	C07 (8, S)
4	A05 (11, J)	B08 (6, S)	C04 (5, S)
	A08 (9, S)	B07 (8, S)	C06 (10, J)
	A07 (4, S)		

(1449),² two being in the desert grazing livestock (1452 and 1454), and two with elderly household heads who had passed away (1455 and 1457). A further household migrated to Mazar between the two in-depth interviews (A07). Of these households, all but 1457 were in wealth group 3 in 2008-09. The households were landless and dependent on either labour migration, their daughters' *peshkashes* (dowry or 'bride price'), or a connection with a village *bai* (wealthy man or *khan* in other parts of Afghanistan) for survival. Household 1457 was in wealth group 1, but was in long-term decline as the household head aged and the family became increasingly dependent on credit and income from the eldest son.

Similarly, five households could not be interviewed in village B as four had permanently migrated out of the village – two to Sar-i-Pul City (1424 and 1425), one to Mazar (1436), and one to Shebarghan (1438). The remaining household (1427) left the village before 2008-09 and could not be found. Three households were in wealth group 3 in 2008-09: household 1427, household 1436 (which had sold their land five years before their interview in 2008-09), and household 1438 (which was given a small area of land during the Soviet period of 1979-1989 with an annual yield of 50 seers).³ Households 1424 and 1425 were both landowners in wealth group 2, with annual yields of ten seers and twenty-five seers respectively. Household 1425 had spent twenty years in Sar-i-Pul City, and in 2008-09 their eldest son was bonded as a labourer to a household in the city.

Two households had moved in village C, one to Shebarghan (1407) and one to Faryab (1403). Household 1407 was in wealth group 3 in 2008-09 and 1403 was in wealth group 4. None of the households that could not be traced in the three villages were part of the sub-sample selected for detailed interviews in 2008-09.

In comparison to the household samples from Herat and Kandahar provinces, the permanent out-migration of households from the Sayyad villages of Sar-i-Pul is greater. This is likely because of the marginal nature of agricultural production and water scarcity in this particular province, which is underlined by the importance of labour migration to almost every household interviewed in Sar-i-Pul (see Appendix 1, Table 1: Migration).

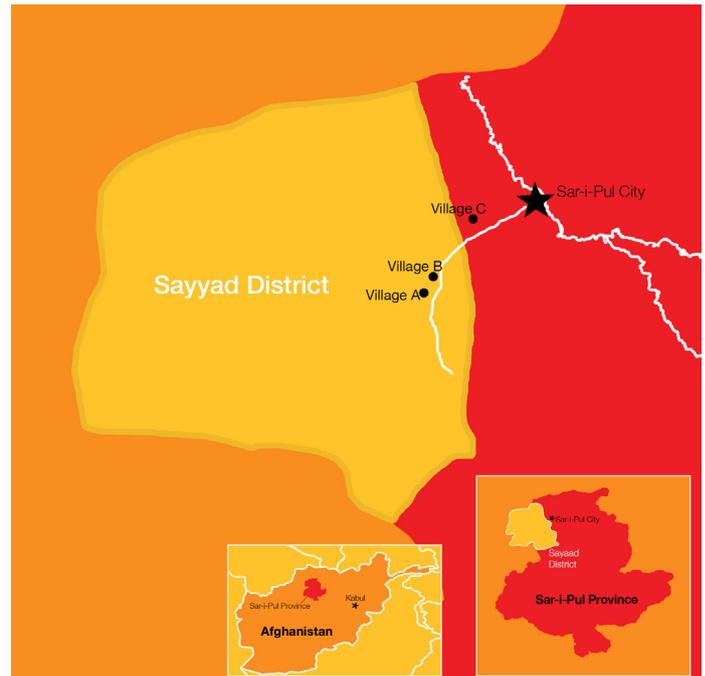
² These households have the original four-digit codes applied in the first study wave in 2002 and were not selected for detailed interviews in 2008-09. Subsequently they were not given a code that corresponds to the rest of the households in the report i.e. A01.

³ A measurement for wheat; one seer amounts to seven kilograms.

3 Context: Sar-i-Pul province and Sayyad district

Chosen to provide a comparison to the ‘port’ border provinces of Herat and Kandahar, which orient themselves to Iran and Pakistan respectively, Sar-i-Pul does not trade directly outside of Afghanistan. The province is mountainous, sharing borders with Balkh, Faryab and Jawzjan to the west and north, Ghor and Bamiyan to the south, and Samangan to the east (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Map of Sar-i-Pul province



3.1 Access to land

Only 31% of the provincial population has access to land and garden plots (through ownership, sharecropping or renting),⁴ which is among the lowest in the country (Central Statistics Organization, 2009). Furthermore, 75% of landowners in Sar-i-Pul have access to rainfed land only (Central Statistics Organization, 2014). Livestock rearing is the mainstay of the rural economy, particularly in the more remote and mountainous areas of southern Sar-i-Pul, such as Kohistanat and Balkhab (Shaw, 2010). Small-scale fruit cultivation is common in river-irrigated areas in the north (particularly sharecropping of melons and watermelons by both men and women), but water scarcity means that subsistence rainfed wheat farming has remained the main agricultural activity since 2008-09.

⁴ Ownership or access to land generally refers to the cultivation of wheat, while gardens involve the production of fruit and vegetables.

3.2 Water scarcity

Sar-i-Pul has pronounced and chronic water scarcity; in 2009 only 12% of its population had access to safe drinking water (Central Statistics Organization, 2009). Annual rainfall is low, and water flow in the major Sarchasma river is highly variable from year to year, with an ongoing risk of destructive flooding in the spring (Thomas *et al.*, 2013). Access to irrigation water, often through flood irrigation, is exacerbated by long-standing water management conflicts in the Sar-i-Pul sub-basin (*ibid.*) that result in inequitable distribution between communities near the river. The study villages are situated downstream from a larger and more politically powerful village, and thus have little control over availability of water, making the area vulnerable to protracted periods of drought that lead to crop failure and household food shortages.

Generally speaking, northern Afghanistan has experienced annual droughts of varying degrees of severity across different regions and years. Data from the World Food Programme (WFP, 2011) back to 2000 indicates that the drought of 2008 was significantly more severe in Sar-i-Pul than in preceding drought years, leading to crop failure and decreased production from pasture. In 2008-09 both land-owning and landless households were found to be selling livestock as a response to the drought – the land-owning households to offset grain deficits, and the landless households to mitigate the loss of on-farm daily labour wages.

In the third wave, little seems to have changed in terms of response to issues of water scarcity. In 2011 Sar-i-Pul – along with 13 other provinces in the northern region – suffered a major drought that resulted in a 17% reduction in cereal production. In the WFP's 2011 Phase 2 Emergency Food Security Assessment, 75% of interviewed households (198) reported a total loss of rainfed crops, with a further 28% reporting a yield reduction of rainfed crops. Accordingly, nearly every household in the present SLRC study spoke of losses of crops and livestock during this time. Households mainly depended on labour migration of men and women to work in the brick kilns of Mazar-i-Sharif, and to a lesser extent on more 'traditional' income-generating activities by women such as spinning wool for quilts. Respondent households were also highly mobile at the time, with some leaving the village permanently (eight of the

overall sample of 60) and many more either seasonally relocating to Mazar, undertaking labour migration for shorter periods, or grazing livestock away from the villages for weeks at a time.

3.3 Opium cultivation

Cyclical drought periods have led to a diversification of activities by households, including growing opium poppy. In the late 1990s, increased opium cultivation was a widespread response to the protracted drought in southern Afghanistan (1995-2002, see Mansfield and Fishstein, 2016). Although Sar-i-Pul was considered 'poppy free'⁵ in 2008-09, opium poppy cultivation has risen sharply since then; the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported a 70% increase in the province from 2014 to 2015 alone (UNODC and Ministry of Counter Narcotics, 2015). This is consistent with evidence from the study villages, all of which reported a resurgence in opium cultivation since 2013. Findings from 2008-09 suggest that efforts to eradicate opium based on religious grounds were largely successful, and were supported by the then District Governor and popular *mullah* (a man educated in Islamic ideology and law) Abdul Latif. However, the failure of the central government to provide the promised financial rewards for poppy-free status has been a source of major discontent.

3.4 Governance and security

In addition to economic marginality, Sar-i-Pul province as a whole – and Sayyad district in particular – is politically isolated. Sayyad is not represented on the Provincial Council and their Governor is from another district, coming to Sayyad only once a month. Classified by the World Bank as a 'low conflict, low spending' region (see Table 2), it has received comparatively less government funding and international assistance than Kandahar or Herat.

During the Soviet period, Sayyad district experienced a high level of armed conflict that peaked between 1983 and 1984 when a local *Jamiat* commander fought government forces. Short-term migration was common as people sought to escape conflict up the Sarchasma River Valley near Kohistanat district. Many households, particularly Uzbeks, were again displaced near the end of the Taliban regime, when fighting flared for a second time. Long-term migration (in many cases around 20 years) was common throughout this period, with many

⁵ Poppy-free status denotes cultivation of less than 100 hectares.

households not returning to Sayyad until after the election of President Karzai in 2004.

Until relatively recently, Sar-i-Pul province was considered secure as the Taliban was thought to be an exclusively Pashtun movement that would not extend its reach beyond the south (Giustozzi and Reuter, 2011). However, security in Sar-i-Pul started to deteriorate in 2008-09 along with the rest of the northern region, and by early 2010 the Taliban had brought parts of Baghlan, Kunduz, Takhar, Faryab, and Jowzjan under their control or influence (ibid.). In 2010 the Taliban also gained territory in Sayyad and Kohistanat districts in Sar-i-Pul, and have extended their presence since then. There is now reported to be a Taliban base just beyond the borders of Sar-i-Pul City, around ten kilometers from the provincial governor's office (Ali, 2015). This is consistent with reports from our respondents who described a rapid deterioration in security from 2010, with village B briefly coming under insurgent control. Insecurity in the district can be traced back to an incident between the police and a large opium trader, who was arrested and released repeatedly, and was eventually shot by the police. Upon his recovery, the opium trader travelled to Helmand and brought Taliban commanders back to Sar-i-Pul that he had known through the opium trade. This, it is assumed, helped establish an anti-government stronghold that would allow smoother business operations. The individual is reportedly now the Taliban shadow governor⁶ of Sar-i-Pul, and his insurgent networks have expanded in other northern provinces.⁷

3.5 Literacy

Male literacy rates in Sar-i-Pul range between 30% and 39% of the provincial population (up from 17% in 2008-09), while female literacy lies around the national average of 17% at between 15% and 19% (Central Statistics Organization, 2014). Additionally, at 83.7%, the girls-to-boys net attendance ratio for primary school is well above the national average of 67.4%, though it falls in secondary school to 48.1% compared to a national average of 56.2% (Table 2). These high girl-to-boy attendance ratios likely reflect the more liberal cultural environment of Sar-i-Pul; respondents described experiences of exile in Pakistan and Iran during the Soviet period, which have led people to become more open to female access to education and work.

3.6 Summary

The high poverty rates in Sar-i-Pul result from a combination of water scarcity, political isolation, and a weak economy. Livelihoods have long been underpinned by labour migration, with land and livestock only being productive in non-drought years although a recent rise in opium cultivation have improved on-farm labour opportunities. Increasing conflict has also contributed to the insecure context of the province.

Table 2: Provincial profiles and national averages for relative aid spending, conflict status and poverty outcomes

	National average	Kandahar	Herat	Sar-i-Pul
High-conflict high-spending		✓		
High-spending low-conflict			✓	
Low-spending high-conflict				
Low-spending low-conflict				✓
Poverty rates (%)	35.8	13 % (2)	35.3 (14)	59.1 (28)
Depth of poverty (%)	8.4	1.6	8.8	16.9
Calorie deficiency (%)	34.7	29.0 (16)	22.1(10)	56.4 (25)
Gini Index (%)	31.6	21.6 (8)	34.8 (32)	27.2 (20)
Underemployment (%)	18.6	10.9 (8)	15.7 (10)	16.1 (12)
Girls-to-boys net attendance ratio, primary (%)	67.4	65.1 (21)	103.6 (1)	83.7 (11)
Girls-to-boys net attendance ratio, secondary (%)	56.2	29.6	97.9	48.1
Access to skilled antenatal care (%)	51.3	26.5 (27)	64.9 (9)	73.2 (6)
Safe drinking water (%)	45.5	46.6 (10)	52.8 (9)	(25)

Note: Where data is available, the relative ranking against Afghanistan's 32 provinces is given in brackets (1 is best, 32 is worst).
Source: World Bank (2015, 2014).

⁶ An unelected, non-state actor who controls economic and political activity in a region through informal networks.

⁷ Unpublished notes from the SLRC field research team.

4 Context: the economies, land classes and institutions of the study villages

Villages A, B, and C lie along the Sarchashma River valley, which runs from the foothills of the mountains in the south to the river's flood plain before it reaches Sar-i-Pul City. The three study sites are characterised by land inequalities (see Table 3). Most of the land in the villages is rainfed (7,700 *jeribs* combined across A, B and C of a total of 8,523 *jeribs*),⁸ with village B having the most irrigated land. All villages have high amounts of landlessness: 77% of households are landless in village A; 87% in village B; and 74% in village C.

In Kandahar, and to a lesser extent in Herat, land ownership is directly linked to wealth and power, with the landed elite ruling the villages, controlling the CDCs, and acting as political gatekeepers. Many of the landless in the Kandahar and Herat villages live in dependent relations or are subject to the political authority of these elites. Although the largest landowners in the Sar-i-Pul villages are also part of the CDC, they are also economically vulnerable as most land is rainfed and its production is low and erratic. Hit hard by droughts in 2008 and 2011, the Sar-i-Pul study villages reported either total crop loss or large yield reductions at these times. Indeed, having access to rainfed land does not ensure the food and economic security needed to establish or maintain strong patron-client relations, thus the large power inequalities found in Herat and Kandahar are not seen to the same extent in Sar-i-Pul (see Huot et al., 2016; Pain et al., 2016; Pain and Huot, 2017).

4.1 Village A

The village economy

Of a total of 310 *jeribs* of land in village A, 300 are rainfed. This, combined with water scarcity as a result of a powerful upstream neighbour (described below), means that food insecurity is chronic in the village and even large landowners cannot rely on agriculture as a primary source of income. Instead, labour migration and livestock form the backbones of the village economy. Village A suffered heavy bombardment during the Soviet period as it was firmly under the control of the *mujahedeen*⁹ (the head of household A02 was the village leader and former commander) and many households migrated to neighbouring districts, provinces, or countries during this period. Households that left Afghanistan primarily went to either Iran or Pakistan, and continue to do so now for labour migration.

⁸ *Jerib* (J) is a land measurement roughly equivalent to one fifth of a hectare.

⁹ Rebel fighters during the Soviet war.

Table 3: Rainfed and irrigated land distribution in the study villages

Landowners	Village A		Village B		Village C	
	No. of households (HHs)	Rainfed/ irrigated land (<i>jeribs</i>)	No. of HHs	Rainfed/ irrigated land (<i>jeribs</i>)	No. of HHs	Rainfed/ irrigated land (<i>jeribs</i>)
Large	5	10-15 / 0.5-1	10	100-150 / 10-12	50	30 / 3
Medium	10	6-8 / 0.5	50	50-60 / 4-5	40	20 / 1
Small	20	3-5 / 0	120	10-15 / 0.5-1	70	10 / 0.5
Landless	115	-	1220	-	510	-
Total irrigated arable (<i>jeribs</i>)		10		400		300
Total irrigated orchard (<i>jeribs</i>)		10		103		0
Total rainfed land (<i>jeribs</i>)		300		4400		3000
Total households	150		1400		689	

Table 4: Livestock holdings in the three villages

Landowners	Village A		Village B		Village C	
	No. of HHs	Livestock holding	No. of HHs	Livestock holding	No. of HHs	Livestock holding
Large	5	30-40	10	100-200	50	200-300
Medium	10	15-20	50	50-60	40	100-150
Small	20	5-10	120	20-30	70	20-30
Landless	115	1-5	1220	10-15	510	10-15
Total households	150		1400		689	

Villagers who went to Pakistan learned brick-making, and subsequently since 2005 temporary migration to work in the brick kilns in Mazar (north of Sar-i-Pul) has been a crucial component of almost every household economy in the sample. This is facilitated by a *jammadar*, or middleman between the labourer and owner of the brick field, which (as explored later in this report) leads to accumulation of debt and bonded labour. With capital lent to him by the brick field owner, the *jammadar* acts as the village's main money lender, and is paid an additional fee of 80 Afghans (Afs) (US\$1.18) per 1,000 bricks (40 from the brick-field owner and 40 from the labourer). In contrast to the findings from Herat and Kandahar, women from Sar-i-Pul also work as labourers and travel to work in the kilns alongside their male family members. This began when many households were in exile during the war, living in poverty and needing to raise income, however present migration patterns depend more on land and asset ownership of the household. If landless, the entire family will move to Mazar for the brick-making season; if

they own land or livestock, part of the family will remain in the village to harvest and graze livestock. For these households, who goes and who stays does not seem to be gender-dependent. Thus, in one case the male head of household A03 was in the village for harvest with his son and his daughter-in-law at the time of interview, while his wife, son and daughter were in Mazar.

Governance

Village A was formerly unified under one head, Mirza Shah of household A02,¹⁰ a former *mujahedeen* leader who was both the *qarydar* (traditional community figurehead responsible for village affairs) and the head of the CDC, and was remembered for his fair distribution of labour and project funds. After his death in 2014 the village divided due to conflict over who would take his place. Mirza Shah was from the dominant Haikal tribal group of the lower part of the village, as were other village authorities including the *whitebeards* (village elders) and

¹⁰ Names are changed throughout the report to maintain anonymity.

the *mullah*. Another Haikal was to be appointed as head of the CDC, but the upper village where the Gaw Khor and Aibtachar tribes lived demanded representation in village government. The village thus split into two regions, upper and lower, each with its own *qarydar* but under one CDC now headed by Mirza Shah's son. While Mirza Shah was widely liked and able to lead across tribal divides, his son does not command the same respect, which respondents attributed to his youth. This has led to a halt in development activities in the village: the CDC has been inactive in the village for the past three to four years, having been responsible for development projects (although it seems that wells installed seven or eight years ago were the only project of the CDC) as well as conflict resolution, 'helping people at the district level', and managing village security. All of the CDC members are also village elders, have between ten and twenty *jeribs* of rainfed land each, and, with the exception of the head who has connections to the provincial level, are connected to only district-level officials.

Access to basic services

Village A does not have a health clinic, although the nearest one in Sayyad district centre takes only five to ten minutes to reach by car. The construction of a road in 2012 has improved people's mobility, but it has not changed how people access the health clinic as there is a perception that it is run 'like a personal shop for the doctors'.¹¹ Between 2009 and 2011, ZOA built ten wells in the village through the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), and an additional water supply system is currently being built by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). While village A does not have a girls' school, the head of the CDC (A02) was able to employ two teachers for the boys' school (for class 1 and class 2) through connections in the Provincial Council. This does not mean that all boys go to school, however, as there is evidence of households keeping sons out of school to work:

'Most of the people in our village know about the value of education but due to poverty some of the people can't leave their sons to study as most of the people go to Mazar for two three months to work there in brick making.'¹²

Water scarcity

Village A suffers from chronic water shortages, with water available from the river only between September and May. Being downstream from a village that is described as more powerful, village A is subject to their water management systems and as a result experiences cyclical periods of flooding and drought:

'We have water in this stream for 6 months and after that in summer time, the upper village does not give water to us. Because the level of water decreases in the river, it is not sufficient for the upstream villages as well. As a result, they stop the water going to downstream villages. We have water only for 6 months when the water level is high. It has been the same since 2008.'¹³

The most recent drought in 2010-11 had a major impact on the village. Many households lost harvest and livestock, which led to male members or entire households migrating to Iran, Mazar or Pakistan in search of work.¹⁴ A flood in 2014 also damaged many houses and land, and resulted in loss of lives and livestock (the brother of household A04 lost five family members). Households sold their remaining assets (primarily livestock) to cope, and again, became dependent on remittance income, particularly from Mazar. Those households that did not have the means to re-establish their lives left the village and have not returned.

4.2 Village B

The village economy

Village B is the district centre and the largest of the villages with 1,400 households and 4,800 *jeribs* of land, 4,400 of which are rainfed. Like village A, village B has problems of food insecurity, water scarcity, and recurrent periods of droughts and flooding. During the 2010-11 drought, the harvest failed in the village and disrupted the local economy as demand for daily wage labour plummeted and the price of wheat and livestock feed increased significantly. The severe flood in 2014 damaged homes and land, with households again suffering losses of harvest and livestock. Employment in the village is sparse and irregular, particularly in the

¹¹ A04, male respondent, interview 2.

¹² A02, male respondent, interview 2.

¹³ A05, female respondent, interview 2.

¹⁴ A04, male respondent, interview 2; A02, male respondent, interview 2.

winter time; thus, like village A, livestock and labour migration (particularly to the brick kilns of Mazar) are vital to household economies:

'First there is no work available in this village especially in winter time. If [a person] finds work at the village level it is not a regular job. They are able to find work for only up five days in a month in winter time. However, in summer time, jobs increase at the village level, but still it is only for two months and the wage is not sufficient.'¹⁵

Governance and security

Village B has a core group of politically connected landed elite who are educated and include a literate head of the CDC and two doctors. Security has declined considerably in village B, with the Taliban briefly taking control of the village in 2009. Insecurity, coupled with the 2010-11 drought, led to many households leaving the village for Sar-i-Pul City, Mazar or Pakistan.¹⁶ According to the leader of the CDC (household B01), the village elders petitioned the government for weapons and vehicles and were able to expel the insurgents from the area:

'...the cruelty and injustice of Taliban caused people... [to] take a decision and all the elders of the villages ... gathered and told the government that if you give us guns and cars we will fight against the Taliban and will send them out of Sayyad district. The government accepted and provided 300 guns for a person ... and he started fighting against the Taliban and many other people from different villages of Sayyad joined him and removed the Taliban from Sayaan and it again became a safe district, but still the Taliban has control in some of the remote areas and in some of the villages which are far from the center of the district.'¹⁷

This sort of successful collective action initiated by the village elders was also noted in 2008-09. However, while the village leadership was reported to be unified in 2008-09 with a well-liked and respected village head (B04), more recent evidence suggests fragmentation and conflict over CDC resources and positions of power, and there are now reportedly three CDCs functioning in the village. Though the one led by the household head (HHH)

of B04 remains the primary CDC, there is now division within village-level governance and conflicting aims for the different CDCs. Furthermore, the CDC head's son was killed in 2009 following a dispute over election results which led the head to withdraw from village affairs. *Jammadars*, of which there are between 20 and 30 in village B, are also important figures but like in village A remain outside the sphere of village governance.

Access to basic services

Despite these tensions, Village B is also the district centre and thus more politically connected than the other two study villages. Aside from the village elite described above, an educated and influential District Governor of nearby Sozma Qala is also from village B. He provided the land for the boys' school to be built and directed the government to construct it. Village B has also had a girl's school since around 2002 with two classes of female graduates. It has also had more development projects in the past than village A, and tends to receive more emergency aid than villages A and C. While village B received 24,000 bags of wheat during a drought year and temporary shelters after a flood,¹⁸ the other villages received proportionately much less. Despite this, every household of the sample reported food insufficiency during the drought. Village B is also the only one to have a health clinic, and therefore it serves people from all three study villages.

4.3 Village C

The village economy

Like villages A and B, most land in village C is rainfed and only 300 of 3,300 *jeribs* are irrigated. The major source of employment is from livestock management and labour migration to Iran. In contrast to villages A and B, who primarily went to Pakistan during the Soviet period, those from village C fled to Iran and continue to migrate there for work. As with villages A and B, village C has problems of water scarcity, food insecurity, and lack of economic opportunities. The drought of 2010-11 and the flood of 2014 also heavily impacted the village economy and led households into deeper debt and a greater reliance on remittance income.

¹⁵ B06, male respondent, interview 2.

¹⁶ B01, male respondent, interview 2 (a village elder).

¹⁷ B01, male respondent, interview 2.

¹⁸ B01, male respondent, interview 2.

Governance

The village is divided into two based on tribal lines – Arabia for the village’s Arab population, and Afghanistan for the Pashtun. The two parts live amicably and the village has a longstanding influential and powerful head, an Arab called Haji Nazar *Bai* who is also the village *arbab* (traditional village leader). Though the village has two CDCs, the one of Arabia (unofficially headed by Haji Nazar *Bai*) has the greater power. Haji Nazar *Bai*’s father was a commander under General Dostum, which gave the family connections to district- and provincial-level government. Aside from this, Haji Nazar *Bai* also gained credibility by staying in the village during the Soviet period and protecting properties:

‘When we were in Iran, he kept our houses from being looted by other people. When all the villagers from our part of the village returned back, he invited us for food in his house. Then he told us, about what happened in and how he saved our house from invaders. After that, all the whitebeards from our village ... told him, “after this you are the head of Afghanistan as well”. He was appointed by the whitebeards in Arabia.’¹⁹

The village leadership has been effective in organising village affairs. Communal wells were built in 2001, for which each household contributed between 5,000-6,000 Afs (US\$75-90). With no Afghan Local Police (ALP)²⁰ in the

village, village C created its own community ‘police force’ in 2016 called *Khezesh Mardumi*. Each household paid an initial fee to arm the eight selected ‘soldiers’, and pay 200 Afs (US\$3) per month for their salaries to patrol the village. The force is led by Haji Nazar *Bai* and was initiated for security reasons after elders agreed the government was ‘too weak’ to protect the village from insurgents. Respondents generally agreed that security in the village had improved with the establishment of *Khezesh Mardumi*; one respondent spoke of improving law and order, but attributed it as much to the the Taliban as to the government:

‘Before people were thinking, “how can I fight or kill [someone] to take his lands or livestock for my own family” but now this is not happening because all the people will report such a person to government and the issue will be resolved either through Taliban or government.’²¹

Access to basic services

The former head of the CDC, head of household C02, implemented many development projects in the village from which he secured personal benefits (as will be explored below). There were positive impacts on the village as well, however, as a boys’ school was built around 2001 and a girls’ school around 2012. The closest medical facility is in Sayyad district centre, in village B.

¹⁹ C03, male respondent, interview 2.

²⁰ The Afghan Local Police (ALP), are a local security force recruited from village which it seeks to protect. It started as a small US experiment but has now become a significant part of the security apparatus.

²¹ C02, male respondent, interview 2.

5 Changes in household composition



Table 5 summarises changes in the composition of the case study households since 2008-09. Changes since 2008-09 are identified in terms of deaths (D), movement out through separation or marriage of daughters (O), births (B), and marriage in (M). It should be noted that figures for household size reported since 2008-09 are often not consistent when matched against reported deaths, births, marriages in and marriages out. In part this may be due to a lack of precision in the dates when household changes happened, or in some cases because deaths closely followed births – for example household A02 had a son who died one month after he was born.

Table 5: Household composition

a) Village A

Wealth group	HH code	Sex of HH head (HHH)	Age of HHH	No. of married couples	No. of HH members (change since 2008-09)	Changes since 2008-09			
						-D	-O	+B	+M
1	A02	M	25	2	18 (-2)	3	4	8	2
	A03	M	55	2	12 (-1)	1	1	5	2
	A01	M	55	2	10 (+6)	1	0	1	0
2	A06	F	50	2	18 (+8)	1	1	7	2
3	A04	M	50	1	4 (+1)	0	1	0	0
4	A05	M	48	1	11 (+2)	1	1	3	0
	A08	M	70	1	9	4	0	3	0
	A07	M	70	1	4 (-2)	0	2	0	0

b) Village B

Wealth group	HH code	Sex of HHH	Age of HHH	No. of married couples	No. of HH members (change since 2008-09)	Changes since 2008-09			
						-D	-O	+B	+M
2	B01	M	54	3	16 (+6)	1	1	5	2
	B04	M	51	1	8 (-4)	1	1	0	0
	B05	M	77	3	20 (+2)	2	1	6	1
	B03	M	60	2	7 (-1)	0	1	1	0
3	B02	M	33	1	6 (-5)	1	0	3	0
	B06	M	80	2	10 (+3)	0	1	2	1
4	B08	F	57	1	6 (-)	1	0	3	1
	B07	M	70	2	8 (+2)	0	1	3	0

c) Village C

Wealth group	HH code	Sex of HHH	Age of HHH	No. of married couples	No. of HH members (change since 2008-09)	Changes since 2008-09			
						-D	-O	+B	+M
1	C02	M	47	2	14 (+2)	0	0	4	1
	C03	M	60	3	11 (+3)	0	1	1	2
	C01	M	56	6	19 (+11)	2	0	6	3
2	C08	M	48	2	7 (-1)	0	1	1	1
3	C05	M	26	2	11 (+1)	1	0	3	2
	C07	M	49	1	8 (+3)	0	0	3	0
4	C04	M	60	1	5 (-3)	0	3	0	0
	C06	M	27	2	10 (+2)	1	2	3	0

6 Household trajectories

The following section compares households that improved (or maintained where they had considerable wealth), declined or coped economically relative to their 2008-09 position. Although some households are reported as 'prospering' or 'recovering', it should be noted that this is relative to the baseline of the 2008-09 report in which all sample households were in decline as a result of drought. Thus 'prospering' should be treated as a relative rather than absolute term.

The primary basis on which these assessments have been made are on what households reported and from analysis of changes in land holdings. Wealth groups are a relative and subjective measure, and it is not known how perceptions of these have changed since 2008-09; accordingly shifts in wealth group memberships has only been used as a proximate indicator. Seven of the interviewed households were assessed as having improved or maintained (if wealthy) their economic circumstances since 2008-09; six had suffered a decline in their fortunes; and nine had more or less maintained their economic position or coped.

6.1 Prospering households

Table 6 outlines the household trajectories of prospering households since 2008-09.

Village A

Household **A03**'s prosperity has been driven primarily by the HHH's former employment with the military and, more recently, his heavy involvement in labour migration and diversification of income sources. In 1984 during a period of fighting between the government and the *mujahedeen*, the household relocated to Sheberghan. They stayed for twenty years, not returning until Karzai became president in 2004. During this time the HHH worked for the military and was able to accumulate significant savings. He bought 15 *jeribs* of land when they returned to the village, adding to the 12 *jeribs* he inherited from his father years before. The HHH is literate, and became a CDC clerk during the first NSP election. During the second election, a conflict between himself and the CDC's head, Mirza Shah, led to them both leaving the CDC. However Mirza's influence over the village as a former commander and *qarydar* allowed him to continue to oversee project activities.

After the drought in 2010-11, the eldest son migrated to Iran to provide income for the family. He was arrested and deported after being in the country for 15 months.

Table 6: Prospering households – asset changes and major drivers of change

HH	Land asset changes since 2008-09	Primary reason for change	Secondary reason for change	Tertiary reason for change
Village A				
A03	Inherited 12 jeribs (J) from HHH's father, bought 15 J in 2010-11	HHH formerly employed in the military and able to accumulate savings	Labour migration to Mazar	Land ownership
A06	No change – has remained landless	Labour migration of 5 sons to Mazar	Female HHH sharecrops melons	Livestock
Village B				
B01	No change – 100 J rainfed and 10 J irrigated	Diversified income sources of HHH and 3 working sons	Large land ownership	Head of CDC
B04	No change – 12 J rainfed and 6 J irrigated	Political connections and literacy secured salaried, government jobs for HHH	Land ownership	HHH's wife sharecrops melons
Village C				
C02	No change – 38 J rainfed, 7.5 irrigated, and 120 livestock	HHH was head of CDC and admits to taking funds and aid	Large land and asset ownership	Son owns a shop in Sar-i-Pul City
C03	No change – 10 J rainfed land	Labour migration of 3 sons in Iran	Land ownership	HHH is village Imam for which he is paid an unofficial salary and in kind
C08	No change – has remained landless	HHH regularly employed	Diversified income sources	Labour migration to Iran

The second son then went to Iran in his place, staying for two years. Since 2007-08, the HHH, his three sons and his wife have seasonally migrated to Mazar to work in the brick kilns. Staying for three months at a time (June to August), they are each able to earn 30,000 Afs (US\$455) which, combined with loans from the *jammadar*, gets them through the six months of the year that their wheat cultivation does not meet. Upon his sons return from Iran, the HHH bought a car with which their eldest son now transports people to the city from the village. From this they earn 5,000 Afs (US\$75) per month (or up to 60,000 Afs/US\$900 per year). A03's house was damaged in the flood of 2014, but it did not have much of an impact as the sons were able to reconstruct the property without additional labour.

Household **A06** is a female headed household (FHH) whose husband was killed nearly 20 years ago when he was sent to battle by the then commander, Mirza Shah of household A02. However, the household has

prospered through the work of five adult sons, all of whom began working in the brick kilns in Mazar in 2008. In 2015 two sons left the kilns and began working in a bakery in Mazar. The FHH is originally from village B, and the household now sharecrops wheat, sesame, and melons from a man who is also from village B. This is an advantageous arrangement for the FHH as sesame and melons are higher value crops than wheat – they cultivate 210 kilograms of sesame, which they are able to sell in the market for around 6,500 Afs (US\$98). Though the FHH is responsible for the sharecropping, her sons sell the sesame in the market as this is firmly a male space. The FHH bought a house in village A in 2009, and paid one son's *peshkash* without taking loans or selling any major assets, instead simply paying in installments from the income earned by her sons. They give charity to villagers and are patrons to the village *mullah*, who lives in their former house rent-free for 'benedictions and good deeds' to the family.

Village B

The head of household **B01** is the village leader and current head of the CDC. With 100 *jeribs* of rainfed land and ten irrigated, they are the largest landowners in the village. A longstanding influential leader, the HHH has been the head of the CDC for ten years, and led the majority of households to Pakistan during the Soviet period. However, his son was recently killed after a dispute involving the CDC election, indicating some conflict between the village elite. Although most respondents were reluctant to talk about the incident, it was generally said that the two sons of the village doctor (who is a fellow elder and CDC member) committed the murder after a dispute over election results.

In addition to the income from his land, the HHH has three working sons, two who do contract work for a construction company in Sar-i-Pul City and one who drives a tractor. The household also has a car, around ten livestock, and has married three daughters since 2008, the first two at bride prices of 500,000 Afs (US\$7,600) and the third at 600,000 Afs (US\$9,000). Through such activities and backed by their land assets, the household has prospered and is in a position to act as creditors by handing out loans. For example, the HHH lent the construction company his son works for 3,500,000 Afs (US\$50,000) in 2016 to buy materials and pay salaries.

After returning from fifteen years in exile in Pakistan during the Soviet period, the HHH of **B04** became a teacher in the village school. He is now an employee in the Sayyad District Statistics Department, a position that he was able to obtain through a connection with Haji Sadruddin, who is a village elder and his brother-in-law. This, combined with the work of four sons, one daughter and his wife in Mazar, and income from their land (12 *jeribs* of rainfed and six *jeribs* of irrigated land on which his wife also harvests melons), has contributed to their prosperity.

One month before the interview, the household's seven-year-old son passed away after complaining of a headache upon returning from grazing the livestock. Since then the mother has not allowed anyone to graze and a number of the livestock have died:

'... One month ago my son passed away. One day late in the evening he came from the desert and told me that he is not feeling well. Because of the sun he got

a headache. We washed his head but ... it was night time and we did not have any medicine at home. In the early morning we took him to the hospital in Sar-i-Pul City [but he died]...my poor son, it broke our hearts and we will never forget him. He was a little child and I could not do anything for him, he was my last baby and I don't know how to forget him. I will never allow [my other son] to take the livestock under the warm sun for grazing ... just two weeks ago two of our sheep died, and I don't know what we will face in the future.'²²

Village C

The HHH of **C02** lives with his brothers, one of whom tends his land (38 *jeribs* of rainfed and 7.5 *jeribs* of irrigated) and one takes care of livestock (120 sheep). A *jallabi* (livestock trader), he sells an average of 40 sheep per year at 5,000 Afs (US\$75) each. His sons own a shop in Sar-i-Pul City, but the most important activity for the household by far is the HHH's implementation of development projects. The HHH was the head of the CDC for six years and freely speaks about using CDC funds for himself and those who granted him contracts. In this way he benefited immensely from various development projects, and made solid connections at the district and provincial level that brought many projects to the village:

'I had a good relationship with the district governor, and through meeting with NGOs, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and other government departments ... I really worked on my networking and I could find friends at provincial level, like in the health sector, agriculture sector, MRRD, NGOs and the Provincial Council. If there were signs of any aid or projects for Sayyad district, the NGO employees or government departments were alerting me. So I would organize a meeting with district governor, and some high-ranking officials at district level and I was telling them that if I take a project I will give you something from that project, then it was easy to take the project and give some small part like 2% or 3% for them and rest of the [funds] were for my own village.'²³

He also spoke of taking funds for himself, saying that he would add up to ten false names to the list of labourers for a project in order to claim their wages, that it was common for him to keep 5% of the overall budget when the project was over, and that he kept between 50 and

²² B04, female respondent, interview 2.

²³ Interview 2.

100 seers of wheat from the aid that was distributed after the drought. During his tenure as head of the CDC, the HHH was also responsible for distributing aid and labour, which with his wealth and political connections made him a powerful figure in the village. As NSP regulations state CDC heads cannot run for longer than two terms, the HHH no longer officially leads the CDC. However, after years of cultivating relationships with donors, NGOs, and political figures at the district and provincial level, he continues to implement development projects in the village. Since leaving the CDC, the HHH has implemented seven projects funded by various organisations including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Afghanistan Natural Disaster Management Agency (ANDMA), UNOPS, and MRRD. Last year he led the construction of flood walls, for which he was paid 300,000 Afs (US\$4,500). The current head of the CDC was selected by Haji Nazar Bai and is simply a figurehead – the real power has remained with the head of C02. Labour for these projects is given to three or four friends who are paid the highly inflated daily wage of 1,000 Afs (US\$15) when daily wage rates in the district are more commonly in the range of 250-300 Afs (US\$3.70-4.50).

The head of household **C03** has been the village *Imam* (Islamic leader) for 25 years. Although he claimed to be paid only in kind with 250 to 300 seers of wheat per year, his wife admitted that he receives an annual salary of 60,000 Afs (US\$900) from all village residents. The household has prospered primarily through the work of three sons in Iran. Having spent 17 years there in exile, the household maintains trans-border connections in the country; their sons all classify themselves as ‘professional labourers’ and are paid a relatively high daily wage rate in jobs that they gain through their networks (the eldest son receives 2,000 Afs (US\$30) per day for contract work and hires his two brothers as labourers for 1,000 Afs (US\$15) per day). The HHH’s second son worked in Iran for three years and earned enough for his *peshkash*, and is now a student in Mazar. After the drought in 2010-11, the household sold four *jeribs* of land for a total of 160,000 Afs (US\$2,400), and used the money for consumption and other needs. In the last two years, the harvest on their ten *jeribs* of rainfed land has been affected by drought but it does not impact their finances heavily as remittances from Iran are their major income source. They used to harvest 300 seers of wheat and now harvest between 30 and 40.

Household **C08** has prospered primarily through the salaried employment of the head and labour work of two sons. The eldest son has worked in Iran since 2013, while the second son left school in 2015 to harvest wheat on Haji Nazar Bai’s land, for which he was paid 20 seers of wheat. Most importantly, through personal connections the HHH secured a salaried position as a guard for a gravel company jointly owned by Haji Nazar Bai and the HHH of C02.

‘...the owner of this company is head and representative of the Arab tribe and I knew him before this company was established. But I was introduced to him by Nazar Bai. We are just Arab tribal members and because we are from the same tribe, he appointed me for this work.’²⁴

Over a three-month period in 2016 the household took 260,000 Afs (US\$3,900) in loans from various friends and relatives in the village to marry two children, and plan to repay them over the course of one year through their sons’ income in Iran.

In summary, what is clear from the above stories is that off-farm, non-rural income sources are vital to the success of prosperous households. While some households have land and livestock assets, the contribution of these to the household economy are volatile and unreliable. It is remittance income from Mazar or Iran, salaried employment, or the use of social or political connections to leverage other advantages that have been the primary drivers of household recovery since the 2006-08 drought. It is also clear that those households with associations to the CDC have experienced windfall gains, not only financially but also through establishing valuable external networks at the district and provincial level.

6.2 Coping households

Table 7 outlines the household trajectories of coping households since 2008-09.

Village A

The head of household **A01** comes from a large land-owning family. His father had 160 *jeribs* of rainfed land, six *jeribs* of irrigated land, and more than 250 livestock. It is the only household in the sample that survives

²⁴ Interview 2.

Afghanistan livelihood trajectories: life on the margins in Sar-i-Pul province

Table 7: Coping households – asset changes and major drivers of change

HH	Land asset changes since 2008-09	Primary reason for change	Secondary reason for change	Tertiary reason for change
Village A				
A01	HHH's father had 160 J rainfed, 6 J irrigated and 250+ livestock; after his father's death in 2010 the HHH received 26 J rainfed, 1 J irrigated, 15 livestock	Large land and livestock ownership buffer the household from shock	Land division	Sale of livestock for medical expenditures
A02	Sold 10 J and 30 livestock in 2014; household owns 4 J, leases an additional 15 J, and has between 300 and 500 livestock	Sold land and livestock in 2010 after drought	Labour migration to Mazar, Iran, and Turkey after drought	Large livestock holdings, connections for loans and history as a wealthy family in the village buffer household from shock
A04	Inherited 10 J from father before 2008, bought another 10 J in 2012-13 through sale of livestock	Lost harvest and sold livestock in 2010 after drought	Labour migration to Iran after drought	Labour migration to Mazar
Village B				
B03	Received 1 J irrigated land for daughter's <i>peshkash</i> – total of 45 J rainfed, 1.5 irrigated, and 3 livestock	Large land ownership buffers household from shocks	Connections that secure contracted labour positions for the HHH with development projects in the village	Labour migration to Mazar after drought
B05	No change – 60 J rainfed, 2 J irrigated and 80 livestock	Large land and livestock ownership buffers household from shocks	Asset losses during droughts and floods – lost entire harvest in the drought in 2010, and half of their land and some livestock lost in flooding in 2014	Labour migration to Sar-i-Pul City and Mazar after the drought and flood
B06	No change – 6 J rainfed, 1 J irrigated, 5 livestock	Labour migration of 4 sons to Mazar	Household headed by disabled cobbler	Land assets contribute to finances
Village C				
C01	Inherited 40 J of 70 J of rainfed land from father and bought additional 3 J in 2013; inherited 300 livestock	Large land and livestock ownership buffers household from shocks	Labour migration of 2 sons to Iran, Mazar, Baghlan, Kabul, and Kunduz	Loss of harvest and livestock after drought and flood
C06	No change – has remained landless	No regular employment in the household	Landless	Debt to human smuggler
C07	No change – has remained landless	No regular employment in the household	Landless	

solely on land and livestock assets, and does not have a household member migrating for work or employed in the urban sector. In 2008-09 the household was recovering from a series of financial misfortunes, but its assets have enabled it to remain one of the wealthiest in the village despite setbacks.

After the drought in 2010-11 the household sold 150 sheep to purchase food and daily necessities, and an additional 15 livestock for 200,000 Af\$ (US \$3,000) when the HHH's father was ill and they needed to pay for his medical treatment. The siblings separated upon their father's death in 2010, dividing the land among three brothers and two sisters with each receiving around 26

jeribs of rainfed land and 1 *jerib* of irrigated land. The HHH also inherited ten sheep, two donkeys, and one ox, and over the past four years has purchased another ox and ten more sheep. His wife and eldest son take them to graze ('go to *ailoq*')²⁵ for 15 days at a time. In addition to the income from their land, the household also trades livestock, selling three or four per year according to need. With a sizeable area of land and livestock each, the land division did not have a large impact on the household's livelihood and reports indicate that all parties are still amicably connected. Despite his wealth, the HHH is not part of the CDC – while he is seen to be influential, this influence is exercised through other ways (Shaw, 2010).

The former HHH of **A02**, Mirza Shah, was the village leader and supervisor of the CDC, and died in 2014. He was a pro-government sub-commander for the *mujahedeen* and retained political connections at the provincial and district level. Following his death, his second son inherited the position of HHH, leader of the village, and head of the CDC. In addition to his father's connections, the new HHH has expanded his external network through his own involvement with the District Development Assembly (DDA). These connections, alongside his position in the village and the fact that he has a university degree, secured him employment with UNOPS, where he supervises project implementation and is paid 20-25,000 Afs (US\$300-380) per month.

Despite this apparent prosperity and political connections, the household has also suffered misfortunes over the years that have led to significant asset loss. The household began to incur debts following the drought in 2011, which continued to accumulate until 2014 and has led to an increasing dependency on remittance income. In the aftermath of the drought, the household sold 30 sheep and relocated to Mazar, where they lived for one year with their father's brother. Their father had been a successful *jallabi* in the village and so continued this in Mazar, while the first son migrated to Iran and sent monthly remittances. After the second drought in 2014, the third son went to Iran, staying for two years. Two months prior to our interview he travelled to Turkey in search of work but has yet to send any money home. In 2014 the household borrowed 1,400,000 Afs (US\$21,000) from their uncle who owns a bakery in Mazar for their father's extensive medical treatment in

Pakistan, his funeral, and for their grandmother's funeral as she died 40 days after their father. In order to repay their uncle, they sold ten *jeribs* of land and 30 livestock, but remain in debt of 700,000 Afs (US\$10,600). They now own four *jeribs* of land and lease an additional 15 *jeribs* for yearly wheat production.²⁶ The respondents were less forthcoming about two other likely major sources of income: although the household reported they have between 20 and 50 sheep, the interview team noted that they appeared to have between 300 and 500; moreover, whilst the household claimed it was not involved in opium harvesting, dried opium pods were seen in the yard.

The HHH of **A04** is literate (he studied to class six), and is a former commander of the *mujahedeen* which gives him connections to the district level. He was elected to the CDC in 2009, but lost the post as he was forced to go to Iran after the drought. As in 2008-09, the HHH is the only regularly employed member of the household as his eldest son is a student and therefore cannot work full time on their land. Although the household has 20 *jeribs* of rainfed land, their income has long been underpinned by labour migration. During the drought the household had no harvest and sold all of their livestock to pay 10-15,000 Afs (US\$150-230) for agricultural inputs obtained on credit. After this, the HHH attempted to travel to Iran but was arrested and deported three times before successfully being able to enter. Employed as a daily wage labourer in the construction industry for two years, he sent 5,000 Afs (US\$75) per month to the family, which was their sole source of income. His earnings have allowed the household to begin to slowly recover their assets. Upon his return to the village the HHH bought 20 sheep, but now, like many other villagers, relies primarily on income from labour in the brick kilns in Mazar. The livestock contribute a modest secondary income of 750 Afs (US\$11) per month. He also has significantly less and more piecemeal revenue from his land (the grain budget provides food for two months a year to six-seven months per year depending on the rain), and from 12 days harvesting opium earlier in the year that paid 6,000 Afs (US\$90).

Village B

Household **B03** has 45 *jeribs* of rainfed land and one and a half *jeribs* of irrigated land. While most was

²⁵ Respondents refer to grazing livestock as 'going to *ailoq*' as *ailoq* refers to a grassy area in the desert.

²⁶ In 2008-09 A02 reported their land ownership to be 40 *jeribs* of rainfed land and 4 *jeribs* of irrigated land. This is inconsistent with reports in this third wave, however, which suggests that they began with only 14 *jeribs* of rainfed land (the household reportedly sold ten *jeribs* to be left with four). This could be because of underreporting of land, which is to be expected to some degree. As noted above, the household also underreported their livestock numbers in wave three.

inherited, one *jerib* of their irrigated land was given to the household 15 days before the interview as part of their daughter's *peshkash*. Farming is central to their livelihood and they largely depend on land for income even though they have had to sell assets over the years to deal with hardship. Their eldest son was injured by the Taliban in 2000 and is now disabled and cannot work. When he was injured, the household sold 400 square meters of irrigated land for 25,000 Afs (US\$380) and seven *jeribs* of rainfed land for 60,000 Afs (US\$900) to pay for medical expenses. Since 2013 they have received a total of 60,000 Afs (US\$900) from the government under a programme for people injured in the war and, with this, dug a well inside their house in 2014. The HHH worked in Mazar after the drought in 2010-11 for a period of five to six months. Now, through a personal connection he has with a contractor, the HHH works on development projects when they come to the village, (there were three in 2015) and is employed for up to four months at a time. Rather than receiving a salary he is paid in-kind with wheat and melons.

Household **B05** has 60 *jeribs* of rainfed land, two *jeribs* of irrigated land, and around 80 livestock. As the household relies heavily on these assets they suffered immensely during the periods of irregular water flow, losing all of their harvest in the drought year, half of their harvest in the flood in 2014, as well as some livestock amounting to total losses of 35,000 Afs (US\$530). They were able to recover to some degree through labour migration of five family members (four sons and the HHH) to Sar-i-Pul City and Mazar, though a family conflict and lack of employment opportunities led their second son to separate from the family one year ago. He now lives and works in Mazar with his wife and children and is no longer financially connected to the household. This has had a major impact on the household as it represents a loss of crucial male labour.

B06 has struggled since 2008-09. Headed by an 80-year-old disabled cobbler, the household has six *jeribs* of rainfed land, one *jerib* of irrigated land and five livestock. The household has been accruing debt from the *jammadar*, friends and relatives in the village over the years and now owes 100,000 Afs (US\$1,500) to various parties. Having worked in brick kilns in Pakistan, the household's four sons have worked in Mazar since their return to Afghanistan in 2000-2002, which is the main source of income for the family. After the drought in 2011 the household sold one cow for 30,000 Afs (US\$450), but were able to replace it in 2015 with their sons' earnings. Between interviews two and three, the

HHH's daughter broke her back in an accident; she was admitted to the hospital in Kabul and had an operation that cost 100,000 Afs (US\$1,500), which depleted the savings that the household had accrued from their previous season of work in Mazar.

Village C

Large landholdings, livestock and the labouring of two sons has helped maintain household **C01** despite numerous shocks. However, the role of land and livestock in the household economy makes the household vulnerable to erratic rains. The HHH inherited 300 sheep and 40 *jeribs* of rainfed land from his father, and bought an additional three *jeribs* of rainfed land in 2013. However, he subsequently sold 233 livestock to pay for the marriages of his three sons, as well as his own wedding to his third wife. An additional 17 livestock were sold to buy wheat following the drought. In 2015 the HHH's mother fell sick, and they spent 180,000 Afs (US\$2,700) on her treatment and funeral. His father is also chronically ill and the household has spent 600,000 Afs (US\$9,000) since 2004 on his treatment. C01 is a highly mobile household with the sons regularly travelling throughout the country – to Baghlan, Kabul, or Kunduz in search of wage labour, and to the brick fields in Mazar. After the drought year the household lost all of its harvest on 70 *jeribs* of land, and again after the flood in 2014. Both times two sons went to Iran to compensate for the losses and they sold 50 more sheep.

The former HHH of **C06** died in 2008, making it a female headed household. When the former HHH fell ill in 2006 the household spent around 50,000 Afs (US\$760) on his treatment. Three months prior to our interview the second son bought a small piece of land in Sheberghan and moved there because of a conflict between his wife and his mother. Although he no longer contributes to the household financially, his separation does not seem to have had a significant impact on the household, apart from the emotional strain on his mother. The household is now dependent on daily wage labour of two remaining sons and the FHH's activities spinning wool for about 400 Afs (US\$6) per month. One son is a shepherd for a village *bai* and is paid 3,000 Afs (US\$45) per month. In 2013 her elder son went to Iran for wage labour but was deported after three months and did not earn enough to pay the smuggler that took him there. His income upon returning to Afghanistan has thus gone towards paying this debt. Although three daughters have married since 2008, the FHH did not collect a *peshkash* for them as the marriages were exchanges.

In the 2008-09 report, it was said that household **C07** 'represents the struggling wage-labour-dependent section of the village with few working-age males' (Shaw, 2010). This remains an accurate description of the household today. A landless household, the HHH harvests wheat for daily wage rates in the summer and collects wood for fuel in the winter. Unable to find work in the village, he regularly travels to surrounding districts, staying for up to 20 days at a time. His wife spins wool, contributing an irregular and small wage to the household. His eldest son is a shepherd for the village head's brother, but has committed to working for one year before receiving an agreed payment of 40,000 Afs (US\$600) so the household has yet to see any income from his work.

The above accounts illustrate the narrow margin between prospering and coping households. Many of the coping households come from a similar portfolio of resources and income: a small amount of land and livestock, coupled with diversified livelihood activities such as labour migration and employment in the urban sector. As with prospering households, those with political or social connections and/or salaried employment fare better. Those who are dependent on rainfed land tend to suffer greater losses when water is scarce, or when resources need to be mobilised for health treatment, marriage, or an unexpected debt.

6.3 Declining households

Table 8 outlines the livelihood trajectories of declining households since 2008-09.

Village A

Landless and poor in 2008-09, the former HHH of **A05** died in 2011. His son, now 48 years old, has replaced him as the head. During the Soviet period the family moved around Sar-i-Pul province, from the nearby villages of Pesta Mazar and Yakaw Lang, to the districts of Kohistanat and Sancharak, staying in each place between six months and two years, before finally relocating to Pakistan until after Karzai was elected in 2004. The HHH and his brother are both irregularly employed in daily wage labour for most of the year. After the drought the HHH went to Iran for 22 months, which was the household's only income at that time. However, in 2016 the HHH began cultivating opium in a sharecropping arrangement with his neighbour, and is responsible for

a 220m² area of land. In 2016 his income from opium amounted to 8,200 Afs (US\$124), and was crucial for the household:

*'The money that I earned from opium harvest, this money was very important for me. If I did not have this money, there will be no food items in my house and I would have to take loan from someone.'*²⁷

Household **A07** is effectively female headed as the male head has been bedridden due to ill-health since 2006. The household is landless and, as in 2008-09, they live in a house rent-free on charitable terms. With no sons and young dependent daughters, the household has been heavily reliant on their daughters' *peshkashes* as active sources of income. The household receives 2-3,000 Afs (US\$30-45) per month from their most recently engaged daughter, which they use for daily expenditures and sustenance; and received 200,000 Afs (US\$3,000) in 2011 and 250,000 Afs (US\$3,800) in 2015 for their eldest two daughters, which were used for their father's medical bills and regular daily spending. The household struggles to buy grain from January to April, as daily wage labour in the village dries up during the winter and their daughter's fiancé cannot keep up with his monthly *peshkash* installments.

The FHH and two of her daughters also spin wool for quilts for a shopkeeper in village B. She commented: 'all the time we are busy in spinning wool, only when we are eating or sleeping we do not spin wool'.²⁸ The quilts, which take approximately 20 days to weave, must be completed before they receive their payment of 250-300 Afs (US\$3.70-4.50) from the shopkeeper. Though meager, this income is regular and vital as it enables the FHH to purchase food. Aside from this, the household regularly receives food from their neighbours as charity. The household migrated to Mazar between the second and third interview of the third wave, likely so that the female members could make bricks (this was discussed as a possibility in the second interview).

Household **A08** relocated to Sar-i-Pul City in 2010. Before moving, the HHH was irregularly employed and struggling to survive in the village with daily wage labour – he was only able to find work for five to ten days per month. The eldest son went first to Sar-i-Pul City in search of work, where he found a job as a live-in cleaner. For two years he was paid 2,000 Afs (US\$30) per month, which

²⁷ Interview 3, male respondent

²⁸ Interview 2, female respondent

Table 8: Declining households – asset changes and major drivers of change

HH	Land asset changes since 2008-09	Primary reason for change	Secondary reason for change	Tertiary reason for change
Village A				
A05	No change – has remained landless	No regular employment in the household	Landless	N/A
A07	No change – has remained landless	Lack of male labour – no sons and a bedridden HHH	Landless	N/A
A08	No change – has remained landless	Lost house in flood and relocated to Sar-i-Pul City	Irregular employment	Landless
Village B				
B02	Sold all 5 J of land inherited from father to pay debt to <i>jammadar</i>	Unemployed HHH	Sale of land and assets	Large debt from medical expenditure
B07	Sold 3 J of rainfed land after the drought and now gives out the rest as sharecrop	No male labour	Household reliant on women's income generation	Sale and sharecropping of land after drought and loss of male labour
B08	No change – 3.5 J of rainfed land	One source of male labour (brick-making in Mazar)	Household headed by a widow	Large debt from son's marriage
Village C				
C04	Has remained landless; sold 3 sheep after the drought	Large debt from failed business investments, medical expenditure and marriages	Landless	Sale of livestock after drought
C05	Has remained landless; sold 20 sheep, 2 camels and 1 horse	Sale of assets for medical expenditure	Large debt from medical expenditure and a dispute with another family in the village	Landless

became essential income for the household. When his employment ended he began working for their neighbour, a shopkeeper and teacher referred to as Malem, and then later he was hired by a connection of a Malem, Haji Habibullah. At the same time, the family lost their house in the flood and decided to relocate entirely to Sar-i-Pul City. The family took up residence in a 'ruined house' on land belonging to Haji Habibullah, who offered to build them two rooms attached to his home if they would tend his garden. Effectively shifting to a position of tied labour, this arrangement remains in place today. Greater security in their housing situation has allowed slightly more freedom for them to seek other labour opportunities. One year after the household relocated, the eldest son was able to go to Iran for ten months for wage labour; however he returned home with only 3,000 Afs (US\$45) as the rest was used to pay his smuggler.

Though no longer employed by Malem, the household receives ongoing patronage from him, totaling around

77,000 Afs (US\$1,200) in cash and food items. Before moving to Sar-i-Pul City, a number of severe health issues plagued the family, resulting in the death of four children and two others becoming paralysed. Although the sick children were treated at the Sayyad District Clinic, poor quality services meant that none recovered. One of their children was ill after they moved to Sar-i-Pul City and they borrowed the money for his treatment (5,000 Afs/US\$75) from Malem.

Village B

In 2008-09, household **B02** was experiencing an extremely sharp decline. The HHH is the son of a formerly wealthy *bai* with numerous political connections, but he separated from his father and brothers in 2011 and joined the military. The HHH inherited five *jeribs* of rainfed land but was forced to sell it to pay back a debt that his brother owed to the village *jammadar*. In 2012 he spent 60,000 Afs (US\$900) on medical treatment for his father,

and a few years later borrowed another 60,000 Afs (US\$900) for health services for his son; he remains in debt from these expenses. After five years in the military, the HHH returned to the village and has since not been able to find employment. However, while in the army, the HHH established an arrangement with a shopkeeper (who is his relative) in which the family took food and other items on credit and would pay the debt at the end of each month. He has managed to maintain this relationship despite the fact that he no longer has an income, and so the household has become heavily dependent on this relationship to ensure that they have necessary items, including food.

B07 has also experienced a sharp decline and is now exclusively dependent on income generated by female members of the household. In 2011 the HHH, who has two wives, had a heart attack and became disabled. As there are no sons in the household above the age of six, the household lost their only source of labour. After the drought of 2010-11 the household sold three *jeribs* of land, two sheep, and one cow, leaving them with eight *jeribs* of rainfed land, three *jeribs* of irrigated land, one donkey and three goats; however, they began sharecropping out their land when the HHH was no longer able to tend it and now receive only 25% of the harvest each year. In 2010 the first wife began working sporadically as a cleaner and cook in the home of the head of the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs, Haji Hashim. Though the work was irregular ('whenever he would call me') and the wages meagre (150 - 200 Afs/US\$2.30-3.00 per day), it developed into an important relationship for the household because of the benefits that accompanied it. When asked whether she had tried to negotiate her wage with Haji Hashim, the household head responded:

'No, because they are bai people and know better, also their family has been helping me too. They give lunch sometimes, and they give some extra food that I bring home too.'²⁹

This irregular employment has led to other work with a different village *bai*. In addition to spinning wool for quilts (for which she can make 2,000 Afs (US\$30) in six months), the second wife also sharecrops *poliz* (melons) on his land. She has been doing this since 2014, sharecropping from July to September, earning 4,000 Afs (US\$60) per month. In 2009 the second wife's daughter was married

for a *peshkash* of 70,000 Afs (US\$1,000) with which the household bought three goats and one donkey.

Household **B08** has been female headed by a widow since 2004. In 2008-09 the household was in a fragile position and has since experienced a decline primarily because of a large debt from her son's wedding in 2006 (100,000 Afs/US\$1,500) and damage caused to their home in the flood of 2014. In an attempt to clear their debt, the HHH took a loan of 50,000 Afs (US\$750) shortly after her son was married and bought a horse through a member of her tribe with the intention of reselling it at higher value. She kept it for a year but sustained a loss when she eventually sold it for 40,000 Afs (US\$600). Later she bought five goats at 2,000 Afs each (US\$30) on credit, and again lost money when she could only sell four goats for 2,000 Afs and the fifth for 1,500 Afs (US\$22). The household is primarily sustained by her son's labour in the brick kilns of Mazar, where he has worked for six months a year since 2003-04. They have three and a half *jeribs* of rainfed land, but with no male labourer to tend it, the FHH sharecrops the land out and therefore receives only half of the harvest (between 30 and 50 seers). The FHH also stitches quilts for a small profit of 100 Afs (US\$1.50) per quilt.

C04 has experienced a steep decline since 2008-09. With only one male labourer and no land, the HHH has tried various income-generating activities since 2011, including selling three sheep and using the income to begin selling vegetables as a vendor in Sar-i-Pul City. In 2012 he borrowed 150,000 Afs (US\$2,300) to open a small street food stall in Sar-i-Pul City. These endeavours have not been entirely successful as he has sunk into debt of 310,000 Afs (US\$4,700). In addition to the loan for the food stall, the HHH took another loan of 150,000 Afs in 2016 to pay the *peshkash* for his son's future bride, as well as 10,000 Afs (US\$150) for his daughter's medical treatment. Urgently needing cash, the HHH recently mortgaged his home for 60,000 Afs (US\$900) and moved his family to a rented house for which they pay 1,500 Afs (US\$22) per month. They have also been dependent on their daughter's *peshkash* as an income source.

Household **C05** has lost a significant amount of their assets and savings through a series of misfortunes. The HHH's father fell ill in 2008, and they spent more than 250,000 Afs (US\$3,800) on his medical treatment in Pakistan, Mazar and Sar-i-Pul City. By selling 20

²⁹ B08, female respondent, interview 3

sheep, two camels and one horse the household raised 150,000 Afs (US\$2,300), an additional 80,000 Afs (US\$1,225) was used from their savings, and they took loans of 100,000 Afs (US\$1,530). In addition to medical expenses, this money was used for daily expenditures. Before his illness, the father was a teacher with the only salaried income in the household. The HHH attempted to go to Iran for work following his father's illness but was sent back at the border. In 2010 a woman in the village accused the HHH's brother of rape; the male respondent did not mention this incident and it was difficult to get the female respondent to talk about it in detail, though what is clear is that they paid 500,000 Afs (US\$7,600) to various parties including the Taliban, Haji Nazar Bai (the village leader), and the District Governor to resolve the issue through traditional dispute resolution. In order to raise this money, the household sold 20 sheep and 15 goats, as well as some land, although the size of this is unclear. The HHH's brother was married in 2016, and in order to pay the *peshkash* the household gave 20 sheep and sold 13 *jeribs* of land for 150,000 Afs (US\$2,300). After his marriage, the HHH's brother went to Iran for wage labour to pay back the debts that had accrued. The household was also unable to harvest their remaining 20 *jeribs* of land in 2016 due to water scarcity. Without land or livestock, their livelihood has declined as the household now survives solely on wage labour of the HHH who, unable to find work in the village, works for six months a year in Baghlan, Mazar or Kunduz.

The above stories show that lack of male labour, irregular or limited employment, debts, and sale of assets have contributed to the decline of these households. Also common to these accounts are idiosyncratic shocks such as the unexpected expenses of a medical emergency or the loss of harvest which causes households to take on new debts. Labour migration is crucial to survival.

Also emerging from these accounts is evidence of the importance of patronage and relationships to the survival of a struggling household: many of these households reported at least partial dependence on some form of charitable relationship for access to food on credit or loans to purchase necessities.

6.4 Summary

There are a number of commonalities between these three groups of prospering, coping and declining households. All have faced specific demands in relation to marriage costs or medical expenses that have required them to raise capital and have led them into debt. Coming from a position of relative wealth with large landholdings, some households have connections that they have been able to leverage. A position within the CDC, or access to paid labour or to regular employment, has allowed them to weather these events. However, the unreliability of agriculture and the volatility of livestock assets makes the division between coping and decline or between prospering and coping narrow and unstable. The geographic context – limited irrigation in an area prone to droughts and floods – virtually guarantees that income in cash or kind derived from land and livestock will be volatile. This has driven households to diversify their livelihood activities, with household that are both relatively wealthy and those that are poor being equally reliant on remittances and other sources of income from outside the rural economy. The very poor households have limited access to these non-farm sources of income, however. Households in each of the three categories depend on relationships, albeit in different ways: households in well-off positions are able to leverage their relationships to secure additional resources, while patronage can be crucial to the survival of struggling households.

7 Household coping mechanisms

As noted, data collection in 2008-09 for the second wave of the livelihood trajectories study took place on the heels of a major drought in Sar-i-Pul that lasted from 2006 to 2008. The impacts of this were multiple and profound. Evidence pointed to widespread economic decline due to crop failure in Sayyad district in the spring of 2008 that pushed households into crisis and acute food insecurity (Shaw, 2010). Households sold assets (particularly livestock) to meet daily food needs. Labourers migrated to find work, women intensified their income-generation activities and households took on more debt in order to survive. The region faced another drought from 2010 to 2011, and a spring flood in 2014. Although these shocks led to the permanent out-migration of a number of households, many stayed, with some not only recovering but improving their circumstances.

Findings from this third study wave suggest that there are four major activities that have supported recovery or survival. First, labour migration to Iran or to work in the Mazar brick fields has remained foundational to most household economies. Second, women have become increasingly involved in the brickfield work and there has been a general increase in the economic contribution of women to the household, both through labour migration and livestock grazing. Third, livestock continue to be an important buffer against livelihood shocks. Finally, there has been a resurgent opium economy that has not only created more work but has doubled wage rates for casual labour.

7.1 Labour migration

Households in Sayyad have long been mobile, with seasonal migration for work to Pakistan, Iran or Mazar. Migration has become more long-term in periods of conflict and drought. In 2008-09 labour migration patterns reflected historical migration routes with Iran as the preferred destination for migrants from villages A and C, and Pakistan for those from village B. Though work in Mazar's brickfields has been common in the district since 2001, in 2008-09 it served only as a supplement to livelihoods and was less common than migration to Iran or Pakistan. This has changed dramatically in the third study wave: while there were no reports of travelling to Pakistan for work since 2008-09, six of the seven respondents in village A who migrated for work went to Mazar, as did all five migrating households from village B. On the other hand, all five households from village C who migrated for work went to Iran. It is not uncommon for one household to have several family members in different places for work (Kunduz, Kabul, Sar-i-Pul City and Baghlan were also

mentioned) at different times, however (see Appendix 1, Table 1 – Migration). Taken together, the evidence emphasises the immense importance of labour migration to household finances and the more general role of labour migration in the economy in all study villages.

Though labour migration should be viewed as an extension of longstanding diversification strategies employed by households during previous periods of hardship, the practice expanded significantly in Sar-i-Pul between 2002 and 2008-09 and has continued to grow. Shaw (2010) reports that it was common for lone male members to travel to Mazar, whereas now entire households in villages A and B have shifted seasonally to work in the kilns, including women and children. Indeed, the research team estimated that migration to Mazar has risen in village B from 40% to 70% of households.³⁰ With agricultural production failing and livestock assets subject to major volatility, the extent of migration reflects the lack of work opportunities in the village.

Migration to Mazar is facilitated by *jammadars* in villages A and B, who are specific to the brick kilns of Mazar and therefore are not to be found in village C. Although not part of village governance, *jammadars* play an immensely important role in the village by acting as creditors and securing work in the kilns. Evidence from an in-depth study on brick kilns in Kabul and Nangarhar (ILO, 2011) suggests that nearly all those who work in the kilns are bonded labourers – tied by debt to the owners of the brick fields with the *jammadar* as the key actor in these dependent relationships. They act as the middleman between the brick-field owner and the labourers, and are responsible for recruiting workers and managing credit relations. Typically, in the winter when households have no access to work and limited or no food stores, the *jammadar* will give a cash advance to the household provided by the owner of the brick field. People will also take loans from the *jammadar* for specific events or projects such as house reconstruction, marriage or funeral costs.³¹ The household is then indebted to the *jammadar*, who is in turn indebted to the kiln owner as he is held responsible for repaying loans if the household does not. The hierarchical nature of this debt means that personal relationships and accountability are crucial to maintaining this arrangement; the kiln owner will not hire anyone outside the *jammadars*'

recruitment, and the *jammadar* in turn will not recruit anyone outside the village or whom they do not have some family, community, or ethnic tie with. For example, one of the main *jammadars* of village B has been living in Mazar for a number of years, but because he is originally from the village he has maintained the necessary networks to continue recruiting from there. There are seven *jammadars* in village A and 20 to 30 in village B, each of whom deal with between ten and 20 households – indicating that more than 100 people in village A alone are likely to be in various cycles of debt and repayment at the same time.

Labour in the kilns is paid as a wage per family, with households paid 400 Afs (US\$6) for every 1,000 bricks they make. Depending on how many people are working and how productive they are, households can make between 1,000 and 3,000 bricks per day for a daily income of between 400 and 1,200 Afs (US\$6-18).³² Generally, elderly family members accompany the household only to cook and clean, but all other physically able men, women and children labour for the season. As one respondent commented:

'Even I know that pregnant women, and some women 20 days after the birth of their baby are back working on making bricks.'³³

Working conditions in the kilns are notoriously grim, as wage levels typically mean that labourers are pushed to work as much as possible in order to pay off their cash advance and save a little, although this is difficult. Households can easily find themselves in a situation of debt bondage to the *jammadars*, trapped in a cycle of debt in the winter and repayment in the summer. With limited options for employment elsewhere and low wages in the kilns, it can be extremely difficult to break out of debts. Households reported selling livestock and other assets to pay loans, but more common was a commitment to work in the kilns the next season to repay their loans:

'People have to continue with the jammadar for the next year as well ... therefore continually people are working in the brick kilns for the jammadar to cover their loan.'³⁴

³⁰ Village B debriefing – unpublished notes from SLRC field researchers.

³¹ B04, male respondent, interview 3.

³² A03, male respondent, interview 3.

³³ B04, female respondent, interview 3.

³⁴ B07, female respondent, interview 3.

Despite being trapped in this cycle of debt and repayment, it can still be seen as a privilege of sorts to have access to this credit; as mentioned earlier, loans are only given to those that have some kind of relationship with the *jammadar* and so are not available to everyone. It is difficult to assess whether an increasing dependence on brick kiln work stems from an inability to find other employment, the unreliability of rainfed agriculture, or a deepening of the debt cycle to the *jammadar*, but it is likely to be a combination of all three. As the following quote shows though, labour migration was absolutely crucial to recovery after the drought in 2008:

'There were two droughts, the one that happened 8 years ago was a really bad drought and caused most of the people to leave the village and go to Iran, Mazar and Pakistan for work. There was nothing for people or animals that year so most people sold the livestock because they had no fodder. In that year all the villagers lost their harvest and even the people who were daily labour left the village because there was no work for them ... My father came [back to the village] in March of next year [after the drought year] and he started cultivation again on our lands but we remained in Mazar as there was no hope to have enough food in the village. Like my father some of the people started coming to village to cultivate the lands and this procedure started slowly that people came back to the village and cultivated the lands and some of the people started buying of animals from the money that they were receiving from Iran, Pakistan or working in Mazar or other provinces. During harvesting time we also moved from Mazar and returned to the village.'³⁵

In addition to debt accrued during and immediately after the drought, marriage costs and medical expenses represent major reasons why households take loans. With the payment of a *peshkash* ranging between 70,000 and 600,000 Af\$ (US\$1,000-9,000), this can provide a considerable source of revenue for households with many daughters (as in household B07). On the other hand, it can be extremely difficult for households with many sons, so remittances from migrant family members, loans from the *jammadar* or relatives, the sale of land or livestock, or some combination of all four are needed. As commented by the head of household A03:

'... collecting such a huge amount of money from the income of land is quite difficult ... they need to collect between 10,000 to 15,000 Af\$ annually and it will take up to three to four years [to save the full amount], but only when they have good harvest from their land. In those cases where people want to marry to their sons [and cannot get enough] money from their land income, they must work in other sectors like the brick fields in Mazar to find money to pay such a huge amount of dowry. Such people also find money from other sources, like getting a loan or selling their assets. Similarly, I had some savings and I borrowed 30,000 Af\$ from my friend. So far I did not pay back that loan, but I plan to when the jammadar pays my wages from the owner of brick factory.'³⁶

Expenditures associated with health events also have the potential to deplete savings and contribute to household debt. Aside from the obvious tragedy that local health facilities are often unable to treat the ill or injured, the cost of seeking repeated medical attention both in Afghanistan and abroad can cripple household finances.

Migrating further afield to Iran or Pakistan emphasises the lack of options in the local rural economy. In the best scenarios, migrants earn enough to finance specific events, like marriages, or are able to send regular remittances during periods of financial hardship. However, the journey, often made on foot with human smugglers, is riddled with obstacles including the risk of arrest, imprisonment, deportation and injuries. There is also the possibility that the process will contribute to or create debt if the migrant does not earn enough to pay the smuggler, thus making the journey a net drain on household resources. Despite these risks, however, labour migration has remained a mainstay of the rural household as few other opportunities exist.

7.2 Opium cultivation

As noted earlier, while respondents were reluctant to give specific details about their involvement with opium production, most were quite willing to speak about indirect elements such as eradication efforts, the return of opium poppy cultivation, the major actors involved, and how it has impacted households in the district. As a result, a general story about opium poppy cultivation in the district can be extracted from the interview transcripts.

³⁵ A02, male respondent, interview 2.

³⁶ Male respondent, interview 2

The attempts to eradicate opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan have had a mixed history with rather unsuccessful outcomes. Respondents spoke of eradication efforts reaching the district in approximately 2006. However, in village A, the upper portion of the village was under the control of insurgents and so cultivation continued throughout Karzai's presidency, with households in the lower part beginning cultivation in 2015. Cultivation also started again in 2015 in village B, and in 2013 in village C.

Eradication efforts were initially successful in Sayyad district as there was a monetary incentive for development projects to be distributed to so-called opium poppy-free districts. Sayyad district was named opium-free in 2008,³⁷ but the funds were reportedly given to another better connected district that was known to be cultivating opium. This angered people and, given the poor wheat harvests, conditions for the return of opium poppy production were established in the district. Although it is difficult to ascertain the exact number of households involved in cultivation, the head of village C estimated that of the total land in Sayyad district, anywhere from 10% to 50% is dedicated to opium production, with variations between villages.³⁸ The harvest of one *jerib*, or 10kg, of opium sells for around 110,000 Afs (US\$1,650), or 11,000 Afs (US\$165) per kilogram. Compared to one *jerib* of rainfed land which, in a good year, can yield around 60 seers of wheat that will sell for 6,500 Afs (US\$100), the returns are significantly higher. Crucially, those who cultivate opium hire labourers from the village during harvest, providing jobs and a higher daily wage rate. The daily wage rate for opium-related labour activities is between 400 Afs (US\$6) for weeding the land and 500 Afs (US\$7.50) for lancing of the poppy to release sap, a significant increase from the standard 250-300 Afs (US\$3.70-4.50) for on-farm employment. Perceptions of the impact that opium cultivation has had on people's lives was unanimously positive amongst respondents, as the following quotes illustrate:

'It has lots of good impact on the economy of the families. It a good opportunity for a farmer to support the family easily with income from opium compare to other crops ... If you work for a month you will have ... enough to buy wheat for a year.'³⁹

'Those people who have been cultivating opium they are having a better life than us. The people who are cultivating opium have better opportunities; for example their women have gold, they have nice cloths and they have better meals.'⁴⁰

Though the sample households were only engaging in small-scale cultivation at the time of writing, many reported that they would engage in larger cultivation in the coming years due to the high returns. The opium season lasts five months, from January to May, and requires three separate weedings before the actual harvest and poppy lancing, which provides people with opportunities for work. Cultivation and weeding is primarily done by young men and women because of the labour involved, while older men and women and children as young as six are also involved in the lancing process.

It was also reported that village elders from Sayyad district were granted permission from the District Governor's office to begin cultivation in exchange for a fee of 1 kg for every 10 kg of opium produced:

'Last year people did not get good [wheat] harvests from their land. As result this year some of the whitebeard come together and went to District Governor of Sayyad [district]. They told him ... our people did not cultivate opium in past years. Last year people in our district did not get good harvest of wheat from their land and now all the people are very poor. This year there is no rain and I am sure when there is no rain, they will not get wheat and other harvest from their land. If you give permission to them to cultivate opium in their land, it will be a survival harvest for them. After that the District Governor discussed the matter with these whitebeards and gave permission to cultivate opium in their land. From each big village there was one whitebeard.'⁴¹

This informal negotiation around the cultivation of opium poppy is not confined to the local government but also includes the police and the Taliban. Growers pay a series of informal fees to a number of parties (both

³⁷ While cultivation continued in insurgent-occupied areas in the district, according to our respondents those areas were more or less ignored as the government could not, or did not wish to, access them.

³⁸ C02, male respondent, interview 2.

³⁹ A04, male respondent, interview 2.

⁴⁰ A06, female respondent, interview 2.

⁴¹ A05, male respondent, interview 3.

state actors and insurgents), with payments made to the local government to guarantee their crops will not be eradicated (the fee paid to the District Governor is split with the Chief of Police), and *ushr* (an Islamic tax that is paid on the production of both irrigated and rainfed land) to the Taliban. Other sources confirm that government officials are involved with the opium trade – in 2015 the Afghan Analysts Network (AAN) quoted a Sar-i-Pul provincial council member who stated that the ALP was protecting cultivators in the district and working against eradication efforts of the central government (Bjelica, 2015).

There was a widespread perception that opium poppy eradication in areas under government control was unequal, with only poor families without political connections having their crop eradicated while the cultivation of the rich *bais* went unnoticed. This pushed people to seek protection from the Taliban and work in areas under the insurgents' control.⁴² The major cultivators in the district were reported to have made arrangements with the District Governor and the Chief of Police to ensure their fields would not be cleared in exchange for a fee of 1kg for every 10kg of opium produced. Some of the larger producers were also said to be government officials, whose actions have triggered others to restart opium poppy production:

'Those people who are in the structure of government, first these people cultivated opium in their land [and after] seeing them other people also cultivated opium in their land. If you go to other villages, where they have local police, first the head of local police cultivates opium on his land and then other people cultivate it.'⁴³

The continuing involvement of government officials in the opium economy has led some to believe that President Ghani himself 'secretly supports' opium production so Afghanistan will 'earn money and become powerful' and 'allow people to improve their lives'.⁴⁴ Local police (ALP) are responsible for collecting the payments from cultivators throughout the district, and require an additional fee from cultivators (around 500 Afs/US\$7.60 per collection). Additionally, producers also pay the Taliban 1kg of every 10kg produced as

ushr,⁴⁵ but despite all of the fees involved, the income from opium is still said to be at least 60% better than cultivation of wheat.⁴⁶ The Taliban have remained in control of the opium trade in the district, with all buying and selling occurring in the insurgent-occupied territory to the north of Sayyad district. A trader, employed by the government and usually from the ALP, buys opium at 11,000 to 12,000 Afs (US\$163-182) per kilogram and sells it to the Taliban. The insurgency thus profits twice – once on the initial payment of 1kg per 10kg produced, and again on the sale of the opium.

7.3 Livestock

The fluid nature of livestock assets makes them both a means of productive capital and an important buffer against shocks. In 2008-09 livestock assets had been almost completely depleted in the wake of the drought, particularly in villages A and C. Village B had retained more of its stores as households were not predominately pastoralists, unlike in the other two villages. According to household A02, in 2009 there were only four oxen left in the entire village (see Appendix 1, Table 2 – Household changes for a full account of livestock changes since 2008-09). The majority of households reported a relative recovery of livestock numbers since 2008-09, with significant occurrences of buying, selling and trading between study waves two and three, particularly in villages A and C. As can be seen in Tables 9-11, households became especially dependent on the sale of livestock after idiosyncratic shocks such as medical expenses, debt payments, and funeral and marriage costs. Though price volatility in the livestock sector was common after the drought when prices fell as fodder costs soared, livestock sold in 2016 for between 3,000 and 5,000 Afs (US\$45-75) each.

Those households with large livestock holdings have used them to mobilise other resources. The head of C01, for example, sold 250 sheep and goats to cover the costs of three marriages (his two eldest sons and his own to his third wife). This investment in marriage subsequently expanded the household's networks in the village, which has been crucial to ensuring continued access to credit and other means of support in the village (see Pain and Huot, 2017; Minoia et al., 2014).

⁴² B07, female respondent, interview 3

⁴³ C02, male respondent, interview 3.

⁴⁴ B07, female respondent, interview 3.

⁴⁵ A03, female respondent, interview 3.

⁴⁶ C02, male respondent, interview 2.

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For those households that have smaller stores, livestock can be sold to meet a specific expense, as in the case of B06 that sold one cow for 30,000 Afs (US\$450) to buy wheat after the drought or A05 with five sheep being accepted in 2010 as part of their daughter's dowry and offered one year later as part of their son's bride price.

As changes in livestock numbers are difficult to trace over such long periods of time due to the high volume of trade, Tables 9-11 chart respondents' accounts of

bought or sold livestock, as well as changes in absolute numbers based on responses from the 2008-09 wave. As can be seen in the tables, livestock assets are important in rural household economies, as they can be mobilised during times of financial need as illustrated by the shifts in herd sizes. However, as with land holdings, livestock are vulnerable to the elements and therefore risky assets. Thus, only those households with large livestock stores in combination with other resources and income sources can truly consider them as buffers.

Table 9: Changes in livestock holdings between wave 2 and 3 – village A

HH	Sold/exchanged	When and for what	Bought/ exchanged	When and how	Holdings in 2016 (and absolute changes since 2008-09)
A01	-150 sheep -15 sheep	-After the drought in 2010 to cover medical expenses	-20 sheep -1 ox	Beginning in 2012 using his son's income	20 sheep (-30) 2 oxen (+2) 1 donkey 0 cattle (-3)
A02	30 sheep	After the drought in 2010	-	-	300-500 livestock (-30) ^a
A03	2 sheep	In 2015 for part of son's bride price	-	-	10 goats (+10) 2 cows (+2) 2 donkeys (+2) 0 sheep (-2)
A04	-	-	20 sheep	In 2011 with Iranian remittance income	20 sheep (+20) 1 ox (+1) 1 cow (+1) 2 donkeys (+2)
A05	Given 5 sheep	In 2011 for eldest son's bride price (part of 350,000 Afs/ US\$5,250 total)	Given 5 sheep	In 2010 for eldest daughter's dowry (part of 200,000 Afs/ US\$3,000 total)	2 goats (+2)
A06	-	-	-	-	3 cows (+3) 2 oxen (+2) 1 horse (+1) 1 donkey
A07	-	-	-	-	0 (no change)
A08	-	-	-	-	0 (no change)

Notes: a) Number of livestock is unclear in the transcripts.

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Table 10: Changes in livestock holdings between wave 2 and 3 – village B

HH	Sold/exchanged	When and for what	Bought/ exchanged	When and how	Holdings in 2016 (and absolute changes since 2008-09)
B01	-		1 cow	In 2011-12 with land income	1 cow (-2) 1 horse (+1) 1 donkey (-1) 3 goats (+3)
B02	-		1 goat	In 2013 with HHH's income from the military	0 sheep (-2) 0 donkeys (-1) 1 goat (+1)
B03	-		-		2 goats (+2) 1 ox (+1) 0 cattle (-1) 0 sheep (-2) 0 donkeys (-2)
B04	-		-		2 oxen (+2) 1 cow (+1) 2 sheep (+8) 2 goats (+2)
B05	Sells sheep as <i>jallabi</i>	Continuously buying and selling			80 goat and sheep ^a (+60) 0 donkeys (-1) 0 cattle (-1)
B06	-		-		1 cow (+1) 4 sheep (+3) 0 donkey (-1)
B07	-2 sheep and 1 cow	After the drought in 2010	3 goats and 1 donkey	In 2015 with daughter's <i>peshkash</i>	1 donkey 3 goats (+3) 0 sheep (-2) 0 cows (-1)
B08	-1 horse -5 goats	In 2008 to pay debt	-1 horse -5 goats	In 2006 with loans	0 sheep (-1)

Note: a) Number of goat and sheep is unclear in the transcripts.

Table 11: Changes in livestock holdings between wave 2 and 3 – village C

HH	Sold/exchanged	When and for what	Bought/ exchanged	When and how	Holdings in 2016 (and absolute changes since 2008-09)
C01	-250 sheep and goats	-3-year period beginning in 2012 for 2 dowries	-13 donkeys -2 oxen	Beginning in 2008 with land income	50 sheep/goats (-250)
	-50 sheep and goats	After the drought in 2010			15 donkeys (+13) 2 oxen (+2)
C02	Sells sheep as <i>jallabi</i>	Continuously buying and selling			100 sheep (+60) 1 horse (+1) 1 cow (-2) 2 oxen (+2)
C03	Sells sheep as <i>jallabi</i>	Continuously buying and selling			20 sheep (+20) 1 cow (+1) 0 donkeys (-1)
C04	10 sheep	In 2016 for dowry	-10 sheep -2 donkeys	In 2007-08 with daily wage	0 sheep (-10) 2 donkeys (+1)
C05	-15 goats and 1 donkey -20 sheep	In 2008 for medical expenses and again in 2016 for dowry	-	-	0 sheep (-30) 0 donkeys (-1) 0 goats (-15)
C06	40 sheep	In 2008 for medical expenses	-	-	0 sheep (-40) 0 donkeys (-1)
C07	-		-		1 donkey (+1)
C08	-		1 donkey	Daily wage labour	1 donkey (+1)

7.4 Women's income generation

Women's involvement in income generation has undergone a transformation since 2008-09. In wave two of the study, women's work in Sar-i-Pul still sat very firmly in the realm of traditional, home-based income-generation activities, such as spinning wool for quilts, embroidery and making *gilims* (woven rugs). In 2008-09 their incomes comprised an unacknowledged yet important part of household finances, used to repay small debts in shops, meet health costs, and to ensure continued access to credit. Such income-generating activities have suffered a long-term decline, however, since conflict led to widespread displacement and since the drought of 2006-08 reduced livestock numbers and the supply of raw materials. Trading ceased as demand dropped, and women had to work longer hours to secure the same income as the price of one unit of spun wool decreased from 10 to 7 Afs (US\$0.15 to US\$0.11). By 2008-09, an emerging drought and subsequent out-migration of males were starting to affect labour division

in the villages, however, with women beginning to get involved in on-farm activities such as weeding and thinning crops, harvesting and gleaning. With limited other options for recovery, we find that by the third study wave in 2016 women have fully entered what was once a strictly male sphere of the economy: grazing sheep, sharecropping land, and labour migration to Mazar to work in the brick kilns.

Despite this reshaping of gendered labour activities, some norms remain. Women cannot, for example, go to Mazar or graze livestock alone, but must be accompanied by a male member of the family. The wife of HHH A01 grazes sheep with her son, going three hours away to the *ailoq* by donkey. They stay for 15 days at a time, for a period of two and half months in the spring. Similarly, for cultural reasons, grazing livestock is restricted to young girls and married women, and participation is restricted for women of marrying age. Sharecropping in the *poliz* (melon) economy seems to be unique, with no male accompaniment or involvement needed,

with the exception of transporting goods; the female sharecroppers live together in a small house built by the landowner (called a *kapa*) from the first of July to the end of September, weeding and tending the land until the harvest. However, women labourers are paid significantly less than their male counterparts would be: one of the wives of household B07 works on a village *bai*'s land for 4,000 Afs (US\$60) per month, averaging around 20 Afs (US\$0.30) per day. Compared to the standard on-

farm wage rate of 250-300 Afs (US\$3.70-4.50) for men, women's labour is clearly undervalued. Though women work in the brick kilns in Mazar, the earnings are paid to the male HHH. When asked how much they earned making bricks in a season, the wife of household B04 responded:

'Honestly I don't know about exact amount of money and we have never counted the money with our men.'

8 Conclusion



Though many findings of this research are specific to Sari-Pul's geographic, political and cultural context, there are larger conclusions that can be drawn.

Our first conclusion relates to the incoherence between the rhetoric of agricultural policy and evidence on the ground. As can be seen from the household-level accounts detailed throughout this report, rural households engage in a number of coping strategies to deal with both idiosyncratic shocks such as illnesses and marriage costs, as well as larger environmental crises, like droughts and floods. What is clear is that these coping strategies, while varied, are largely non-farm based; in almost no cases are households in a position to survive, let alone improve their circumstances, through agricultural pursuits alone. This is not surprising given that the majority of agricultural land in the study villages is rainfed (7,700 out of a total 8,523 *jeribs*), and that the proportion of landless households varies from 74% to 87% of each village. Thus, most households seek livelihood security from activities beyond the village, and therefore outside the rural economy, instead depending largely on remittance income and employment in urban sectors. It is clear that these households have no future in agriculture, and that the possibilities of employment in the rural economy are limited given their need to travel to Mazar, Iran, Pakistan or elsewhere. Salaried, regular employment is difficult to come by, but if found, can have significant and positive outcomes. The few households who are able to secure regular employment do so through personal networks.

Secondly, for most households, life is characterised by risk and uncertainty. As in the case of household B06, whose savings were depleted when their daughter needed an unexpected operation in Kabul, things can change in an instant. Marginal conditions demand household mobility. Some have permanently left the village, but many more travel to Iran or Mazar on a seasonal basis for work. Working in the brickfields of Mazar carries risks, however, as a household can easily get trapped in cycles of debt, either becoming bonded labour for the brick kilns or being forced to sell assets in order to repay their debt. Many households, particularly in villages A and B, are deeply dependent on credit from the *jammadar* to get them through the winter months when food stores are exhausted and opportunities to work in the village all but vanish. They therefore have no choice but to continue working in the kilns. Village C's labour migrants still travel mainly to Iran which carries its own risks of being detained by the Iranian police, deported, physical injury and even death, and the possible accrual

of debt due to a failed migration. There is little choice in either of the options and both carry substantial risks.

Marginality has also contributed to a resurgent opium economy, and with the benefits of employment and higher rural wages there is little reason to believe opium poppy production will not further expand in the future. Opium poppy cultivation has increased the demand for farm labour and has increased rural wages for men and women alike. Indeed, the head of household A04 earned 6,000 Afs (US\$90) harvesting opium for 12 days, which was greater than his income from one month working in Iran (5,000 Afs/US\$75) and nearly equal to the sale of one *jerib* of wheat (6,500 Afs/US\$98) which requires months of labour and inputs. Given this, household A04 and many others plan to increase the scale of their opium poppy cultivation in the coming years. Reports from the informants also suggest that opium producers in the district have made arrangements with both the Taliban and local government through the payment of informal production 'taxes' to ensure security for the crop.

Our research also reveals how the village connects to the outside world and the nature of power dynamics at play. A companion SLRC study (Jackson, 2016: vi) describes the 'networks of access' that govern resource and public goods distribution in Afghanistan:

'While institutions exist in name and edifice, network connections are what govern access to resources – being appointed as a governor, gaining employment in the civil service, obtaining the release of a relative from police custody, securing the right to sell vegetables in a bazaar, and so on. As a result, there are no truly "public" goods, and even the most basic forms of protection or access to education and economic opportunities must be sought through network ties.'

Given that access to resources is governed by personal networks that largely exist outside the formal structure of the state and connectivity to them, few public goods can be seen as accessible to all. In the case of Sayyad, with a largely inactive and disengaged district governor and limited personal networks beyond the district, the CDCs in the villages have served as the major channel for making connections to the district and provincial level. Pre-existing village governance structures blend with the CDC as village leaders that derived their power as traditional authorities, heads of *shuras* (village councils), or former commanders became CDC members. In village A, all CDC members cited a version of 'meeting powerful/important

people at the district and provincial level' as the most pronounced benefit of being part of the CDC. Through these connections, village leaders are able to bring public goods to the village, as in the case of two teachers to the boys' school in village A.

Without a head that has access to networks, the CDCs become an empty structure; it is the power and the influence of external networks that make it function. This is clear in the example of village C, when the village leader could no longer manage the CDC due to election regulations. While someone else took over as the official head, by using the networks that he had established during his time running the CDC, the former village leader kept implementing projects and employing people in the village as labourers. Thus, one of the most important functions of the CDC may be the reworking, expanding and consolidation of external networks for its leadership. Furthermore, as suggested by Coburn (2011), networks are characterised by mutual reciprocity and must be maintained through a system of rewards and benefits. As such, networks take time to build and this could be why the governor of Sozma Qala district, who was born in village B, continues to work for the benefit of village B rather than the district he is presently governor of, providing the land for the boy's school and ensuring that the government funded its construction.

Finally, the need for income and the scarcity of employment have contributed to reshaping gendered labour activities. While income generation by women was beginning to play a role in household recovery in 2008-09, the activities remained firmly in the realm of 'traditional' activities such as spinning wool. Male out-migration and decreasing markets for embroidery and *gilims* after the 2006-08 drought have enabled and encouraged women to begin sharecropping, grazing livestock, and travelling to Mazar to work in the brick kilns with their families. In the third study wave, we find that women have begun to enter a once exclusively male space, labouring in the brick kilns of Mazar, sharecropping melons, and grazing livestock. While this represents a significant shift in women's economic roles within the family, inequalities persist as wage rates remain lower for women than men, and are paid to the male head of the household when women work in the brickfields.

To summarise, in 2008-09 the Sar-i-Pul study households were suffering severe economic decline as a result of drought and subsequent crop failure and enforced sale of assets. In the period up to 2016 there has been a further drought and flooding, and security in the district

has steadily declined. Sayyad remains a peripheral district within a marginal province, neglected by donors, under resourced in terms of the delivery of public goods, and agriculturally risky. These conditions have shaped household-specific dynamics. Thus, although many households have recovered since 2008-09, life remains deeply uncertain with many moving in and out of poverty

within seasons and between years – a classic form of poverty ‘churning’. The ability to survive from agricultural activities alone is rare, and requires extensive land and livestock holdings. Only those with access to sufficiently diverse income sources, enough labour, or the right connections to secure off-farm jobs, have any degree of livelihood security.

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Appendix 1: Tables

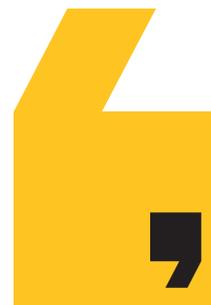


Table A1: Migration

Village A

WG	HH ¹ Code	HH members who migrated and where	When	Frequency, duration	Type of work	Earnings	Outcomes	Risks faced	Assessment of Contribution to HH finances
1	A02	Eldest brother of HHH to Iran	6 years ago ²	Once, 2 years	Daily wage labour in the construction industry	8,000 Afs sent to family per month	Remittances to family and saved 300,000 Afs for peshkash	None	Major: one of two incomes after the drought
		HH to Mazar	6 years ago	Once, 1 year	HHH did livestock sales (jallabi)	?	No information – moved because they could not cultivate land in village A	None	Major: second of two incomes after the drought
		Third brother of HHH to Iran	3 years ago (after second drought)	Once, 2 years	Daily wage labour in the construction industry	10,000 Afs sent to family per month	Remittances and saving money to go to Turkey for work	None	Major: support to the HH after drought
		Third brother of HHH to Turkey	2 months ago	Once, 2 months	Has not found employment yet	None	N/A	None	N/A
		HH to Kohistanat	During the Taliban	Once, 1 year	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1	A03	Eldest son to Iran	6 years ago	Once, 15 months	Daily wage labour in the construction industry	20-25,000 Afs sent to family every 3 – 4 months	Remittances for daily expenditures	Arrested and deported after 15 months	Major: one of the household's only incomes during the drought
		Second son to Iran	6 years ago (after eldest son was deported)	Once, 2 years	Daily wage labour in the construction industry	20-25,000 Afs sent to family every 3 – 4 months	Remittances for daily expenditures	None	Major: one of the household's only incomes during the drought
		HHH, wife, and 3 sons to Mazar	Seasonally for last 8-9 years	8-9 times for 3 months (June to August)	Working in brick kilns	30,000 Afs each in 3 months	Remittances for daily expenditures	None	Major: the provides income for winter when grain budget diminishes
		HH to Shebarghan	1984 –2004	Once, 20+ years	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

¹ HH is abbreviation for household

² 6 years ago (2011) refers to the period during and after the drought

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WG	HH ¹ Code	HH members who migrated and where	When	Frequency, duration	Type of work	Earnings	Outcomes	Risks faced	Assessment of Contribution to HH finances
3	A04	HHH to Iran	6 years ago	Once, 2 years	Daily wage labour in construction industry	5000 Afs sent to family per month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remittances for daily expenditures • Bought 20 sheep upon return 	Arrested and deported 3 times trying to enter Iran	Major: sole income during and after the drought
		HHH to Mazar	4 or 5 years ago	Once, ?	Working in the brick kilns	12,000 Afs sent to family per month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remittances for daily expenditures • Bought solar panels 	None	Major: sole income at that time
4	A05	HHH to Iran	6 years ago	Once, 22 months	Daily wage labour in the construction industry	100,000 toman per month	Remittances for daily expenditures	Arrested and deported	Major: sole income during and after the drought
		HH to: a. Pesta Mazar b. Yakaw Lang c. Kohistanat d. Sancharak e. Pakistan	During the Soviet occupation	a. Once, 2 years b. Once, 10 months c. Once, 1 year d. Once, 6 months e. Once, 10 years (until 2004)	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	A06	5 sons to Mazar	8 years ago	Seasonally for 8 years	3 sons make bricks 2 sons work in bakery	Bricks – Respondent did not know Bakery – 550 Afs per day	Remittances for daily expenditures and saving for bride price	None	Major: HH's primary income
		HH to Pakistan	During the Taliban	Once, one year	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	A07	HHH (F) and daughter(s) to Mazar	No information, HH migrated between interviews 2 and 3	No information	No information	No information	No information	No information	No information
4	A08	HH to Sar-i-Pul City	6 years ago	Once, 6 years ago to present	Tend to their landlord's garden	Housing	Provided housing	N/A	Major: house is provided by landlord in exchange for labour
		Eldest son to Sar-i-Pul City	9.5 years ago	Once, 3.5 years before entire household relocated	Cleaner in people's households	2000 Afs per month	Daily expenditure for household	None	Major: was HH's primary
		Eldest son to Iran	5 years ago	Once, 10 months	Daily wage labour in the construction industry	3000 Afs total	N/A – earned too little	Spent most money earned on smuggler	Minor: retuned with only 3000 Afs

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Village B:

WG	HH Code	HH members who migrated and where	When	Frequency, duration	Type of work	Earnings	Outcomes	Risks faced	Assessment of Contribution to HH finances
2	B01	HH to Pakistan	During the Soviet occupation	Once, 14 years	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	B02	HH to Korarma	During the Taliban	Once, 1 month	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	B03	HHH to Mazar	6 years ago	Once, 5 – 6 months	Working in the brick kilns	34,000 Afs	Remittances for daily expenditures	None	Major: sole income during and after the drought
		HH to Pakistan	During the Soviet occupation	Once, 10 years	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	B04	Second son to Iran	6 years ago	Once, 3 years	Daily wage in the construction industry	Respondent did not recall	Paid for his peshkash	Imprisoned for 40 days	Minor: paid for one peshkash
		4 sons to Mazar	Seasonally for the last 3 years	3 times for 6 months each time	Working in the brick kilns	95,000 Afs for season	Remittances for daily expenditures	None	Moderate: secondary to HHH's employment with district level government
		HH to Pakistan	During the Soviet occupation	Once, 15 years	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	B05	Second son to Mazar	1 year ago	Once, 1 year ago to present	Working in the brick kilns	Does not contribute to household finances (is separated)	N/A	None	None
		4 sons and HHH to Mazar	6 years ago	Once, 2 weeks	Working in the brick kilns	2000 Afs -only enough for their own expenses	Remittances for daily expenditures	None	Major: sole income after losing harvest and livestock after drought
		4 sons and HHH to Sar-i-Pul City	6 years ago	Twice, 1 month each	Daily wage labour	5000 Afs each 5000 Afs each	Remittances for daily expenditures	None	Major: sole income after losing harvest and livestock after drought
		HH to Kohistanat	During the Soviet occupation During the Taliban	Twice 1. 4 years 2. 2 years	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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WG	HH Code	HH members who migrated and where	When	Frequency, duration	Type of work	Earnings	Outcomes	Risks faced	Assessment of Contribution to HH finances
3	B06	4 sons to Mazar	Seasonally for the last 14-16 years	14-16 times for 7 months at a time	Working in the brick kilns	1200 Afs per day each = 70 -100,000Afs total per season	Remittances for daily expenditures	None	Major: HH's primary income
		Son to Pakistan	Last year	Once, 3 months	Brick making	No information	Remittances for daily expenditures	None	No information
		HH to Pakistan	During the Soviet occupation	Once, 14 years	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	B07	HHH to Sar-i-Pul City and Mazar	6 years ago	No information	Labour in construction industry and working in brick kilns	No information	No information	No information	No information
		HH to Kohistanat	During the Soviet occupation	Once, 1 year	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	B08	Son to Mazar	Seasonally for the last 13-14 years	13-14 times for 6 months at a time	Working in brick kilns	3000 Afs per month	Remittances for daily expenditures	None	Major: HH's primary income

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Village C:

WG	HH Code	HH members who migrated and where	When	Frequency, duration	Type of work	Earnings	Outcomes	Risks faced	Assessment of Contribution to HH finances
1	C01	2 sons to Baghlan, Kabul, Kunduz, or Mazar	Seasonally for the last 6 years	6 times for 3 months at a time	Wage labour or working in brick kilns	Dependent upon type of work, for wage labour they earn 35,000 Afs / season and for cultivation is 20 seers of wheat	Remittances for daily expenditures	None	Major: HH's primary income
		2 sons to Iran	5 years ago (after the drought)	1 st son: Once, 8 months 2 nd son: Once, 2 years	Daily wage labour in the construction industry	5000 Afs per month	Remittances for daily expenditures and asset recovery after drought		Major: contributed to recovery of asset loss after the drought
		HH to Kohistanat and Khair Abad	During the Soviet occupation During the Taliban	Once, 3 years Once, 2 years	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1	C03	3 eldest sons to Iran	1 st son: 7 years ago 2 nd son: 4 years ago 3 rd son: 1 year ago	1 st : Once, 7 years ago to present 2 nd : Once, 3 years to present 3 rd : Once, 1 year ago to present	Professional labourers in the construction industry	1. 2000 Afs / day 2. 1000 Afs / day 3. 1000 Afs / day = sending 30-40,000 Afs / month as remittance	Remittances for daily household expenditures and one son's peshkash	2 sons arrested and deported	Major – HH's primary income source
4	C04	HH to Imam Kalan refugee camp in Sar-i-Pul	18 years ago (during the Taliban)	Once, 1 year	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
		HH to Kohistanat	During the Taliban	Once, 7 years	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	C05	HHH's brother to Iran	4 months ago	Once, 4 months ago to present	Daily wage labour in the construction industry	No earnings yet	N/A	HHH arrested and deported several times	N/A
		HH to Qorchy	During the Taliban	Once, 7 years	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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WG	HH Code	HH members who migrated and where	When	Frequency, duration	Type of work	Earnings	Outcomes	Risks faced	Assessment of Contribution to HH finances
4	C06	HH to Shebarghan	19 years ago	Once, 4 years	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
		Eldest son to Iran	3 years ago	Once, 3 months	Daily wage labour in the construction industry	Earnings went to paying the smuggler	N/A	Deported after 3 months	None – came home indebted to the smuggler
3	C07	HH to Imam Kalan refugee camp in Sar-i-Pul City	16 years ago (during the Taliban)	Once, 1.5 years	N/A – migration was to escape drought and famine	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	C08	Eldest son to Iran	3 years ago 2 weeks ago	Twice, 2 years and 2 weeks to present	Daily wage labour in the construction industry	20,000Afs	Remittances for daily household expenditures and paid for building one room in the household	Arrested and deported 6 months ago	Moderate–secondary to HHH’s salaried employment
2	C08	HH to Pakistan	During the Taliban	Twice, 1 year, 2 years	N/A – migration was to escape conflict	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table A2: Household changes

Village A households

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HH	WG	Size (Changes)	M/F Head Age and Literacy ¹	Wives	Male labour (aged 15+)	Rainfed/ Irrigated land owned (jeribs)	Food sufficiency	Livestock (change)	Migration destination (number)	Debt (Afs)	Trajectory, notes
A01	1	10 +1B -1D	55/55 I/I	1	2	26/1	Grain budget from August to January	20 sheep (-30) 2 oxen (+2) 1 donkey 0 cattle (-3)	0	40,000 Afs	Coping. HHH comes from large landowning family. Land assets have buffered HH through numerous shocks
A02	1	18 +2M -3D +8B -4M	25/20 L/I	1	2	15 on lease, 4 J HH owns / 0	Good year, grain budget for 8 months, normal year 4 months, drought year, nothing	300-500 livestock (-30) ²	Iran (2) Turkey (1) Mazar (HH) Kohistanant (HH)	700,000 Afs	Coping. Began incurring debt after the drought until 2 years ago- led to sale of land and livestock and has resulted an increased dependence on remittances
A03	1	12 +2M -1D +5B -1M	55/51 L/I	1	3	27/0	Grain budget 6 months per year	10 goats (+10) 2 cow (+2) 2 donkey (+2) 0 sheep (-2)	Iran (2) Mazar (4)	30,000 Afs	Prospering. Former military employ, now heavy reliance on labour migration
A04	3	4 +0B -0D +0M -1M	50/45 L/I	1	2	20/0	Good year, grain budget for 6-7 months ; bad year for 2 months	20 sheep (+20) 1 ox (+1) 1 cow (+1) 2 donkeys (+2)	Iran (1) Mazar (1)	0	Coping. Only one labourer in the HH, almost solely dependent on remittances
A05	4	11 +3B -1D -1M	48/35 I/I	1	3	0/0	Chronic food insecurity - regularly short of food December to April as wage labour is less accessible in winter	2 goats (+2)	Iran (1) Pesta Mazar (HH) Yakaw Lang (HH) Kohistanat (HH) Sancharak (HH) Pakistan (HH)	0	Declining. Landless and irregularly employed; becoming involved in sharecropping opium
A06	2	18 +7B -1M +2M -1D	50 (F) I	0	5	0/0	Sharecrop enough for wheat all year	3 cows (+3) 2 oxen (+2) 1 horse (+1) 1 donkey	Mazar (5)	0	Prospering. Female headed HH; prospered primarily through labour migration
A07	4	4 -2M	70/40 I/I	1	0	0/0	Struggle to buy grain from January to April	0 (no change)	Mazar	0	Declining. Female headed; no male labour so dependent on daughter's peshkashs'

1 L indicates literacy and I indicates illiteracy

2 Number of livestock is unclear in the transcripts

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HH	WG	Size (Changes)		M/F Head Age and Literacy ⁴	Wives	Male labour (aged 15+)	Rainfed / Irrigated land owned (jeribs)	Food sufficiency	Livestock (change)	Migration destination (number)	Debt (Afs)	Trajectory, notes
A08	4	9		70 / 50	1	1	5 / 0	Struggle to buy grain between January and April – wage labour less accessible in winter	0 (no change)	Sari Pul City (1) Iran (1) Sari Pul City (HH)	77,000 Afs	Declining. Relocated to Sar-i-Pul City after losing house in flood 3 years ago. Now bonded to <i>bai</i> taking care of garden
		+3B	-4D	I/I								

Village B households

3 4

HH	WG	Size (Changes)		M/F Head Age and Literacy ³	Wives	Male labour (aged 15+)	Rainfed / Irrigated land owned (jeribs)	Food sufficiency	Livestock (change)	Migration destination (number)	Debt (Afs)	Trajectory, notes
B01	2	16		54 / 50	1	3	100 / 10	Sufficient grain for all year	1 cow (-2) 1 horse (+1) 1 donkey (-1) 3 goats (+3)	Pakistan (HH)	0	Prospering. Diversified income sources (3 working sons) backed by large land assets
		+5B	-1M	I/I								
		+2M	-1D									
B02	3	6		33 / 34	1	1	0 / 0	No land – buying grain all year on credit from shopkeeper	0 sheep (-2) 0 donkey (-1) 1 goat (+1)	Kotarma (HH)	60,000 Afs	Declining. HHH formerly employed by military and from large landowning family. Now unemployed and sold all land to repay debts
		+3B	-1D	L/I								
B03	2	7		60 / 50	1	3	45 / 1.5	Sufficient grain for all year in good year	2 goats (+2) 1 ox (+1) 0 cattle (-1) 0 sheep (-2) 0 donkey (-2)	Mazar (1)	20,000Afs	Coping. Dependent on land assets and daily wage labour in village
		+1B	-1M	L/I								
B04	2	8		51 / 45	1	3	12 / 6	Normal – 9 months, good – 11 months, bad – 3 months	2 oxen (+2) 1 cow (+1) 2 sheep (+8) 2 goats (+2)	Iran (1) Mazar (4) Pakistan (HH)	20,000 Afs 40,000Afs	Prospering. Personal connections that are used to secure salaried employment
		-1M		L/I								
		-1D										
B05	2	20		77 / 70	1	5	60 / 2	Good year – more than one year, normal year – 6 months, bad year – nothing	80 goat and sheep ⁴ (+60) 0 donkey (-1) 0 cattle (-1)	Mazar (1) Mazar (5) Sari Pul City (5) Kohistan (HH)	0	Coping. Severe losses during both the drought and flood as they are dependent on land but have recovered slightly through remittances
		+6B	-1M	I/I								
		+1M	-2D									
B06	3	10		80 / 55	1	4	6 / 1	Good year 6 months, bad year, 3 months	1 cow (+1) 4 sheep (+3) 0 donkey (-1)	Mazar (3)	100,000Afs	Coping. Poor since 2008-09; dependent on remittances from Mazar
		+2B	-1M	I/I								
		+1M										
B07	4	8		70 / 57 / 35	2	0	8 / 3	Good year 6 months, bad year 3 months	1 donkey 3 goats (+3) 0 sheep (-2) 0 cow (-1)	Mazar (1) Sari Pul City (1)	0	Declining. HHH disabled, no male labour so sharecrop land and receive only 25% of the harvest; reliant on women's income
		+3B	-1M	I/I/I								
B08	4	6		57 (F)	-	1	3.5 / 0	Normal year – 2 months	0 sheep (-1)	Mazar (1)	100,000 Afs	Declining. Female headed and in debt; reliant on remittances form Mazar
		+3B	-1D	I								
		+1M										

³ L indicates literacy and I indicates illiteracy

⁴ Number of goat and sheep is unclear in the transcripts

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Village C households

HH	WG	Size (Changes)	M/F Head Age and Literacy ⁵	Wives	Male labour (aged 15+)	Rainfed / Irrigated land owned (jeribs)	Food sufficiency	Livestock (change)	Migration destination (number)	Debt (Afs)	Trajectory, notes
C01	1	19 +6B -2D +3M	56 / 50 I / I	3	5	43 / 0	Sufficient grain for all year in good year	50 sheep / goat (-250) 15 donkey (+13) 2 oxen (+2)	Iran (2) Baghlan (2) Kabul (2) Kunduz (2) Kohistant (HH) Khair Abad (HH)	30,000 Afs	Coping. Dependent on large and livestock holdings; many setbacks and losses since 2008-09 but partial recovery from remittances
C02	1	14 +4B +1M	47 / 40 L / I	1	4	42 / 7	Sufficient grain for all year in good year	100 sheep (+60) 1 horse (+1) 1 cow (-2) 2 oxen (+2)	None	200,000 Afs	Prospering. HHH formerly head of CDC and continues to implement projects
C03	1	11 +1B -1M +2M	60 / 50 I / I	1	3	70 / 0	Sufficient grain for all year in good year	20 sheep (+20) 1 cow (+1) 0 donkey (-1)	Iran (3)	40,000 Afs	Prospering. Primarily dependent remittances from Iran
C04	4	5 -3M	60 / 50 I / I	1	0	0 / 0	Buy grain all year	0 sheep (-10) 2 donkey (+1)	Imam Kalan refugee camp (HH) Kohistanat (HH)	310,000 Afs	Declining. One male labourer with debts and assets loss from failed business endeavours
C05	3	11 +3B -1D +2M	26 / 25 I / I	1	2	20 / 0	40 seer (280 kg) cultivation / year	0 sheep (-30) 0 donkey (-1) 0 goats (-15)	Iran (1) Qorchy (HH)	100,000 Afs	Declining. Major asset loss through a series of shocks; HHH unable to enter Iran for work
C06	4	10 +3B -1D -2M	27 / 20 I / I	1	4	0 / 0	Buy grain all year	0 sheep (-40) 0 donkey (-1)	Shebarghan (HH)	20,000 Afs	Coping. Female headed; dependent on son's wage labour and wool spinning; debt to human smuggler
C07	3	8 +3B	49 / 39 I / I	1	1	0 / 0	Buy grain all year	1 donkey (+1)	Imam Kalan refugee camp (HH)	10,000 Afs	Coping. Poor in 2008- 09; landless and dependent on on daily wage labour
C08	2	7 +1B -1M +1M	48 / 40 I / I	1	3	0 / 0	Buy grain all year	1 donkey (+1)	Iran (1) Pakistan (HH)	260,000 Afs	Prospering. Personal connections that are used to secure salaried employment; labour migration to Iran

⁵ L indicates literacy and I indicates illiteracy

Table A3: Household Debts

Village A

WG	HH Code	Amount and method	When	Used for	Paid back?
1	A01	40,000Afs borrowed from relatives	1 year ago	Bought an oxen and wheat flour in the winter	No – plans to pay back through HHH’s income as a jallabi
1	A02	140,000Afs cash borrowed from uncle’s friends and relatives	6 years ago to 2 years ago	Medical treatment and funeral for father (2 years ago), funeral for grandmother (40 days after father’s death), and buying wheat after the drought (6 years ago)	Partially – have paid back 700,00Afs through sale of land and livestock
1	A03	30,000 Afs cash borrowed from a friend	1 year ago	Contributed to third son’s peshkash (total of 360,000 Afs)	No – plans to pay back when he receives wages from this season’s work in Mazar
4	A05	30,000Afs cash borrowed from a relative	5 years ago	HHH’s father’s medical treatment and funeral expenses	Yes – paid through income from daily wage labour
4	A07	10,000Afs cash borrowed from relatives	1 year ago	Daily food items and regular household expenditure	Yes – paid back through head and daughter’s income in Mazar
4	A08	77,000Afs cash and kind borrowed from eldest son’s former employer	Continually borrowing – beginning from around 7 years ago	Daily food items and regular household expenditure	No – no mention of plan for repayment

Village B

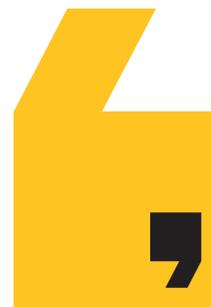
WG	HH Code	Amount and method	When	Used for	Paid back?
3	B02	60,000 Afs cash borrowed from relative	6 months ago	Medical treatment for her brother’s son	No – plans to pay back “when they find work”
2	B03	20,000 Afs owed to shopkeeper for foodstuff	This year	Daily food items	No – plans to pay back with income from land
2	B04	20,000 Afs owed to shopkeeper for food stuff	This year	Daily food items	No – plans to pay back through income from salary at Statistics Department
		40,000 Afs to jamador	This year	Paid to take children to Mazar	
3	B06	100,000 Afs cash borrowed from relatives	?	Son’s peshkash, medical treatment for ill wife, daily household expenditures	No – plans to pay back with son’s income from Mazar
4	B08	100,000 Afs cash borrowed from relatives	?	Son’s wedding	

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Village C

WG	HH Code	Amount and method	When	Used for	Paid back?
1	C01	30,000 Afs cash borrowed from friends in Sari Pul City	This year	Daughter's wedding ceremony	No – no mention of plan for repayment
1	C02	200,000 Afs cash borrowed from friends	8 months ago	Bought irrigated land	No – no mention of plan for repayment
1	C03	40,000 Afs in kind taken from shopkeeper in Sari Pul City	This year	Foodstuff taken on credit from shopkeeper in Sari Pul City	No – plans to repay with son's wages in Iran
4	C04	310,000 Afs cash borrowed from friends and relatives	Beginning 4 years ago	150,000 Afs to start and maintain his food stall in Sari Pul City 150,000 Afs borrowed 6 months ago to pay son's peshkash 10,000 Afs borrowed less than 6 months ago for daughter's medical treatment	Partially – renting home to pay back debt
3	C05	100,000 Afs cash borrowed from relatives		HHH's father's medical treatment in Pakistan	No – no plan to repay
4	C06	20,000 Afs in kind taken from shopkeeper in Sari Pul City	This year	Foodstuff taken on credit from shopkeeper in Sari Pul City	Partially – pays per month from son's wage as shepherd
3	C07	10,000 Afs cash borrowed from friend Horse worth 15,000 Afs borrowed from neighbour	Last year 6 months ago	Wife's medical treatment Horse used for family's transport and brining wheat	No – plans to repay with son's wages as shepherd
2	C08	260,000 Afs cash borrowed from relatives	3 months ago	60,000 Afs contributed to daughter's wedding ceremony 200,000 Afs for son's peshkash and wedding ceremony	No – plans to repay with son's wages in Iran

Appendix 2: Field methods



Household interviews were undertaken by an experienced team of four male and four female field researchers. Interviews commenced in village A in May 2016, and were completed in village C in August 2016. Three field trips were undertaken for each study village (nine in total), first for the purpose of introductory interviews with the 20 households in each village that made up the original sample in the 2008-09 study and general focus group discussions. Two subsequent field trips were undertaken to conduct two rounds of household interviews, both with the male and female heads of the 8 households selected for this in-depth interview stage. A period in between the two rounds of interviews was used to review and analyse the information collected and ensure optimal targeting of questions, and therefore data quality, for the second interviews. The household interview procedure followed a number of stages, summarised as follows.

Household profile: In the original 2002 study the households within the villages (15 households per village) were selected out of a village wealth-ranking exercise with the guidance of local elders and community leaders. The number of households selected from each wealth group was roughly proportional to the relative number of households in each wealth group in the village. Using the 2002 household data, a household profile was prepared for each of the original interviewed households summarising basic data on household composition and economy in 2002-03.

Introductory interviews: The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) interview team introduced themselves to the village, holding a focus group discussion with village elders in order to collect general information about the village itself, and changes in livelihoods since 2008-09. A series of introductory discussions then followed with all the original sample households that were present in the village. These preliminary interviews, informed by the household profiles, explored changes that had happened in the household (in household composition, economy etc.) and looked for evidence on changing household

fortunes (improving, maintaining or declining). These preliminary interview transcripts were then translated and comparisons were made with the household profile.

Household selection: On the basis of the preliminary interview evidence, a sub-sample of eight households (proportional to the number of households in each wealth group in the original 20 household sample) were selected for further interviews. The criteria for the selection was first to find household contrasts in terms of changing fortunes across and within the wealth groups, and then within these to choose households of contrasting size, structure and age. This selection was made by lead researchers, informed through consultation with the field researchers.

Household interview guides: Detailed household interview guides were prepared for each household selected for interview. The interview guides identified key themes and issues to be followed up over the four interviews held – two with the responsible male and two with the responsible female of the household. Although the content of each interview guide was structured around eight common themes, each was tailored to the specific household drawing on changes reported by the household in the preliminary interview. Particular issues of interest, such as village histories, shopkeeper credit and NGO project activities, were followed up with relevant individuals in supplementary ‘key informant’ interviews.

Household interviews: Household interviews were carried out by the male and female teams usually with the head of the household and the oldest woman (in the case of joint households). Occasionally, sons, daughters or daughters-in-law were interviewed where the head of the household was away, or the intended respondent was sick. In a minority of cases, one longer interview was undertaken with a respondent due to their lack of availability for a second interview. Care was taken to ensure that interviewers for each respondent remained constant, for the sake of continuity and to build on the trust and rapport built by interviewers with individual

respondents. However, the teams rotated internally with the interviewer and note taker exchanging roles with each different household. Feedback on transcripts was provided regularly, and analytical discussions with the field teams were held at the end of each working day in the field, facilitated by the lead author.

Debriefing: Debriefing sessions were held in between field missions and at the end of data collection for

each study site, for the project team to contribute to joint analysis on emerging themes based on collected information and observations made in the field. Some of the debriefing sessions involved clarification of key issues for particular households, while others involved systematic household comparisons in relation to key themes. Discussions were held regarding the meanings of particular local terms and the way in which ideas were articulated by respondents.



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