



The Political Economy Of Education and Health Service Delivery In Afghanistan

January 2016



14 YEARS
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RESEARCH

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About the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

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Chona R. Echavez

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Acronyms

ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
BDN	Bakhtar Development Network
BPHS	Basic Package of Health Services
BK	Balkh
BS	Badghis
CHA	Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
CHC	Comprehensive health center
CHW	Community health worker
CSO	Central Statistics Organisation
EPHS	Essential Package of Hospital Services
EQUIP	Education Quality Improvement Project
EQUIP II	Second Education Quality Improvement Project
FGD	Focus group discussion
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HSERD	Health Sector Emergency Reconstruction and Development
IDI	In-depth interview
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KII	Key informant interview
KL	Kabul
Lajnat	Lajnat Al Daawa Al Islamiya
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MP	Member of Parliament
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
PED	Provincial Education Department

PG	Provincial Governor
PHD	Provincial Health Department
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
SEHAT	System Enhancement for Health Action in Transition
SHARP	Strengthening Health Activities for the Rural Poor
SMC	School management council
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WK	Wardak

Glossary

Arbab	village elder or head (used interchangeably with <i>Malik</i> in different parts of the country)
Arbaki	Originally tribal security forces indigenous to the Loya Paktia region, but now refers to almost any irregular local security forces.
Jabha	front
Jihadi	fighters against the Soviet occupation
Kamaz	type of truck
Malik	head of village traditionally recognised by the community
Muallems	teachers
Mawlawe	clerics
Qaryadar	head of village (used interchangeably with <i>Malik</i> in parts of the country)
Shura	consultation, council, or community-level governance body
Ulema	a religious council

NOTE

This report tests the proposition that the character of political settlements at various levels (primary, secondary, and sectoral) may help explain the different delivery outcomes in education and health in Badghis, Wardak, and Balkh provinces, in particular whether political settlements influenced: a) Badghis' poor access to health services; b) Wardak's performance in immunisation and birth care; c) Wardak's low female enrolment rates and declining attendance rates in schools; and d) Balkh's comparatively modest performance in health delivery. The findings, while offering insights into the importance of political economy factors in understanding education and health outcomes, are not intended to be generalisable to the country as a whole nor to that of other service delivery sectors. There are many other potential variables that may contribute to differences in delivery outcomes.

Figure 1: Location of study areas in Afghanistan



Much is still unknown about service delivery in Afghanistan, especially at district level, including basic information about actual student attendance rates, the qualifications of teachers, the skills of the health staff, and levels of teacher absenteeism. It was beyond the scope of this report to carry out quantitative research to assess service delivery in Afghanistan. The existing NRVA surveys capture some of this more quantitative service delivery data at provincial level. This data has recently been analysed from a quantitative perspective by the World Bank.¹ But none of this analysis reflects on the role of political settlements in driving outcomes. It is clear from the research carried out to date that there remain significant gaps in our knowledge of local level elite bargains with the insurgency at district or sub-district level. As a result, we hope the insights from this study will allow more detailed research in other parts of the country to test the relationship between the nature of local level political settlements and forms of violence and service delivery outcomes.

Extensive desk reviews that included existing literature and reports, as well as qualitative field research, were the basis of the key findings of the study. For the qualitative research, the following were conducted: 11 focus group discussions among members of the education and health *shura*, as well as ordinary community members; 54 in-depth interviews with EQUIP and SHARP district or village programme implementers and village leaders; and 54 key informant interviews with EQUIP and SHARP national programme implementers and other stakeholders, such as members of Parliament, media correspondents, civil society actors, and international and national political analysts, among others. Given the difficulties of access due to insecurity in many districts all interviews in the study areas, except those of SHARP's district programme implementers and beneficiaries, were carried out at the provincial centres, which limited the amount of data captured in all three provinces from more outlying areas.

Finally, the selection of the three provinces was not based on any scientific principles other than to choose provinces that were sufficiently different from each other according to levels of insecurity, geographical remoteness, economy and politics. Wardak was chosen because of its proximity to Kabul, long history of service delivery and high levels of infiltration by Taliban; Badghis because of its geographical remoteness and distance from Kabul, lack of economic resources, and fragmented nature of the insurgency; and finally Balkh, because of its domination by one strongman, vibrant economy, and relative stability with low levels of Taliban penetration.

¹ See the recently published report by the Ministry of Economy and World Bank, "Afghanistan Poverty Status Update" (2015). The report can be found at http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2015/11/05/090224b083194124/1_0/Rendered/PDF/An0analysis0ba0020070080and02011012.pdf

Executive Summary

Since 2004, there has undoubtedly been a (significant and varied) development in the delivery of health and education services in Afghanistan. In both cases, external aid has been essential. The modalities adopted in achieving this quantitative improvement varied drastically between the two sectors. Health service delivery was largely carried out by the Ministry of Public Health contracting out basic health service delivery to non-governmental organizations (NGOs); in education, delivery was carried out directly by the state through the Ministry of Education hiring teachers as civil servants. Yet in both sectors, qualitative improvements have been much more difficult to achieve than quantitative ones, not least because targets were set by donors in quantitative terms, while service delivery to rural areas has been extremely problematic. By comparing the case studies of three provinces (Badghis, Balkh, and Wardak), this report reveals, despite the limited data available, substantial differences from province to province in terms of the success of service delivery from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective.

Wardak province was found to perform comparatively well in health service delivery, but poorly in education delivery, particularly since 2008 and in terms of girls' education (but not only in this). Badghis, by contrast, performed poorly in health delivery, but rather well in education delivery, especially considering that it started from a very low level. In this province, access to health services was much more limited than access to education, despite the fact that in Afghanistan, the latter is much more controversial and likely to be sabotaged by insurgents. Finally, Balkh performed relatively well in both education and health delivery, although not quite as well as Wardak in health delivery, despite being a much wealthier and more stable province.

This study tests the hypothesis that the character of political settlements at various levels (primary, secondary, and sectoral) may partly explain the different delivery outcomes. The study first assesses whether insurgents and local strongmen interfere with service delivery, finding largely affirmative responses in this respect, and then examines the variations in secondary settlements in the three provincial case studies. Finally, the study explored how local elites and government officials attempt to manage and control service delivery for their own ends. Balkh is most obviously characterised by a strong secondary settlement at the provincial level, as Provincial Governor (PG) Atta has been able to co-opt all former political rivals under his leadership, with the exception of some disaffected Pashtun communities. With full control, Atta has managed to turn his allies into "stationary bandits" who, while they may still extract provincial rents, including from health service delivery, do so in such a way to maximise the long-term benefits and overall stability of the system. One typical example is the way the elite in Balkh invest in private health care provision and use state facilities to direct patients toward the private hospitals in which they have stakes. The strong secondary settlement he has achieved in Balkh also allows Atta to obtain a stake in the primary settlement in Kabul.

The two other case studies are much more complex than Balkh. In Wardak, a relatively cohesive secondary settlement exists, in which the main powerbroker has been linked to anti-Taliban factions, with the incorporation of Hezb-e Islami networks in later years. The strong Hezb-e Islami and Hizb-i Wahdat networks in Pashtun and Hazara areas, respectively, may have helped in bringing service delivery to these constituencies, although conclusive evidence is lacking in this regard. Nevertheless, it is evident that the secondary settlement in Wardak has contributed to building relatively good relations between elders and provincial administrations and allowed the negotiation of successful sectoral bargains for the delivery of health and education services, including with the armed opposition of the Taliban.

By contrast, in Badghis, the local strongmen have not been able to establish a stable secondary settlement at the provincial level. As a province of limited strategic importance for Kabul and with a weak economic base, Badghis cannot support a strong secondary settlement—not even the principal warlords of northern and western Afghanistan are willing to invest resources over the long term. The fragmented secondary settlements lead to much low-scale infighting, which disrupts health service delivery in particular. In general, the widespread violence and banditry discourage professionals from working in the province. This has harmed the health sector more than the education sector because of the greater availability of employment opportunities for health professionals compared to education professionals.

In conclusion, political settlements do have a major impact on service delivery. Even strongmen linked to the ruling elites in Kabul may be serious potential impediments to service delivery, particularly because of their attempts to exploit them as a source of patronage and revenue. However politically controversial, sectoral bargains appear to be especially crucial for service delivery in remote areas, and, more generally, all areas with a strong Taliban presence. Nevertheless, these settlements come at a cost: even if local elders and implementers often claim to have “convinced” strongmen and armed opposition groups to allow service delivery, in reality, significant concessions have to be made. Even successfully negotiated sectoral bargains have been unable to completely prevent disruptions to service delivery, partly because violence discourages professionals from working in affected areas and partly because the presence of mobile insurgent groups, not bound by any settlements, is a reality in Afghanistan. This contributes to explaining why the quality of service delivery lags so much behind quantitative expansion.

In a highly contested environment, direct state delivery can turn service delivery into a target for the armed opposition. While contracting out to NGOs could reduce this danger, such a proposal should not be overstated: even clinics require sectoral bargains to function, despite the violence against health service delivery being much rarer than against education delivery. Future studies might investigate in greater detail the options available in terms of the “compromises” resulting from different types of political settlements and accompanying forms of violence that surround them, as some might be more developmental than others.

1. Introduction

Delivering services in violence-affected areas is an especially complex, contested, and challenging endeavour. In Afghanistan, service delivery faces numerous challenges as a result of more than 30 years of continuous armed violence. Often, social service delivery outcomes in violence-affected countries like Afghanistan are interpreted based on institutional capacity, technical assistance or input provided by the international community, as well as security conditions. Political economy dynamics, particularly political settlements among the elites, are usually seen as given intervening variables and part of the challenges to overcome rather than as factors that affect outcomes. However, there is now growing recognition within the international development community of the value of using the political settlement framework to understand outcomes.

The analytical framework adopted for this study focuses on three elements: key actors, their interests, and the “rules of the game,” or the institutions that regulate the behaviour of contending actors. A political settlement is a reproducible combination of institutions and a distribution of power between organisations that achieves the minimum conditions for economic and political viability in society.² These conditions are typically the outcome of bargaining, negotiation, and compromises between elites.

Political settlements and elite bargains can exist at different levels of the polity (state, province, cities, villages, and so on). It is thus conceivable that at the level of central government, there might be a stable and inclusive elite bargain, while unstable and fragile bargains co-exist at the regional and/or local levels of the polity. Given Afghanistan’s diversity and the heterogeneity of its elites and their interests, the discussion of the political economy dynamics in this paper considers three levels of political settlements relative to social service delivery:

- Primary settlements, in reference to the elite bargains among the actors in Kabul;
- Secondary settlements, defined as the “arrangements among powerful local elites to control political competition and governance below the national level”³;
- Sectoral elite bargains, denoting the specific strategic interactions of actors and their interests within the education and health sectors

This categorisation does not imply that the national, provincial, and sectoral levels are disconnected from each other in terms of elite bargains and contestations as well as their effects. Almost all of the informants and group discussion participants, in addition to the relevant literature on Afghan politics and governance, noted that this network of relationships functions among actors at all levels.

The character of political settlement, its degree of inclusiveness, its reach into the provinces, and its solidity are all relevant when explaining the presence of political violence, which is in turn likely to affect service delivery. At a minimum, regardless of the aims of an insurgent movement, violence tends to discourage educated professionals from deploying to affected areas, especially if employment alternatives exist. The features of the political settlement are also useful to explain the degree of attention received by a particular province from the centre: it might be weakly represented in the centre or its representatives might be co-opted away from their local powerbase. The features of a political settlement might also determine the distribution of resources and patronage within a particular province depending on whether the elites develop an interest in service delivery or in the delivery of some services over others. A political settlement including conservative clerics with a strong interest in the viability of non-state religious schools

² Mustaq Khan, “The Political Economy of Inclusive Growth,” in *Promoting Inclusive Growth: Challenges and Policies*, ed. Luis de Mello and Mark A. Dutz, 15-54 (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2012); Edward Laws, “Political Settlements, Elite Pacts and Government of National Unity: A Conceptual Study,” DLP Background Paper 10, Development Leadership Program, 2012; Thomas Parks and William Cole, “Political Settlements: Implications for International Development Policy and Practice,” Occasional Paper No. 2 (San Francisco, CA: The Asia Foundation, 2010); Laura Routley and David Hulme, “Donors, Development Agencies and the Use of Political Economic Analysis: Getting to Grips with the Politics of Development?” ESID Working Paper No. 19 (Manchester, UK: Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre, 2013).

³ Parks and Cole, “Political Settlements,” 18.

might, for example, work against the aggressive development of secular state education. The exclusion of clerics and the inclusion of secular and leftist parties would likely have the opposite effect. Finally, an unstable political settlement might discourage central and local elites from investing in the development of institutions and effective service delivery, instead privileging personal or factional ambitions and diverting resources toward political competition. An unstable political settlement, based on precarious compromises in a fast-evolving political and social landscape, is also likely to face constant re-negotiation, disrupting appointments at the centre and in the provinces, and preventing the smooth functioning of bureaucracies.

More indirectly, the character of political settlement could also influence the forms of violence affecting service delivery. Disaffected and marginalised communities and individual strongmen are less likely to use long-term organised violence than political organisations. The latter are more likely to have national aims as opposed to local ones and to challenge the legitimacy of the state as a whole, considering state service delivery to be a systematic target for their activities. However, the presence of multiple organised insurgencies is likely to create some competition for local support, potentially pushing political organisations away from the most violent and abusive forms of behaviour. The loss of cohesion within an organised insurgency, due to military, financial, or leadership crises, could produce a fractionalised “roving banditry” of less disciplined and uncoordinated armed groups, more interested in generating whatever possible revenue for their short-term survival than developing long-term strategic aims. In this case, state service delivery is viewed as yet another opportunity to raise revenue.

In similar contexts, the issue also arises as to what modes or forms of service delivery are most effective.⁴ Indeed, the traditional option of direct state delivery might maximise its value as a target for insurgents, for example. Delivery through non-governmental organisations (NGOs) could affect such considerations, but at the same time, this implies other disadvantages from the perspective of central government, such as its effects on local perceptions of state legitimacy⁵ and depriving personnel of the ministries of potential “rents” from the resources that would otherwise flow through their ministries.

A political economy analytical framework is not entirely new to Afghanistan. Goodhand and Mansfield’s study on the opium trade, political settlements, and state-making revealed insights into the links between the drug economy and political settlements.⁶ Jackson’s paper on politics and governance in Nangarhar and Kandahar provinces also illustrated the sub-national “power relations at play” in terms of general access to public goods.⁷ Giustozzi studied the political economy of northern Afghanistan and the formation of “oligopolies of power.”⁸ Mukhopadhyay analysed how provincial-level political settlements affected the functioning of state bureaucracy.⁹ Fishstein and Wilder studied how aid delivery is affected by ongoing conflict and vice-versa, although without a specific focus on health and education.¹⁰ Reports on the detrimental effects stemming from the conflict between the two main alliances/leaderships (i.e., the broad-based “coalitions of interest” in Kabul headed by former President Karzai versus the leadership of the Taliban) abound, but such studies do not extend their analysis to service delivery. While there has been a growing interest in the politics of social service delivery in Afghanistan as well as in

4 Thomas Parks, Nat Colletta and Ben Oppenheim, “The Contested Corners of Asia: Subnational Conflict and International Development Assistance” (San Francisco, CA: The Asia Foundation, 2013).

5 Claire Mcloughlin, “When does Service Delivery Improve the Legitimacy of a Fragile or Conflict-Affected State?” *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* 28, no. 3 (2014): 341-56.

6 Jonathan Goodhand and David Mansfield, “Drugs and (Dis)order: A Study of the Opium Economy, Political Settlements and State-Building in Afghanistan” (London: Crisis States Research Centre, 2010).

7 Ashley Jackson, “Politics and Governance in Afghanistan: The Case of Nangarhar Province” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2014); Ashley Jackson, “Politics and Governance in Afghanistan: The Case of Kandahar Province” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2015).

8 Antonio Giustozzi, “The Resilient Oligopoly: A Political Economy of Northern Afghanistan 2001 and Onwards” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2012).

9 Dipali Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongman Governors, and the State in Afghanistan* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

10 Paul Fishstein and Andrew Wilder, “Winning Hearts and Minds? Examining the Relationship between Aid and Security in Afghanistan” (Boston, MA: Feinstein International Center, 2011).

other low-income countries,¹¹ no study to date has systematically attempted to study the topic through a political economy framework, especially in conflict-affected countries. In particular, no study has attempted to explain why differences exist in service delivery outcomes within “violence-affected” Afghanistan. There are also no analyses to explain the partial success of service delivery, for example, with the successful quantitative expansion of basic coverage, but persistent low quality services, or small-scale success with an inability to scale up.

The literature on service delivery in Afghanistan is largely conflict-blind, particularly in the case of health services, and it tends to deal with technical explanations.¹² In the case of education delivery, a few studies discuss how the ongoing conflict has affected it, but they focus on political aspects as opposed to the implications for service delivery.¹³

Based on the literature review, there is evidently a gap in the literature in terms of service delivery in Afghanistan. Although there is a growing awareness of the need to consider political economy dynamics in service delivery in conflict countries, there remains a lack of empirical evidence to make the case for a new approach. However, explaining failures and partial successes would allow donors to more systematically anticipate the various trade-offs that are likely to result when deciding how and where to allocate aid funds and what aid modalities to use.

This paper focuses on the experience of the World Bank (WB)-supervised projects in each sector, namely, the Education Quality Improvement Project (EQUIP) and Strengthening Health Activities for the Rural Poor (SHARP),¹⁴ both implemented in the three selected provinces. The study does not generalise the influence of political settlements in Afghanistan to education or health services delivery, given the general complexity of the other provinces. By examining three provinces, this report provides examples of how and why social service delivery is affected by political economy dynamics in violence-affected settings.

The paper is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 2 briefly discusses the status of both education and health service delivery at the country level based on a comprehensive review of the available data and descriptive information about Afghanistan’s education and health sectors, in addition to a description of the implementation of the EQUIP and SHARP/Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) programmes and project evaluations. Chapter 3 discusses violence and political settlements in Afghanistan in general terms, based primarily on secondary literature. Chapters 4 through 6 are case studies of Wardak, Badghis, and Balkh provinces, respectively. Finally, Chapter 7 presents the summary and conclusion.

11 Daniel Harris and Leni Wild, “Finding Solutions: Making Sense of the Politics of Service Delivery” (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2013); Sam Hickey, “Thinking about the Politics of Inclusive Development: Towards a Relational Approach,” ESID Working Paper No. 1 (Manchester, UK: Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre, 2013); Brian Levy and Michael Walton, “Institutions, Incentives and Service Provision: Bringing Politics Back In” (Manchester, UK: Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre, 2013).

12 ACBAR, “Health and Education in Afghanistan: 10 Years After—Quantity Not Quality” (ACBAR Policy Series, November 2011); Tekabe A. Belay (ed.), “Building on Early Gains in Afghanistan’s Health, Nutrition, and Population Sector,” (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2010), 7-8; Markus Michael, Enrico Pavignani and Peter Hill “Too Good to Be True? An Assessment of Health System Progress in Afghanistan, 2002-2012,” *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 29, no. 4 (2013): 322-45. For a partial exception, see Rohini Jonnalagadda Haar and Leonard Rubenstein, “Health in Post-Conflict and Fragile States,” Special Report 301 (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2012); Masahiro J. Morikawa, “Effect of Security Threats on Primary Care Access in Logar Province, Afghanistan,” *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 24, no. 1 (2008), 59-64.

13 Antonio Giustozzi, “Nation-Building is not for all: The Politics of Education in Afghanistan” (Kabul/Berlin: Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2010); Antonio Giustozzi and Claudio Franco, “The Battle for the Schools: The Taliban and State Education” (Kabul/Berlin: Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2011); Antonio Giustozzi and Claudio Franco, “The Ongoing Battle for Education: Uprisings, Negotiations and Taliban Tactics” (Kabul/Berlin: Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2013).

14 The above-mentioned are all government projects, financed by the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund and the International Development Association, implemented by the government, and supervised by the World Bank.

2. The Status of Service Delivery in Afghanistan: An Overview of the Education and Health Sectors

2.1 General description of education and health service delivery in Afghanistan

Delivering services in settings affected by internal conflicts is an especially complex, contested, and challenging endeavour. Such is the case of Afghanistan's education and health sectors. The long years of war severely damaged the infrastructure in both sectors, and service delivery "mirrored the rest of the government: dysfunctional, poor, with little outreach to rural areas."¹⁵

Before the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the government and a few international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), such as the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), had worked together on education service delivery in the country.¹⁶ In all schools, curricula were modified with a dramatic expansion of the hours dedicated to religious subjects. As one national programme implementer remembered, schools were "changed into *madrastas*, as whatever they were learning in the mosque was also [taught] in schools."¹⁷ Girls were banned from attending school altogether, although in some areas the Taliban turned a blind eye to "home schooling" of girls. Health services were mostly delivered by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with the Taliban Emirate playing a very limited role.¹⁸ After the ouster of the Taliban in 2001 this pattern of delivery broadly continued with the Ministry of Education (MoE) delivering education services directly, while the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) contracted out service delivery to NGOs, thus assuming a stewardship role in all but three out of 32 provinces at the time.¹⁹ The ban on girls attending school was rescinded and the enrolment of girls in schools became a particular focus of international attention.

After the fall of the Taliban, international assistance to the country dramatically increased. Much of this aid was "off budget" – according to WB calculations, in Afghanistan's 2010-11 national budget, 88 percent in aid was executed through the external budget (off-budget) and only 12 percent through the core budget.²⁰ "Off-budget" sectoral allocations are difficult to track as no reliable data was kept of these allocations. Data on the core budget, however, shows clearly that the MoE received much more in the way of "core budget" resources than the MoPH (see Table 1 below). This was largely a result of the particular mode of delivery in the two sectors, with the MoE delivering education directly through employing civil servants (teachers), while MoPH contracted NGOs to deliver basic health services. As a result, the Ministry of Education's operating budget was much larger than health, which had a relatively small operating budget but higher development budget, out of which the NGO contracts were paid. Yet even so, government spending on health is low relative to both the education budget and the overall needs of the population. This low public spending on health is partly offset by the high private spending on health and the private sector appears to have a disproportionate role in providing health care.²¹

15 NATO/Harvard, "The Afghanistan Case Study," Working Paper of the Collaborative NATO-Harvard Project: Towards a Comprehensive Response to Health System Strengthening in Crisis-Affected Fragile States (NATO Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Center, Harvard Medical School Department of Global Health and Social Medicine, 2013), 6.

16 Yahya Baza, *Education in Afghanistan* (London: Routledge, 2011).

17 KL: KII-37.

18 Asger Christensen, *Aiding Afghanistan: The Background and Prospects for Reconstruction in a Fragmented Society* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 1995); Rosemarie Skaine, *The Women of Afghanistan under the Taliban* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2002).

19 Ron Waldman, Lesley Strong and Dr. Abdul Wali, *Afghanistan's Health System Since 2001: Condition Improved, Prognosis Cautiously Optimistic*, AREU Briefing paper series, 2006

20 Hogg et al., *Afghanistan in Transition*.

21 Hogg et al., *Afghanistan in Transition*, 122, Figure 5.2 and 125, Figure 5.4. See also Nathalie Lahire, "Afghanistan—Second Education Quality Improvement Program Project," Restructuring Paper (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015).

Table 1: Core budget allocated to the education and health sectors in million US\$

MoE core budget	2005	2007	2008	2009	2011	2012	2013	2014
Operating	117.6	161.83	184.31	271.34	469.41	392.57	569.08	556.50
Development	41.6	122.17	75	102.38	166.70	130.03	279.53	247.64
Total	159.2	284	259.31	373.72	636.11	522.6	848.61	804.14
MoPH core budget								
Operating	27.4	30.66	27.57	35.51	56.67	41.61	65.31	66.55
Development	31.3	103.45	57.31	102.4	144.29	185.86	187.42	261.82
Total	58.7	134.11	84.88	137.91	200.96	227.47	252.73	328.37

Source: Ministry of Finance National Budget. Note that the 2007 national budget figures were taken from the 2008 national budget; there is no English version of the 2010 national budget, with figures for this year also not presented in 2011 national budget.

The WB-supervised EQUIP and SHARP programmes are all “on budget” national programs financed by a combination of Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and International Development Association (IDA) grants. The first phase of EQUIP was funded by the IDA; the second phase is funded through the ARTF and IDA. SHARP, on the other hand, is financed from different sources that include both ARTF and IDA, as well as some smaller Trust Funds.²² A recent World Bank document showed that US\$437 million has been allocated to EQUIP since 2008.²³ The closing date of EQUIP II is December 2016. The health programme, SHARP, running from 2009 to 2013, was allocated US\$151 million.²⁴ A continuation of the programme under the System Enhancement for Health Action in Transition (SEHAT) project is currently being supported by combined IDA and ARTF grants of over US\$400 million.²⁵

EQUIP is the government’s main education program, which began in 2004 and is almost at the end of its second phase. A follow-on program is currently being designed. The development objective of EQUIP I was to improve educational inputs and processes as a foundation for a long-term strategy through a) the strengthening of schools and teacher training initiatives in communities; b) investment in human resources (teachers, principals, and educational administration personnel) as well as physical facilities; and c) institutional development of schools, District Education Departments, Provincial Education Departments, and the MoE. Education for girls and female teacher training was a project priority.²⁶ The three main components of the intervention were school grants, support to schools through institutional and human resource development, and policy development and monitoring and evaluation.

The development objective of the second phase, known as EQUIP II, is to increase access to quality basic education, especially for girls, through school grants, teacher training, and strengthened institutional capacity with the support of communities and private providers. The components of EQUIP II are similar to those of the first phase, namely, school grants, teacher and principal training and education, and project management, monitoring, and evaluation.

EQUIP’s Semi-Annual Report for January-June 2014 showed that the project supported the construction of 585 schools by communities and 233 comparatively large schools built by construction companies through national competitive bidding. Since the beginning of EQUIP II, over 120,508 students have graduated from both pre-service and in-service teacher

22 The Norwegian Trust Fund funded Component 4: Piloting Innovations; while JSDF contributed to the funding for Component 1: Sustaining and Strengthening the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS).

23 Lahire, “Afghanistan—Second Education Quality Improvement Program Project.”

24 World Bank, “Afghanistan—Support to Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) Project,” Implementation Completion and Results Report (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015).

25 World Bank, Implementation Status and Results Report “Afghanistan—System Enhancement for Health Action in Transition (SEHAT) Project, Sequence 06 (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015).

26 World Bank, “Afghanistan—Education Quality Improvement Project,” Implementation and Completion Results Report (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2009).

training programmes in colleges across Afghanistan. In total, 14,222 school management *shuras* have been developed as of June 2014 to increase community and parent participation in their children's education.

Like EQUIP for education, SHARP, and its successor SEHAT, is the government's main health programme. SHARP's development objective was to support the government in achieving the goal of the Health and Nutrition Sector Strategy 2009-13 to "contribute to improving the health and nutritional status of the people of Afghanistan, with a greater focus on women and children and underserved areas of the country."²⁷ SHARP had four components, namely: a) sustaining and strengthening the BPHS; b) strengthening the delivery of the Essential Package of Hospital Services (EPHS); c) strengthening MoPH stewardship functions; and d) piloting innovations. SHARP's implementation and completion results report revealed an overall outcome rating of satisfactory, as it "was highly relevant for the development challenges of the Afghan health sector in 2009 and implementation was largely successful with minor challenges."²⁸

The post-2002 Afghan government and donor community have highlighted the education and health sectors as outstanding success stories within the Afghan reconstruction effort. It was claimed, for example, that in 2012 the number of students enrolled in primary education stood at 6.1 million,²⁹ up from 4.8 million in 2004 and less than a million in 2002.³⁰ The share of female primary students in 2012 was claimed to be 40.5 percent,³¹ up from 24 percent in 2004.³² The number of teachers on the government's payroll also continues to increase: in just one year, it rose from 162,273 (2010-11) to 184,042 (2012-13). The percentage increase in female teachers was, however, negligible (31 percent in 2010-11 vs. 32 percent in 2012-13). In reality, there have always been doubts concerning the reliability of education data (not least because of the use of enrolment data as opposed to attendance data). This is especially true following the recent investigations of the United State's Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction and the statements made by the new Minister of Education (2015) who believed that the data previously provided by the MoE might have been falsified.³³ Minister Hanif Bakhi told the press that "in some of the insecure areas, there are no schools, but the benefits, opportunities, money for infrastructure, money for teachers, and so on have been taken."³⁴

The surveys conducted under the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessments (NRVA) produced data independently of the MoE. The results showed the literacy rate for 15-year-olds and over increasing from 25 percent in 2007-08 to 31.4 percent in 2011-12. Data on adult female literacy from the same multi-sectoral surveys presented an increase from 11.4 percent in 2007-08 to 17 percent in 2011-12. NRVA estimates of literacy rates are in all likelihood based on self-assessment in the survey sample, hence possibly overestimating the literacy rate. NRVA data would nonetheless seem to confirm a rapid increase in the level of schooling, even if not necessarily as fast as claimed by the MoE. In part, this was achieved through sacrificing quality for quantity: the ratio of government general education students to teachers has indeed worsened, increasing from 39 students per teacher in 2007³⁵ to 44 in 2012³⁶ (see Appendix A).

27 World Bank, "Afghanistan—Strengthening Health Activities for the Rural Poor," Implementation and Completion Results Report (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2014), 2.

28 World Bank, "Afghanistan—Strengthening Health Activities for the Rural Poor," 18-9.

29 MoE 2012-13, as cited in Central Statistics Organisation, "Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2012-13" (Kabul: Central Statistics Organisation, 2013).

30 Central Statistics Organisation, "Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2005" (Kabul: Central Statistics Organisation, 2005). It is difficult to obtain longitudinal data for a number of education indicators, especially those pertaining to Afghanistan's provinces. Indicators from the Education Management Information System and even those from multi-sectoral surveys, such as the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessments (NRVA) completed in 2007-08 and 2011-12, are not always the same. For the purpose of comparison among the three study areas, only a select number of education indicators are highlighted.

31 MoE 2012-13, as cited in Central Statistics Organisation, "Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2012-13."

32 MoE, as cited in Central Statistics Organisation, "Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2005."

33 Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Letter to the Honourable Alfonso E. Lenhardt, Acting Administrator, US Agency for International Development, 11 June 2015.

34 Karim Amini, "U.S. Watchdog Says MoE Faked School Statistics, Embezzled Donations," *Tolo News*, 18 June 2015.

35 Central Statistics Organisation, "Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2008-09" (Kabul: Central Statistics Organisation, 2009).

36 Central Statistics Organisation, "Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2012-13."

Like education, public health coverage has greatly improved since 2001. From 2002 to 2007, the number of functioning primary health care facilities increased from 496 to over a thousand. In 2001, only 8 percent of the population was estimated to have access to basic health care, but in 2007-08 more than 68 percent lived within one hour walk of a health care facility. Nevertheless, coverage is patchy. Data provided by the MoPH also needs to be treated with caution, partially because not all facilities nominally under its supervision are fully operational.³⁷ For certain health indicators, improvements were reported in the following areas: access to skilled antenatal care; proportion of births attended by a skilled attendant; vaccinations; and child delivery in a health facility.³⁸ In 2004, 14.4 percent of women had access to skilled antenatal care,³⁹ increasing to 51 percent in 2012.⁴⁰ NRVA reported the proportion of births attended by a skilled attendant to be 25 percent in 2007-08, rising to 40 as reported in its 2011-12 edition. Massive improvements in the numbers of polio vaccinations for children aged 12-23 months were observed from 2005 to 2012. As to birth deliveries in a health facility, the numbers increased from 11.1 percent in 2004⁴¹ to 36 percent in 2012⁴² (see Appendix A).

2.2 Education delivery in the three case study provinces

2.2.1 Support for education

Wardak

Education in Wardak was delivered largely by international NGOs such as the SCA, CARE International, and Lajnat Al Daawa Al Islamiya (Lajnat).⁴³ In the 1990s, Lajnat supported schools exclusively in Pashtun-dominated areas. Iran also supported education services, particularly in the two Behsud districts, where the majority of inhabitants are Shiite Hazaras.

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, it took time to relaunch state education, but since 2004, education in Wardak has witnessed much change. Positive descriptions appeared in all the interviewees' narratives. There were more schools at all levels, and the number of enrolled students had increased, faster than average in the case of girls.⁴⁴

EQUIP was implemented in Wardak in 2008, two years after the National Education Strategic Plan was launched under the leadership of Hanif Atmar, the former Minister of Education. Dr Ghulam Farooq Wardak, a local Pashtun, was appointed as the Minister of Education after Atmar in 2008. The establishment of the school management councils (SMCs) or school *shuras* was perceived to be EQUIP's major local achievement,⁴⁵ followed by teacher training and school construction. The SMCs were seen as a useful monitoring mechanism for student and teacher performance as well as security,⁴⁶ and they attended to education service delivery issues in their respective villages.⁴⁷ As many SMC members are village elders, the institutionalisation of SMCs gave the community a strong voice in the management of schools, thus facilitating negotiations over sectoral bargains.

37 ACBAR, "Health and Education in Afghanistan."

38 As with education indicators, it is likewise difficult to obtain longitudinal data for a number of health indicators, especially those pertaining to Afghanistan's provinces. Indicators from the Health Management Information System and even those from multi-sectoral surveys, such as the NRVA completed for 2007-08 and 2011-12, are not always the same. For the purpose of comparison among the three study areas, only a select number of health indicators are highlighted.

39 Central Statistics Organisation, "Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2004" (Kabul: Central Statistics Organisation, 2004). In the Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2004, this indicator referred to professionals visited for antenatal care (doctor, nurse, or midwife).

40 Central Statistics Organisation, "National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-12" (Kabul: Central Statistics Organisation, 2012).

41 Central Statistics Organisation, "Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2004."

42 Central Statistics Organisation, "National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-12."

43 Lajnat Al Daawa Al Islamiya is a Kuwaiti-based NGO formerly associated with Al Qaeda. Its name was previously on the United Nations Security Council Sanctions List, but it was removed in September 2013.

44 Given the poor availability of longitudinal data for a number of education performance indicators, a more detailed, but scattered tabular presentation of some education performance indicators is attached in Appendix B.

45 WK: KII-02; WK: KII-05 & 06; WK: IDI-01; WK: IDI-02; WK: FGD-01; WK: FGD-02.

46 WK: FGD-01 to 15; WK: IDI-01; WK: KII-02; WK: IDI-03.

47 WK: FGD-01 to 15; WK-IDI-11; WK-IDI-10.

Badghis

The education sector in Badghis Province was virtually non-existent before 2004. There were limited number of schools and students, and no teacher training centres and technical or vocational institutes. At the time, teachers were mostly from the villages and had poor qualifications. During the time of the Taliban, girls were forbidden from attending schools. People in the province also showed less interest in sending their children to school due to the unstable security situation during and after the Taliban's occupation.⁴⁸ Limited exposure to state education in earlier years meant that there was little incentive to send children to schools. Only recently has a university been established in the province, with three faculties—agriculture, medicine, and economics—which, in the longer term, should help in meeting the shortage of teachers. Two private universities have also been founded.

After 2004, the education sector in Badghis began experiencing positive changes.⁴⁹ The number of schools and students increased, and teachers from other provinces came to Badghis. However, the general education student-teacher ratio remained low from 2009 to 2012. Anecdotal evidence also suggests poor-quality education, a fact that partly offsets the quantitative gains reported by education statistics (see Box 1).

Box 1: Comments on the quality of education in Badghis

There are schools in Badghis for everyone. Even far-flung areas of Badghis have schools and teachers. But in general, education in Badghis is in a very bad state. There is quantity, but not quality. Even schools in Qala-i-naw city itself are not of quality. What about those in rural areas? In general, education is a concern in Badghis (BS:IDI-28).

...schools in insecure places are closed, so the figures that the Directorate of Education provides for Badghis Province about schools being open are inaccurate; they are wrong. In insecure places...we do not have schools. There are no teachers who go to school. The schools are only open in words and on paper, not in reality. This is an absolute abuse of resources. In some places, the salaries of teachers are paid to the Taliban (BS:IDI-29).

There is one problem in particular that we are all facing: the lack of qualified teachers. For example, the acting director of the Department of Education only has a high school certificate. Because he is a relative of Salem (not the real name of an elite) he got the job. A high school graduate cannot lead the education sector of a province (BS:IDI-31).

SMCs were established in Badghis, and as in Wardak, they are reported to be helpful in encouraging (actually pushing) families to send their children to school.⁵⁰ This is also mentioned as an important achievement of the EQUIP project in the province.⁵¹ Like Wardak, most of the SMC members in Badghis are village elders. They are tasked with monitoring school conditions as well as student and teacher performances, among other tasks.⁵²

Balkh

The status of education service delivery in Balkh before 2004 was somewhere between that of Badghis and Wardak. During the Taliban Emirate, most schools were closed, and girls were not permitted to attend. The schools that were open faced a lack of facilities. According to two interviewees, the education sector was poorly managed at the time.⁵³

48 BS: KII-18.

49 BS: KII-15; BS: IDI-20.

50 BS: IDI-20; BS: KII-18.

51 BS: IDI-19; BS: IDI-20.

52 BS: KII-18; BS: IDI-20.

53 BK: IDI-42; BK: IDI-44.

Since 2004, the province has benefitted from EQUIP. Before this programme, the education sector in Balkh had already received some assistance. There was already an increase in the number of provincial school buildings, libraries, and materials. Girls were able to attend school, and the number of female and male students increased. Further progress in education was attributed to EQUIP, as summarised by one of the interviewees:⁵⁴

As I said, there have been a lot of positive changes in education in Balkh since 2009 and before that year. With the backing and support of the EQUIP programme, every school tries to become better than the other schools; every single school wants to be a model school among the other schools. I mean, the EQUIP programme helped us a lot in the improvement of the education system. Now we have a laboratory, library, and different pictures of the lessons on the wall, which motivate students (BK: IDI - 44).

Table 2 below provides Balkh Province figures on selected education indicators, showing a consistent increase in the number of students and education facilities.

Table 2: Selected education data for the three provinces (2009 and 2012-13)

Indicators	Years	
	2009	2012
Number of public schools		
Badghis	377	456
Balkh	451	533
Wardak	323	390
	2009	2013
Teachers per 1,000 inhabitants		
Badghis	3.29	4.43
Balkh	7.98	8.47
Wardak	6.1	6.72
Enrolled students as % of the population		
Badghis	21.3	25.4
Balkh	32.1	39.4
Wardak	22.9	27.4

Source: Central Statistics Organisation (CSO).

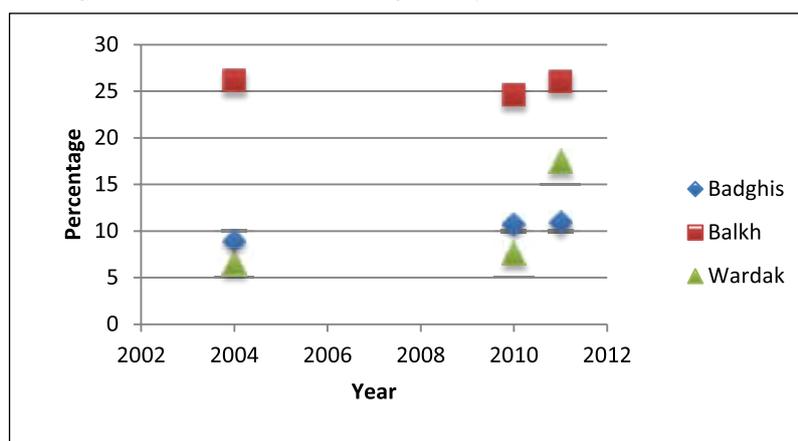
2.2.2 Data and performance comparison

Available facilities

The availability of education resources in the three provinces has been highly uneven. While the Ministry of Education authorised the opening of many new schools in Badghis (many of which never developed beyond being mere tents), it lacked sufficient numbers of teachers to meet the needs of the population (Table 2). It is noteworthy that Wardak had a lower percentage of female teachers than Badghis in 2004-10, but subsequently overtook it, recording a much faster increase in the percentage of female teachers than Badghis, which remained close to 10 percent throughout 2004-12 (Figure 2).

54 BK: KII-26; BK: KII-25; BK: IDI-43; BK: IDI-44.

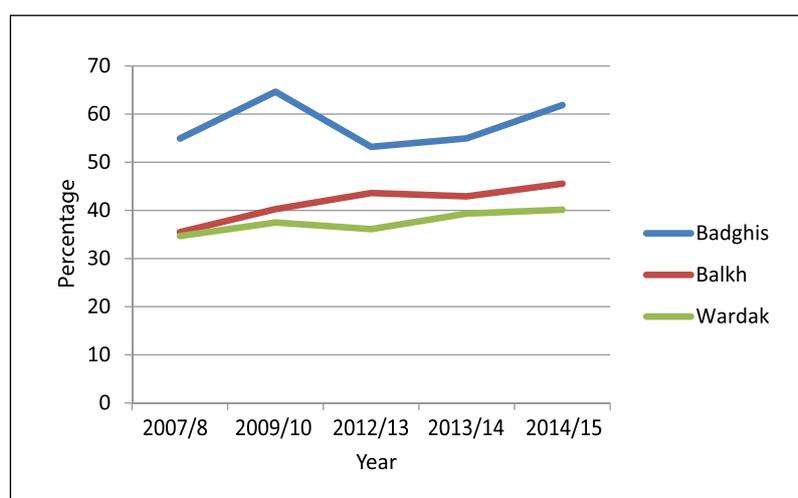
Figure 2: Number of female primary education teachers (%)



Source: CSO.

The percentage of female teachers has always been much higher in Balkh than in the other two provinces (around 25 percent). However, the ratio of students to teachers in Balkh has increased from 2009 until the present (Figure 3). A high provincial student-to-teacher ratio explains why a number of schools have two or three class shifts per day.⁵⁵ It is thus unsurprising that teacher performance remains poor.⁵⁶ The ratio of students per teacher is a proxy indicator for education quality. For this indicator, Wardak performs better than Badghis and Balkh provinces.

Figure 3: Average number of enrolled students per teacher, primary and secondary schools combined



Source: CSO.

Performance

The creation of SMCs, which is an EQUIP activity, was mentioned as having contributed positively to school management and performance.⁵⁷ However, there are no statistical indicators available regarding the quality of state education in Afghanistan; even enrolment rates are not fully reliable. Literacy rate data only started to become available with the two NRVA surveys. These surveys show a strong increase between 2007-08 and 2011-12 in primary school attendance rates in Badghis and, to a much lesser extent, in Balkh; by contrast, school attendance in Wardak declined markedly from 58.9 to 42.8 percent. Female net attendance ratios evolved in line with

55 World Bank, "Afghanistan—Public Expenditure Tracking Survey: Education Sector—Synthesis Report," Education Sector Review (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011).

56 BK: KII-25; BK: KII-23.

57 BK: IDI-43; BK: IDI-45; BK: FGD-58; BK: FGD-63.

the overall figure in Balkh, but increased much faster than average in Badghis and declined even faster than average in Wardak (Table 3).

Table 3: Attendance rates in primary schools

Primary schools	School attendance rate (%)		Girls-to-boys net attendance ratio (%)	
	2007-08	2011-12	2007-08	2011-12
Badghis	30.2	51.6	69.2	79.7
Balkh	57.6	66.1	87.2	87.7
Wardak	58.9	42.8	42.0	21.4

Source: NRVA.

The collapse in attendance in Wardak was almost entirely due to the drop in female attendance, as male attendance remained largely stable. In secondary schools, the scenario was similar: attendance rates in Badghis started from very low levels (4%), but had increased fourfold by 2011-12 (Table 4). There was also an increase in Balkh, although not as dramatic, as the province commenced with much higher levels of secondary school attendance (29%). In Wardak, the decline in attendance was repeated in secondary schools, but not because of girls' attendance, which remained stable at very low levels. Indeed, girls' schools are concentrated in Qala-i Naw, Badghis, where security is better. Here, there was instead a considerable drop in boys' attendance.

Table 4: Attendance rates for secondary schools

Secondary schools	School attendance rate (%)		Girls-to-boys net attendance ratio (%)	
	2007-08	2011-12	2007-08	2011-12
Badghis	3.9	16.1	58.5	42.4
Balkh	29	42.5	67.7	73.9
Wardak	41.8	33.9	3.6	4.7

Source: NRVA.

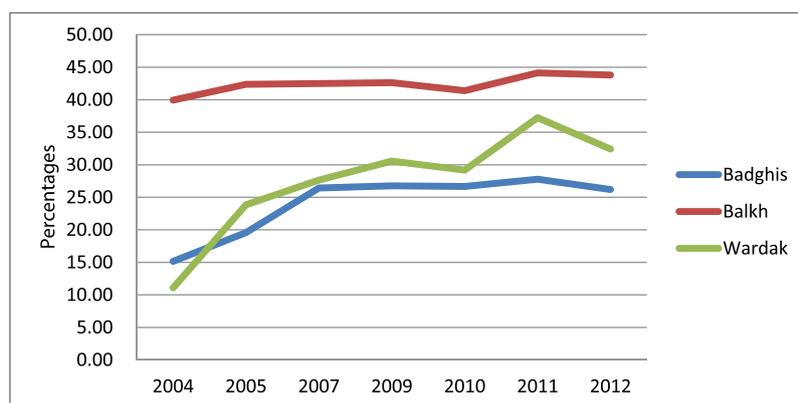
The difference between enrolment and attendance data is remarkable. Female enrolment has been much stronger in Balkh than in Wardak and Badghis, standing at around 40-45 percent but remaining stable from 2004 to 2012. Badghis and Wardak reported similar percentages of enrolled female students, but both experienced considerable increases in female enrolment after 2004, rising from 10-15 to 30-35 percent (Figure 3, Table 5). Consequently, Badghis saw the percentage of female students more than double over the period 2004-12, while the percentage of female teachers hardly increased.

Table 5: Enrolment rates

	Enrolled students as % of population	
	2009	2013
Badghis	21.3	25.4
Balkh	32.1	39.4
Wardak	22.9	27.4

Source: CSO.

Figure 4: Number of female primary education students (%)



Source: CSO.

Questions

This data on education service delivery in the three provinces raises several questions:

- Why did Badghis have fewer resources (staffing levels) than the other two provinces despite the high demand for education services?
- Why did Wardak begin with strong performances in education and then experience a very sharp drop in attendance rates between 2007-08 and 2011-12?
- Why did Badghis, starting from a low level, perform much worse than Balkh in terms of education delivery, but better than Wardak?

Note that Badghis also performed very well in terms of the growing percentage of enrolled female students. These increases are observed in Badghis in spite of having fewer teachers relative to the population. In 2013, for example, Badghis respectively had half and two-thirds the number of teachers per 1,000 inhabitants compared to Balkh and Wardak (Table 2). This would suggest a degree of neglect from the centre, despite the high local demand for educational services. Particularly surprising is the fact that the scarcity of female teachers did not prevent the enrolment rates of girls from improving.

Health sector delivery in the three case study provinces

2.2.3 Support for health services

Wardak

International and national NGOs dominated the health sector in Wardak as well as the entire country from the collapse of the Najibullah regime in 1992 to the US intervention in late 2001 and the ousting of the Taliban. The INGOs present during this period include SCA, Ibn Sina, Afghan Red Crescent Society, and Lajnat. Narratives from interviewees revealed that the government managed health services delivery in the provincial hospital,⁵⁸ but failed to coordinate with local NGOs delivering primary health services.

Since the government lacked the capacity to provide services and oversee the health sector, the operations of INGOs were not standardised, with each organisation delivering health services according to their own mandates and assessment of Wardak's needs:

Each organisation had its own strategy, programme, and work-plan, and thus there was no coordination among these institutions to provide better health services (WK: KII-08).

Before 2004, different kinds of health services were offered by NGOs that were financially supported by various institutions. Based on their plan and available facilities, they delivered health services on specific components...The service deliveries in these clinics were based on the support or resources they received...A dental unit was functioning in one health centre, while it was not in others (WK: KII-12).

According to informants, although the delivered health services were basic and facilities sparsely distributed, there was a presence of professional health personnel, especially female health workers, and the available medicines were of good quality.⁵⁹ However, local maternal and child mortality rates were high due to the distance and remoteness of a substantial part of the population from the clinics.⁶⁰ As discussed below, insecurity in Wardak Province in the 1990s was largely attributed to the violent rivalry of *jihad* commanders. However, according to one of the provincial programme implementers, none of these commanders opposed the delivery of health services:

There were some problems due to the insecurity and influence of jihadi parties. However, none of them opposed the health services, and none of the doctors or medical staff was hurt. The Hezb-e Islami Party assisted in bringing NGOs to work here (WK: KII-09).

From 2004 to 2012, Wardak's health sector was marked by increases in the number of facilities, services, professional staff, and medicines. Interviewees also said that delivery was more organised.⁶¹ SHARP/BPHS, which was implemented in Wardak in 2009 through SCA, was seen by programme implementers to have facilitated better health service delivery and management.⁶²

Badghis

As in Wardak, INGOs were working in Badghis before 2004,⁶³ although people tended to travel to Herat Province or Mazar-i-Sharif in Balkh to seek medical attention. There were very few medical doctors present and very limited health services; further, there was only one hospital operating in

58 WK: KII-08; WK: KII-09; WK: IDI-06.

59 WK: KII-10 & 11; WK: IDI-08; WK: IDI-07; WK: IDI-06.

60 Accurate maternal and child mortality data per province is unavailable. In the WB's Implementation Completion and Results Report, it mentioned that under-five mortality and maternal mortality "are generally no longer used as program indicators due to widely-known difficulties in measurement and attribution": World Bank, "Afghanistan—Health Sector Emergency Rehabilitation and Development Project," 12.

61 WK: KII-10 & 11; WK: KII-12; WK: IDI-06; WK: IDI-09.

62 WK: KII-08; WK: KII-12; WK: KII-13; WK: IDI-05.

63 The NGOs were Merlin, Maltezer, and Médecins Sans Frontières.

Badghis at that time.⁶⁴ After 2004 things began to change.⁶⁵ The Spanish Provincial Reconstruction Team was established in 2005 and provided considerable assistance to health services delivery, such as paying the salaries of health personnel and building several clinics. The accounts of the interviewees mentioned progress in some health indicators like vaccinations and access to care,⁶⁶ but the lack of data prevents us from confirming these impressions.⁶⁷ By 2010, SHARP/BPHS was being implemented in Badghis. Like Wardak, Badghis Province also participated in the BPHS prior to this, as a recipient of the WB's Performance-Based Partnership Agreement under the Health Sector Emergency and Reconstruction and Development (HSERD) Project.⁶⁸ MOVE Welfare Organisation (MOVE) took over the implementation of BPHS from BRAC in 2010.

Balkh

Similar to its education sector, Balkh's health services were lacking and not universally accessible before 2004. One interviewee recalled that the Taliban restricted health services to their members during their regime.⁶⁹ There were only a few clinics with a limited number of health workers, none of whom were female. Clinics only had limited medicines. Like the NGOs delivering health services in Badghis and Wardak provinces, those in Balkh also operated based on their own policies and strategies. According to informants, local strongmen and elders tended to oppose women's access to health services.

The province saw the BPHS implemented from 2004 onwards.⁷⁰ Increases in the number of health facilities and health workers followed. The SHARP/BPHS programme came to Balkh Province in 2010. NGOs delivering health services were no longer operating based on their own strategies, but were contracted out and managed by the MoPH to deliver the comprehensive BPHS package.

The NGO, Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA), assumed the implementation of the BPHS component in Balkh Province during the SHARP programme. Before SHARP, this component was implemented by two other NGOs, namely, the Bakhtar Development Network (BDN) and BRAC.⁷¹ Interviews conducted with some CHA staff revealed that they did not perform well after they took over the implementation of BPHS from BDN and BRAC. The differences in their procedures compared with those of the previous NGOs affected health facility performance,⁷² a situation confirmed by Balkh health workers.

...you know, one of the issues is contracting with different NGOs. When this happens, each NGO comes to the hospital and starts their own policy and system, which takes time for the doctors and other staff to adjust to and this makes them upset. The issue of contracting out with NGOs after a year or two reduces the activities, and it takes time for the health staff to get familiar with the new NGO (BK: IDI-48).

64 BS: KII-19; BS: KII-20; BS: KII-21.

65 BS: KII-21; BS: KII-20; BS: IDI-25; BS: IDI-26.

66 BS: KII-19; BS: KII-21; BS: IDI-25; BS: FGD-39; BS: FGD-41.

67 Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health and Indian Institute of Health Management Research, "Afghanistan Health Sector Balanced Scorecard 2008" (Kabul: Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, 2008); Ministry of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Indian Institute of Health Management Research, "Afghanistan Basic Package of Health Services Balanced Scorecard National Report 2012-13" (Kabul: Ministry of Public Health, 2013).

68 HSERD was the WB health sector project prior to SHARP.

69 BK: IDI-48.

70 During the HSERD project, BRAC and BDN implemented BPHS in Balkh. These two NGOs divided the districts in Balkh province among themselves.

71 BRAC is formerly known as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee.

72 KL: IDI-65 & 66.

2.2.4 Data and performance comparison

Available facilities

The 2007-08 statistics from the CSO indicate a much stronger presence of doctors in the field in Badghis compared to Wardak (0.31 vs. 0.19 per 1,000 inhabitants, respectively), which is hardly credible in light of the 2014 findings (Table 6). Indeed, later statistics reveal a very different picture: in 2014, Badghis had 0.09 doctors per 1,000 inhabitants, compared to 0.2 in Wardak (Table 7). This would appear to confirm that Badghis suffered from its remoteness, driving medical personnel away from the province (Table 7).

Table 6: Selected health statistics (inputs) for Badghis, Balkh, and Wardak, 2007-08

Private and public health centres				
2007-08	Comprehensive	Basic	Medical personnel	Doctors per 1,000 inhabitants
Badghis	3	20	135	0.31
Balkh	15	32	578	0.78
Wardak	9	24	99	0.19

Source: CSO.

Table 7: Selected health statistics (inputs) for Badghis, Balkh, and Wardak, 2014

Private and public health centres					
2014	Comprehensive	Basic	Doctors	Female doctors	Doctors per 1,000 inhabitants
Badghis	3	23	44	0	0.09
Balkh	14	44	500	136	0.39
Wardak	10	26	118	13	0.20

Source: CSO.

Performance

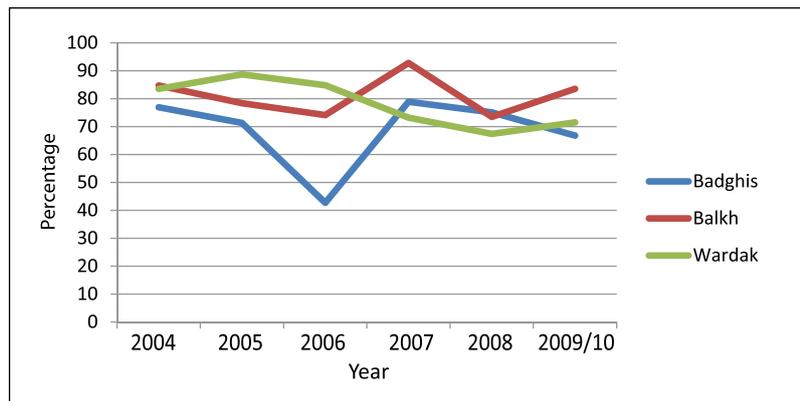
The Afghan health sector has been the object of regular assessments of quality in contrast to the education sector.⁷³ The balanced scorecard is a “core measure used by the government and the NGOs to measure performance of the health system at the provincial level that provides a measure from a reliable source of the effectiveness of project support to provision of the BPHS.”⁷⁴

The performance of the three provinces was mostly similar, with a few important exceptions. Client satisfaction as measured in the balanced scorecards was at similar levels for the three provinces, except for a major drop in Badghis in 2006, when it fell from 70 to 40 percent; it nevertheless recovered afterwards (Figure 5).

⁷³ Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health and Indian Institute of Health Management Research, “Afghanistan Health Sector Balanced Scorecard 2008”; Ministry of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Indian Institute of Health Management Research, “Afghanistan Basic Package of Health Services Balanced Scorecard National Report 2012-13.”

⁷⁴ World Bank, “Afghanistan—Health Sector Emergency Rehabilitation and Development Project,” 16.

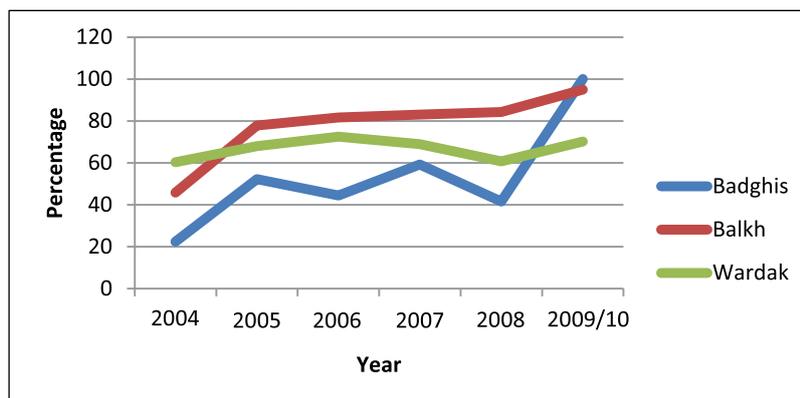
Figure 5: Client satisfaction and perception of quality index (MoPH balanced scorecards)



Source: THE BALANCED SCORECARD REPORT FOR AFGHANISTAN HOSPITALS 2012/13, John Hopkins Bloomberg school of Public Health

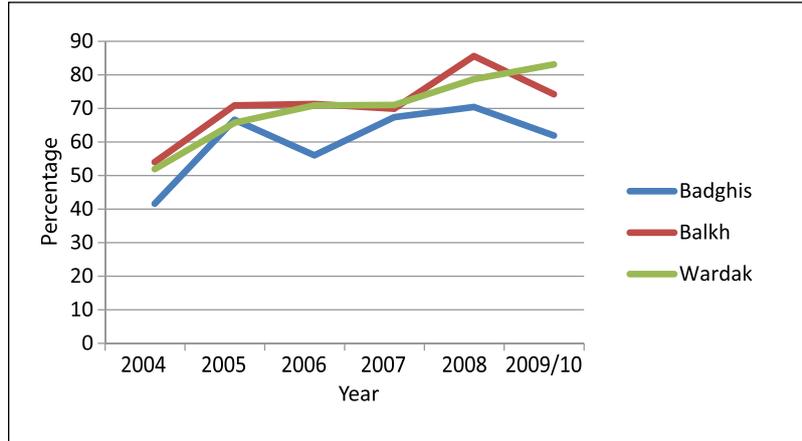
By contrast, the staffing index of the balanced scorecards shows Badghis improving considerably from 2008, after lagging behind the two other provinces; Wardak remained stable at 60-70 percent, while Balkh improved throughout the period, although at a slower rate than Badghis (Figure 6). In terms of the provider knowledge score, the performance of the three provinces was remarkably similar in terms of their common upward trend, with very similar scores throughout 2004-12 (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Staffing index (MoPH balanced scorecards)



Source: THE BALANCED SCORECARD REPORT FOR AFGHANISTAN HOSPITALS 2012/13, John Hopkins Bloomberg school of Public Health

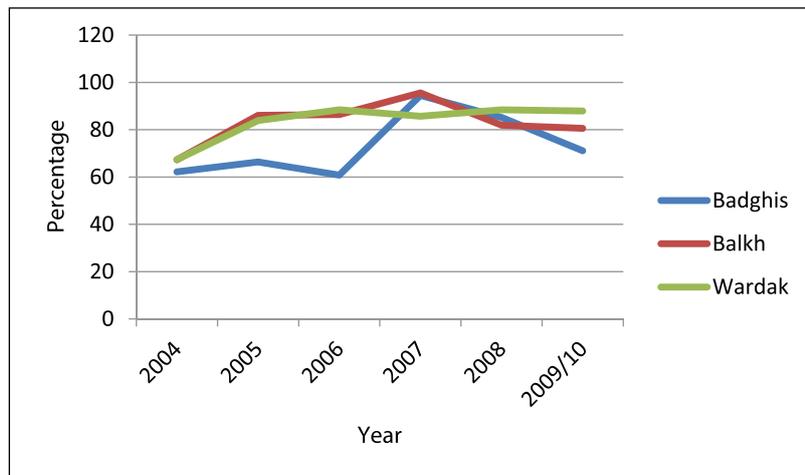
Figure 7: Provider knowledge score (MoPH balanced scorecards)



Source: THE BALANCED SCORECARD REPORT FOR AFGHANISTAN HOSPITALS 2012/13, John Hopkins Bloomberg school of Public Health

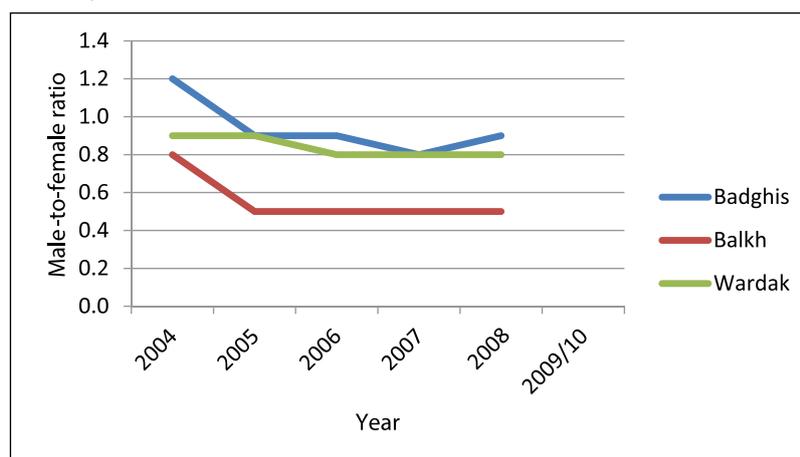
The equipment functionality index shows a comparable performance in the three provinces, with the sole exception of Badghis, which lagged from the other two provinces until 2007 (Figure 8). This would therefore appear to have been a critical year for the health system of this province. In terms of female utilisation of health facilities, since 2005, women have represented the majority of patients in all three provinces. The trend stabilised after 2005, but female utilisation remained significantly higher in Balkh at around 0.5 male users per female (i.e., around two-thirds of users were females); it stood at around 0.8-0.9 for both Badghis and Wardak (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Equipment functionality index (MoPH balanced scorecards)



Source: THE BALANCED SCORECARD REPORT FOR AFGHANISTAN HOSPITALS 2012/13, John Hopkins Bloomberg school of Public Health

Figure 9: Outpatient utilisation, male: female ratio (MoPH balanced scorecards)



Source: THE BALANCED SCORECARD REPORT FOR AFGHANISTAN HOSPITALS 2012/13, John Hopkins Bloomberg school of Public Health

While local health sector performance as measured by the balance scorecard has shown steady if variable improvements, the quality of health services should not be overestimated. As in most of rural Afghanistan, many continue to complain about the quality of services they receive:⁷⁵

Actually, when our students graduate from medical school or nursing, they don't want to come back, because in Maidan Wardak they cannot earn as much as in big cities (WK: IDI-17).

While the quality of health services delivered was quite similar in the three provinces, with the exception of Badghis which tended to play catch-up much later, access to health facilities is a different matter. In 2007-08, according to the NRVA, only 36 percent of Badghis' population had easy access to a health facility, that is, located less than 1 hour walk away (Table 8). At present, over 30% of Badghis' villages have difficult access to health services, compared to 16.9 percent in Balkh and just 8.4 percent in Wardak (Table 9).

Table 8: Selected health statistics (outcomes) for Badghis, Balkh, and Wardak (2007-08)

2007-08	% of population with a health facility less than 1 houraway	% of children fully immunised	% of births with skilled birth attendant
Badghis	36	4	1
Balkh	82	27	28
Wardak	71	78	60

Source: NRVA 2007-08.

The performance of Balkh on child immunisation was particularly disappointing given the comparatively favourable context.

Table 9: Estimated number of settlements with difficult access to health services (2015)

2015	% settlements with difficult access to health services	Number of settlements with difficult access to health	Total number of settlements
Badghis	30.1	331	1,098
Balkh	16.9	214	1,263
Wardak	8.4	179	2,131
All Afghanistan	23.1	10,380	45,017

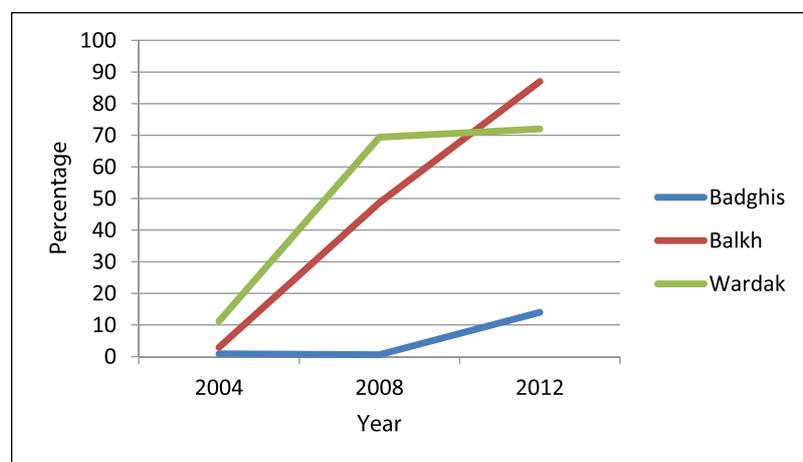
Source: USAID-IMMAP.

75 WK: IDI-16; WK: IDI-15. .

In 2007-08, Badghis lagged well behind not only Balkh (82 percent), but also Wardak (71 percent) in terms of access to health services, which explains why comparatively few women in Badghis have had access to skilled antenatal care (Table 8, Figure 10). Limited access to health care facilities also contributed to the low percentage of children being fully immunised (only 4 percent in 2007-08).

Better health access is in all likelihood what explains Wardak's performance, which was positively rated according to the balanced scorecard. In 2008, Wardak's mean score, as with many of the provinces, was above 50 percent. In 2012-13, Wardak achieved the highest mean score among all 34 provinces of the country. In one particular field, notably child immunisation, Wardak was reported to be doing exceptionally well. Despite having fewer medical facilities relative to the population compared with Balkh (Tables 6, 7, and 9), according to the data in Table 8, Wardak performed better than Balkh in terms of fully immunised children and births with skilled birth attendants. This was most certainly influenced by Wardak's high accessibility to health services (Table 9).

Figure 10: Access to skilled antenatal care (MoPH balanced scorecards)



Source: MoPH.

Questions

The two core questions relating to the delivery of health services that have emerged from the analysis of the data are the following:

- Why is there a much lower level of access to health facilities in Badghis compared to the other two provinces and compared to education delivery in the same province?
- Why is Wardak's performance in health delivery better than Balkh's despite the latter being a much wealthier province, particularly in basic health delivery (such as immunisation)?

The purpose of this paper is to produce a framework which could help answer these questions by examining the interaction of political settlements and their associated forms of violence, the elite bargains that emerge (or do not) from such settlements, and the way different modes of service delivery in health and education respond to and are in turn shaped by these settlements.

3. Violence and Political Settlements in Afghanistan

3.1 The primary political settlement

For more than 30 years, Afghanistan has been a violence-affected country, which has resulted in complex rivalries given the variety of actors, interests, and informal institutions present throughout its history. During the 1978-92 *jihad* period, there was a massive mobilisation of players, such as religious and political counter-elites, who opposed the Soviet regime that they believed was moving toward “pre-emptive repression.”⁷⁶ The grassroots mobilisation was decentralised, with several competing insurgencies involved. Most of these organisations were themselves decentralised, with local fronts enjoying a high degree of political autonomy. This later contributed to the emergence of “warlordism” and the persistent fragmentation of the political and military landscape, making the shaping of a political settlement particularly fluid. The reduction of Soviet aid to the Najibullah regime and the failure of other potential patrons to intervene eventually led to the *de facto* collapse of the state in 1992-93, as none of the opposition groups was able to assert control over state structures. By 1993, the country was sliding toward factional war, with various armed irregular forces competing for territorial control.⁷⁷ The inability of the factions to reach a stable elite bargain prevented the re-establishment of a functioning central government in Kabul until 2002; what instead prevailed was the “formation of rival alliances in an attempt to achieve victory without an inclusive political settlement.”⁷⁸

The movement of the Taliban, which emerged as a serious contender for overall state control in 1994, came closest to re-establishing a monopoly of violence in Afghanistan. Initially, the Taliban presented themselves as carrying “slogans of peace and security,”⁷⁹ and the only force able to bring stability back to Afghanistan. The Taliban’s style of dealing with the newly acquired territories was to co-opt “a number of militias previously affiliated with their enemies.”⁸⁰ While ready to strike elite bargains, the Taliban rejected any idea of sharing power at the centre and tried to achieve a complete military victory.

Eventually, the Taliban lost to the US-led Northern Alliance coalition in 2001, leading to the return of many of the same factions which had battled for control of Kabul in the early 1990s and the subsequent formation of a coalition government in Kabul, excluding only the Taliban from the main Afghan political groups. The signing of the Bonn Agreement for an interim power-sharing government created a framework for a new political settlement and a new elite bargain, presided over by Hamid Karzai, and for international aid to start flowing to Afghanistan. The Bonn Agreement was later criticised as an “exclusive elite” pact, unreflective of the actual central and provincial political structures,⁸¹ and inclusive only of the various anti-Taliban groups,⁸² excluding in particular the defeated Taliban.⁸³

76 Antonio Giustozzi and Niamatullah Ibrahim, “Thirty Years of Conflict Drivers: Government Mobilisation in Afghanistan 1978-2011” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2012), 11.

77 Giustozzi and Ibrahim, “Thirty Years of Conflict Drivers.”

78 Giustozzi and Ibrahim, “Thirty Years of Conflict Drivers,” 19.

79 KL: KII-43.

80 Giustozzi and Ibrahim, “Thirty Years of Conflict Drivers,” 24.

81 Antonio Giustozzi and Niamatullah Ibrahim, “From New Dawn to Quicksand: The Political Economy of Statebuilding in Afghanistan,” in *The Political Economy of Post-Conflict Statebuilding: Power after Peace*, ed. Mats Berdal and Dominik Zaum, 246-62 (London: Routledge, 2013); Sarah Lister, “Caught in Confusion: Local Governance Structures in Afghanistan” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2007); Lucy Morgan Edwards, “State-Building in Afghanistan: A Case Showing the Limits?” *International Review of the Red Cross* 92, no. 880 (2010); Katja Starc, “Limits of Internationalized State-Building: The Stabilization of Post-2001 Afghanistan” (DPU Working Paper No. 158, UCL, 2013).

82 Gilles Dorransoro, “Afghanistan Searching for Political Agreement” (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010); Goodhand and Mansfield, “Drugs and (Dis)order”; Thomas Ruttig, *Islamists, Leftists—and a Void in the Center: Afghanistan’s Political Parties and where they come from (1902-2006)* (Kabul: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2006).

83 Dorransoro, “Afghanistan Searching for Political Agreement.”

The new government was heterogeneous, not just ethnically but also ideologically, thus complicating the task of former President Karzai, who was not able to articulate a unified development vision. In the words of one of the civil society actors interviewed:

That administration brought in people to the government with different backgrounds. I should say that some of these people were fighting each other during the civil war. Some of them came from abroad, from Iran and Pakistan. They attempted the formation of a unity government, while considering power sharing. However, one could see that with the people who composed the administration, there was no unified vision for the country, and as such, there was no teamwork among them (KL: KII-42).

The unprecedented amount of international aid pouring into Afghanistan and the division of the spoils among the political-military factions cemented the elite bargain, allowing old rivals to co-exist within the same government:

All political leaders tried to have a better share in the new government...If one supports a particular presidential candidate, it is for one's own benefit. Everyone tried to have more benefits for their parties...The money ends in the hands of those people who are not professionals, and it was all spent without a proper plan or according to the facts and realities of the country. Powerholders made plans according to their personal connections or relationships with each other (KL: KII-53).

Access to major political or government posts gave control over an unprecedented flow of resources. Not new to Afghanistan was the fact that top government jobs also granted *de facto* impunity from any form of accountability. Together with the massive inflow of the civil war's military leaders with poor educational backgrounds, this impunity crucially weakened the professionalism of the state:

Those civil war fighters started to find political posts in the new government... These were mainly people who do not have a very high educational background or a clean background. So in the new government, Karzai had to assign them to high government positions, like ministers, deputy ministers, very high-ranking positions. That affected the government very negatively. First, they did not have the required knowledge and experience to do their job. Second, they had an interest to keep power, gain more economic resources, and maintain their status (KL: KII-47).

The ineffective and corrupt character of many government activities compromised citizen perceptions of the government, despite a massive concomitant increase in availability of resources. It is common to hear that these failures may have pushed some communities to side with the Taliban, even if conclusive research in this regard has not been conducted.⁸⁴ Certainly, the reliance on clientelism alienated those excluded from the settlement; deprived of political protection, the Taliban suffered more than most from the abusive character of many Afghan security actors, resulting in its re-organisation and mobilisation into the insurgency from 2002 onwards.⁸⁵ Local security and government officials exploited Western support for their own ends, that is, by reporting local rivals as insurgents to eliminate or marginalise them in order to gain power and influence, which consequently weakened support for the central government in many communities.⁸⁶

In the early years of post-Bonn Afghanistan, the coalition government in Kabul existed precariously. The main players manoeuvred to gradually marginalise their rivals, aiming for the formation of a more homogeneous (and less inclusive) coalition after the presidential and parliamentary elections.⁸⁷ In practice, the post-2004 coalitions were only marginally more homogeneous than the previous ones, as former President Karzai's own circle was not able to consolidate a sufficiently large and independent powerbase.

84 KL: KII-44; KL: KII-50.

85 Theo Farrell and Antonio Giustozzi, "The Taliban at War: Inside the Helmand Insurgency, 2004-2012," *International Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2013): 845-71; Carter Malkasian, *War Comes to Garmser: Thirty Years of Conflict on the Afghan Frontier* (London: Hurst, 2013); Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban-Al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan* (London: Hurst, 2011).

86 Anand Gopal, *No Good Men among the Living: America, the Taliban* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014).

87 Kai Eide, *Power Struggle over Afghanistan: An Inside Look at What Went Wrong—and What We Can Do to Repair the Damage* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2011).

The power of international actors shaped the construction and the stability of ‘elite bargains’. The interviews revealed two factors that convinced the ruling elites of the necessity of a coalition of different and even heterogeneous forces to avoid the collapse of the central government. These factors related to the growing instability from 2005 onwards, largely due to the expanding Taliban insurgency, and the gradual withdrawal of Western military forces from 2011:

Any politician who wants stability would have to have a clear understanding that one would need to have everybody on board (KL: KII-49).

The political elites in Kabul have accepted that none of the ethnicities could have all the power. For them to stay in power, make use of resources, and also implement their powers, they had to compromise (KL: KII-42).

From 2002 to 2013, however, the power struggles in Kabul and in the provinces were all too visible. This contributed decisively to weakening the image of the government and to spreading among the public and middle- and low-rank government officials alike, a sense of precariousness and a lack of resilience, presumably pushing many officials to privilege their short-term personal gains over long-term investment in the system. The unstable and fragile political settlement at the centre translates into a variety of elite bargains linking the provinces to the centre, with provincial elites often entertaining antagonistic relationships with at least some elements of the political elite at the national level. The secondary settlements are therefore often out of tune with the primary one in Kabul; ministers such as those responsible for health or education might sometimes be political rivals of the provincial elites, even from provinces from which they originated. This could result in provincial line ministries, under direct orders from Kabul, acting in dissonance with the provincial elites, or in other cases, provincial elites hijacking control of the provincial departments of Kabul ministries. This in turn leads to a variety of sectoral elite bargains emerging in different provinces, depending on both the ability of the provincial elites to control the local state bureaucracy and the aims of those very elites.

3.2 The security outlook of the three provinces

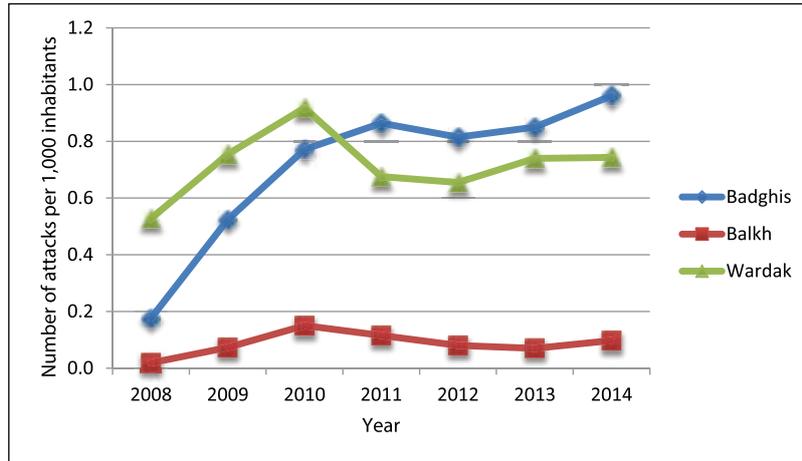
The three provinces chosen as case studies for this country study are geographically very different. Wardak Province is situated on the southern outcrops of the Hindu Kush mountain range close to the capital city Kabul, while Badghis is located in the isolated hills of northwestern Afghanistan on the border with Turkmenistan. Balkh Province, home to one of the largest commercial and financial centres of Afghanistan, Mazar-i-Sharif, is situated in the northern plateau, bordering Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

The estimated populations of Wardak and Badghis Province in 2012 were almost identical, at 600,000 and 500,000 inhabitants respectively. Badghis, however, is twice as large as Wardak in terms of land area.⁸⁸ By contrast, Balkh province has an estimated 1.2 million inhabitants in a much smaller area of land than Badghis.

In terms of security conditions in the three provinces from 2008-14, Badghis had the highest number of incidents related to armed opposition groups per 1,000 inhabitants at the start of 2011 (Figure 11). Incidents in Wardak reached only slightly lower proportions after peaking in 2010. Balkh was the most secure of the three provinces.

⁸⁸ The land area is 10,348 km² for Wardak, 20,794 km² for Badghis, and 16,183 km² for Balkh.

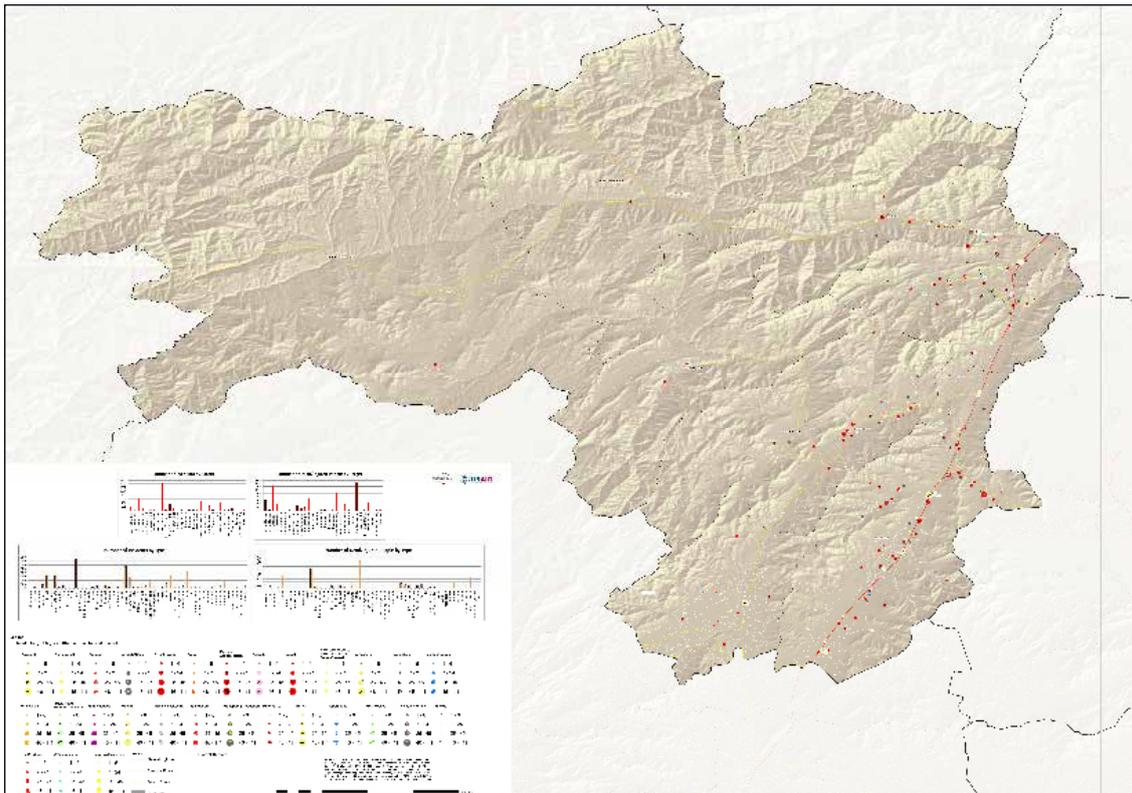
Figure 11: Insurgent attacks in Badghis, Balkh, and Wardak per thousand inhabitants (2008-14)



Source: ANSO quarterly reports 2008-14.

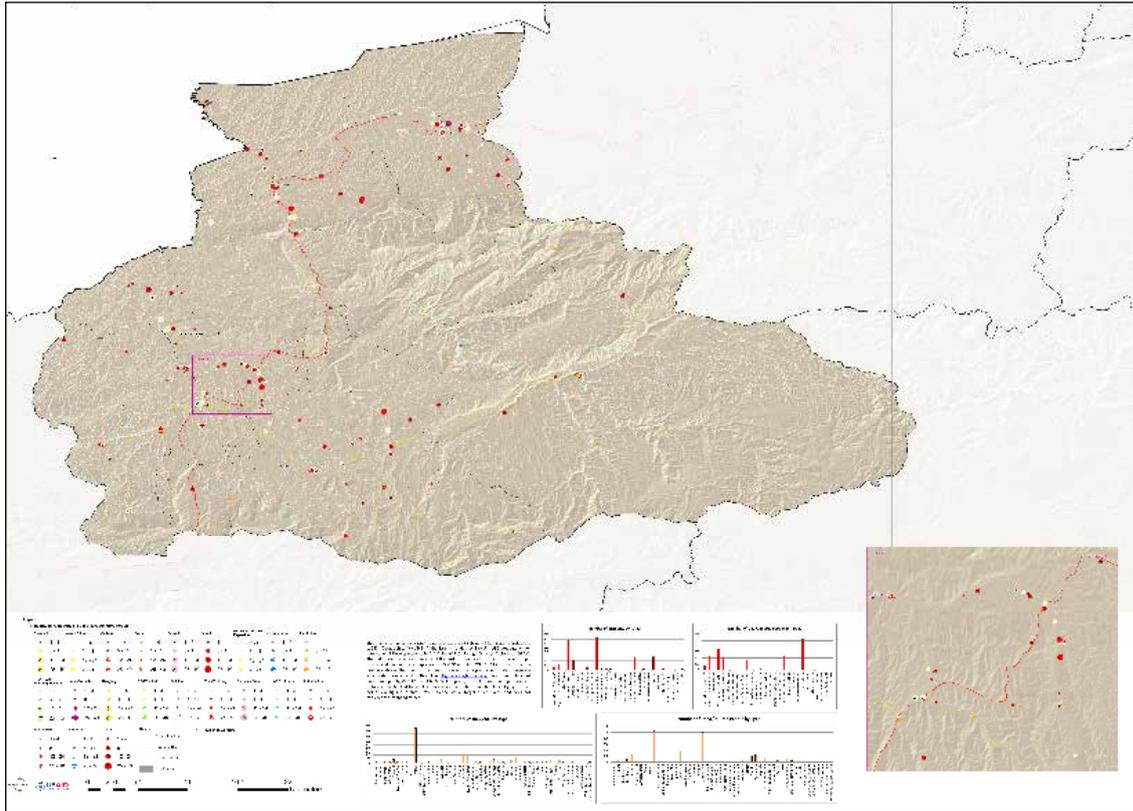
Figures 12-14 show where violent incidents have taken place in the three provinces. As can be seen, incidents tend to be geographically concentrated and large portions of Wardak in the Hazara-populated west and north of the province have been completely unaffected by violence. Even in Badghis, large portions of the province, particularly in the districts of Ghormach, Jawand, and Bala Murghab, show little violence, although the reason in this case is that these areas have been abandoned by the government, either being dominated by the Taliban or turned into no-man’s lands.

Figure 12: Geographical distribution of security incidents in Wardak (2007-13)



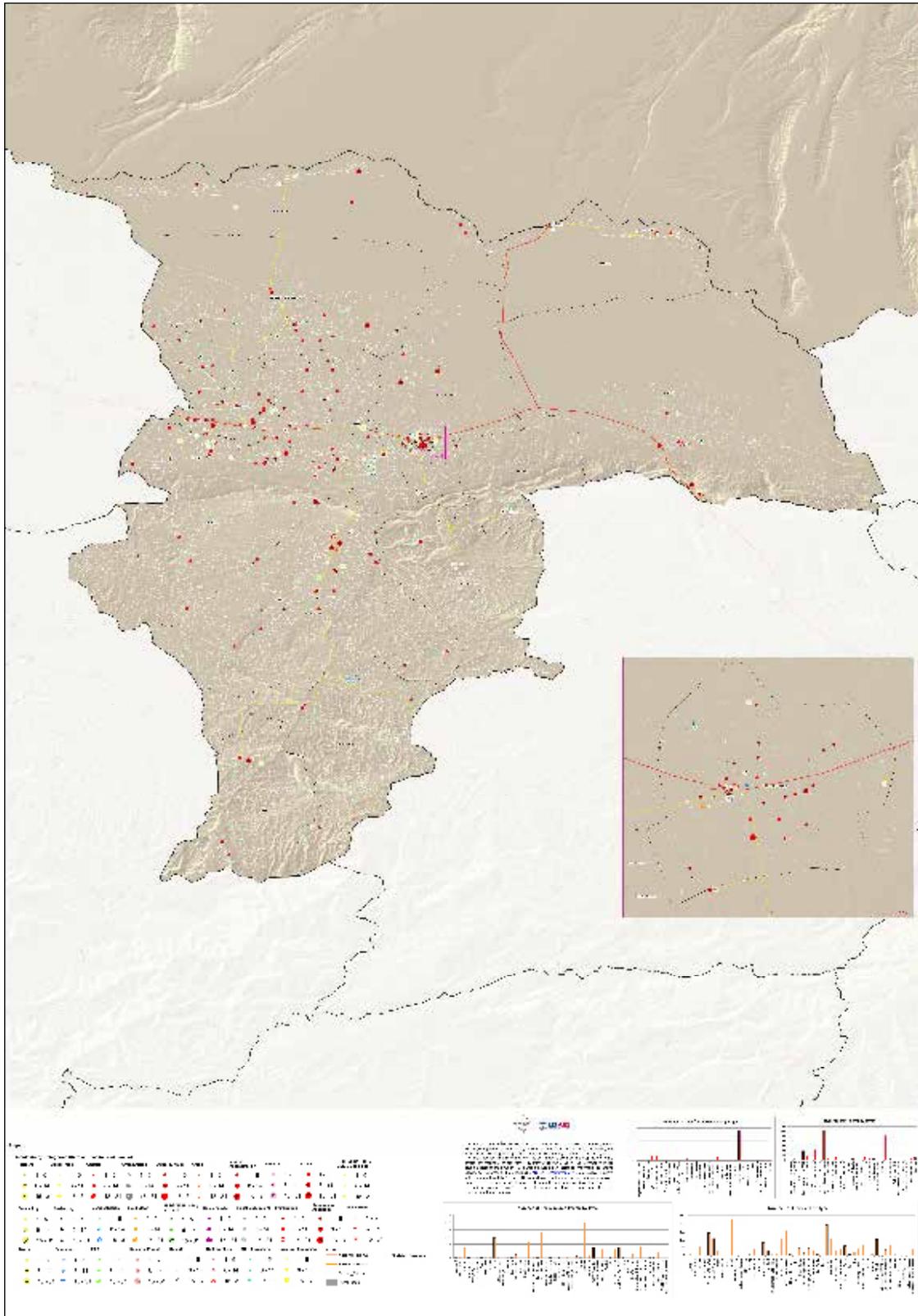
Source: USAID/iMMAP

Figure 13: Geographical distribution of security incidents in Badghis (2007-13)



Source: USAID/iMMAP

Figure 14: Geographical distribution of security incidents in Balkh (2007-13)



Source: USAID/iMMAP

Although the Hazara areas of Wardak are largely untouched by the insurgency, the Pashtun areas are very seriously affected. Tangi Valley in Sayyed Abad District has for years been a major Taliban stronghold,⁸⁹ although there is currently a strong Taliban presence in virtually all of the Pashtun areas of Wardak. Another insurgent force, Hezb-e Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, has also been present in Wardak, which, despite its strong local roots, has been severely underfunded compared to the Taliban. In Badghis, the insurgency started in the Pashtun-dominated districts of Ghormach and Bala Murghab, but over the years it has spread to the rest of the province as well. The seemingly unaffected areas of the southeast are in fact sparsely populated and with very little government presence (Jawand). In Balkh, too, the insurgency began in Pashtun areas, primarily Balkh and Chimtal districts, and only recently has it started taking hold in some Tajik and Uzbek areas as well. The result has been a complex web of secondary settlements, sometimes making it impossible to develop a single dominant political settlement at the provincial level (see below).

Figures 12-14 raise a number of points for future research. If intra-provincial data on the distribution of violent incidents are available, it should be possible to make informed assessments about the impact of violence. Large parts of Wardak, for example, are unaffected by violence: did these areas within Wardak perform better in terms of service delivery outcomes? Similarly, did the areas of Badghis that were more secure perform better across a range of service indicators? It might also be possible to assess the impact of dispersed population: do remote areas always perform worse than the provincial average outcome? By adding detailed information about Taliban presence, district by district, it might also be possible to assess more accurately how the Taliban presence affects social service delivery outcomes at the sub-provincial level.

3.3 The politics of education delivery

The fluid nature of the primary political settlement at the center and resultant uncertainty over its longevity creates a degree of fluidity of secondary settlements around the country, and even more so, they create an environment where provincial elites might not want or even be able to strike elite bargains with the Kabul elite. All of these impact education and health delivery, providing incentives for short-term profiteering and for the allocation of resources to the development and strengthening of patronage networks. This was supported by interviews with project implementers and non-programme implementers at the national level.

For example, in the education sector, patron-client relationships between members of the ruling coalition and local elites and strongmen influenced the selection of school locations, the number of schools built in each province or district, and the hiring of staff. In reference to some MPs, one national programme implementer mentioned that “they have facilitated [the delivery of education services] in the sense that there are now more education service deliveries in their respective areas. They did not equally distribute the education services; more are found in their areas.”⁹⁰ Two other national programme implementers noted the same, seeing this as impeding the equitable distribution of education services.⁹¹

The leverage of politicians and local powerbrokers was enhanced by the fact that the Afghan government has historically had difficulties with communities not previously exposed to state education.⁹² Using their positions, MPs and powerbrokers trade off the facilitation of delivering education services, thus weighing in on the location of schools and the hiring of staff.⁹³ Although the MoE in general and EQUIP in particular are supposed to abide by certain criteria in terms of recruitment, allegations of nepotism and clientelism abound, especially in relation to pressure from the economic and political elites.⁹⁴ A national programme implementer admitted that while hiring people without adequate qualifications compromises the quality of education service

89 See, for example, Nagieb Khaja, “Afghanistan Conflict: Life inside a Taliban Stronghold,” *BBC Panorama*, 20 October 2014.

90 KL: KII-37.

91 KL: KII-34 & 35.

92 Antonio Giustozzi, “Nation-Building is not for all.”

93 KL: KII-34 to 37.

94 KL: KII-37 & 43.

delivery, it has nonetheless been necessary.⁹⁵ The existence of patronage pyramids is also alleged, where each bureaucratic layer sells positions to the layer below, and the bottom layer regularly demands payments from the beneficiaries (teachers, students, and even parents). According to an international political analyst and researcher:

Everything is the same everywhere; if you want the job of provincial director of education, you'll have to pay someone, that's for sure. You will not get the job without paying...How do they get reimbursed? Well, they will make sure that all the people who work for them collect money for them. Through this, they get reimbursed for the investment that they made to get the position of provincial director [of education]. How do these people get money [referring to those below the level of the provincial director]? From the students, from the parents, from the teachers... (KL: KII-45).

Seen as the “largest single civilian employer in the country,”⁹⁶ MoE attracts interest as a vote bank, with the expectation of further increases in staffing levels in the future:

Education in particular...is very interesting, as it is one of the largest employers in the country. For instance, in election campaigns, it is an extremely useful ministry to have. If you want, you can instruct all teachers to campaign for certain candidates; you can instruct them to tell students to tell their parents...I do not know for sure if that is being done from the top to bottom in a centralised way, but I do know that it is done. I know that in election campaigns, the system uses teachers, and there have been complaints against this as well (KL: KII-44).

Capturing sources of revenue is another priority of political actors primarily concerned with accumulating resources for their own agenda, as highlighted by the emphasis on school construction: patronage networks are often active in the construction sector.⁹⁷ Citing the case of Kandahar schools, a national political analyst and human rights activist stated:

There was more focus on infrastructure, physical building, rather than quality. The physical infrastructure, the building of schools, is needed, but more than that, there is a need to invest in the quality of education. Therefore, the result was that there was more money for buildings, constructions, and that kind of stuff. They focused more on that and less on the quality (KL: KII-49).

The opinion of this activist is supported by EQUIP I's implementation review, where infrastructure grants were described as an area where “financial over-commitments” were made, while teacher and principal planning, for instance, had their budgets curtailed.⁹⁸

Some interviewees were inclined to accept the existence of corruption and nepotism as a necessary evil to rapidly develop the education sector. What really matters, so goes the argument, is that those recruited through patronage networks for the wrong reasons are still able to deliver:

I see less harm in hiring a person who is corrupt but is capable of doing something and is doing something. For instance, look at the enthusiasm that everyone has in the education sector. Everyone is looking to what is going on in schools, with teacher training and the curriculum. However, if you place someone there who looks at the delivery of any services as something to help him or her gain economic resources or use it to promote a certain agenda, but does not work toward its development, that is another thing (KL: KII-42).

The effort to roll out state education on a much larger scale since 2001 has not only been controversial because of its impact on patronage politics. The armed opposition of the Taliban has identified education delivery as a key field of state activity. It has therefore rejected education, regarding it as an attempt to indoctrinate children and impose Western ideas on them. This has been particularly the case when it comes to the education of girls. A campaign of violence started in 2006-2008, which led to the destruction of many schools and the closure of an even larger number. Gradually, the Taliban's campaign evolved toward an attempt to influence state schools through local-level negotiations with MoE officials. These deals were often negotiated

95 KL: KII-37.

96 Dany et al., “Critical Administrative Constraints to Service Delivery,” 33.

97 KL: KII-45 & 50.

98 World Bank, “Afghanistan—Education Quality Improvement Project,” 4.

through local elders.⁹⁹ By the end of 2008, none of the schools in Balkh and Wardak were declared inactive, and only 5 percent were considered so in Badghis.¹⁰⁰ However, in 2013, a number of schools had been closed in Balkh, although they only represented 3 percent of the total number according to MoE figures (Table 10). In Wardak, the percentage was twice as high, while in Badghis it was over 8 percent. Currently, the primary objective of the insurgents is not, however, to close schools, but rather to co-opt them. The Taliban try to assert control over schools through deals with local MoE officials: the schools stay open, but changes are made to the curriculum, with the Taliban being allowed to inspect the schools regularly. The Taliban claim that in Wardak, such deals extend to 17 percent of all schools, while in Badghis, the rate is 13 percent. As of 2013, no such deals had been implemented in Balkh.

Table 10: Impact of insecurity on schools in Badghis, Balkh, and Wardak (2013)

	% of schools under Taliban control (according to the Taliban)	% of schools closed (according to the MoE)
Badghis	13.0	8.2
Balkh	0	3.1
Wardak	17.0	6.8

Source: MoE, Taliban Education Commissions.

3.4 The politics of health services delivery

The health sector is similarly not immune from the impact of patronage politics nor from attack by insurgent groups. Political actors well connected with the ruling elite manipulate the allocation of resources to favour their powerbases. One of the consequences is the unequal distribution of health resources between provinces and districts, as better-connected politicians and powerbrokers have been able to lobby for their own areas more effectively.¹⁰¹

If you go to some provinces, you will see two clinics in one village, but another village does not have one. In Aziza's (not the real name of an MP) district, there are many clinics, but in the other districts of the same province, which do not have a good connection with a powerholder, there is not a single clinic (KL: KII-53).

Compared to education, the impact of nepotism and clientelism on health sector recruitment is more limited, due largely to the “contracting out” modality of health service delivery whereby local health workers are NGO employees rather than civil servants (except in the provincial hospitals which are directly managed by MoPH), and in the three “Strengthening Mechanism” provinces, namely, Parwan, Panjshir, and Kapisa, where MoPH has retained responsibility for basic health delivery. According to one programme implementer, the political elite accepted the contracting out of health services delivery in the early post-Bonn days, and only later realised that they were sacrificing a major source of patronage by doing so. According to this source, some of the elites turned against the scheme, but donor pressure prevented the rolling back of the system:

They initially received the budget and accepted the programme and policy. However, when they saw that their authority and personal benefit was in danger, they turned against the programme. The reason for their opposition was losing power in the implementation of the programme, and they could not hire their own people in the programme. However, as I told you, as the donors put pressure on them (MoPH and other relevant ministries), the programme received the political support at the implementation stage (KL: KII-38).

⁹⁹ Giustozzi and Franco, “The Battle for the Schools”; Giustozzi and Franco, “The Ongoing Battle for Education”; Human Rights Watch, “Lessons in Terror: Attacks on Education,” <https://www.hrw.org/report/2006/07/10/lessons-terror/attacks-education-afghanistan>, July 2006 (accessed 13 May 2015).

¹⁰⁰ Care International, “Knowledge on Fire: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan Risks and Measures for Successful Mitigation,” (Kabul: Care International in Afghanistan, 2009).

¹⁰¹ KL: KII-53; KL: KII-47; see also World Bank, “Afghanistan—Support to Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) Project.”

Although NGOs are clearly not immune from political influence and lobbying themselves, nor from instances of corruption in the pursuit of contract awards, the larger ones at least find it easier to resist pressure and argue that they already have employees when they obtain a contract. There are also fewer government positions to fill in the MoPH as compared to the MoE.¹⁰² Finally, NGO payments are transferred directly from the Ministry of Finance (MoF) without going through the MoPH, hence reducing the potential opportunities for rent-seeking.¹⁰³

You know that in the government, if you want small paperwork to move in any office, you have to pay a bribe. But the payment system to NGOs is such that the money is transferred from the government's account to the NGO's account, which doesn't allow you to take even one Afghani, because everything is done through online banking and is a fixed transfer to the [NGO's] account (KL: KII-38).

The Taliban opposition never objected to the delivery of health services in principle, mainly because they saw health delivery as less “political” than education and clinics as useful to the Taliban themselves, unlike state schools. Nevertheless, the Taliban has gradually evolved a policy of asserting control over the sector through their own registration system. NGOs and government clinics have been asked to treat the Taliban and allow facility inspections to ensure that they were not being used for “spying” purposes; in the event of a refusal, violence and bans have sometimes occurred.¹⁰⁴

The quandary for policy makers and programme implementers is that efforts to bypass patronage and clientelism often heightens the risk of local and even national elites sabotaging service delivery. On the other hand, tolerating patronage and clientelism often negatively affects the quality and increases the costs of the services being delivered.

102 A review of the Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook from 2003-13 showed that the number of MoPH employees, in contrast to that of MoE, decreased almost annually.

103 Opportunities for rent-seeking at the MoF could occur, but none of the national-level informants mentioned it.

104 Ashley Jackson and Antonio Giustozzi, “The Other Side: Humanitarian Engagement with the Taliban in Afghanistan” (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2012); Rod Norland, “After Years of Decline, Polio Cases in Afghanistan Triple in a Year,” *NY Times*, 17 January 2012; unpublished Mercy Corps study of humanitarian access, Kabul, 2015.

4. Case Study 1: Wardak Province

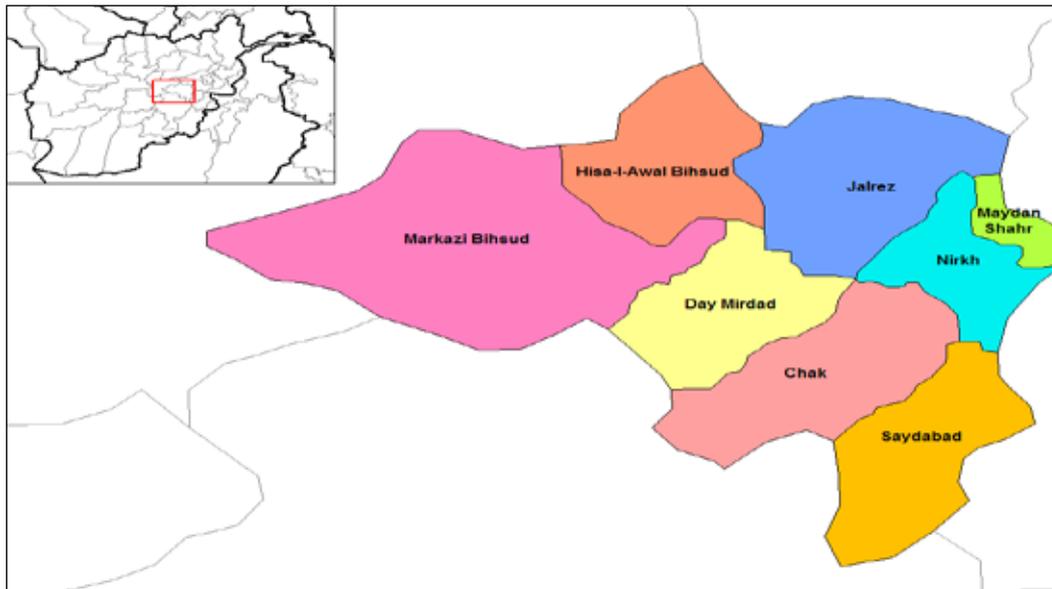
This section seeks to explain Wardak's comparatively good performance in health service delivery compared to its much more modest performance in education service delivery, particularly with regard to the decline in attendance rates since 2008.

4.1 Overview of Wardak Province

Wardak is one of the eight provinces in Central Afghanistan. It shares borders with Parwan and Bamyan to the north, Kabul and Logar to the east, and Ghazni to the south and west. A large part of the province (84.1 percent) has a mountainous or semi-mountainous terrain, while 11.4 percent is flat.¹⁰⁵

Wardak has eight districts and is Pashtun-dominated, with a further presence of Tajiks and Hazaras. The local Pashtuns are of the Wardak, Kharoti, and Hotak tribal groups. At least three Wardak Pashtuns have held important positions in the central government: General Abdul Rahim Wardak (Ministry of Defence), Abdul Karim Khoram (Ministry of Information, Culture, and Youth), and Dr Ghulam Farooq Wardak (Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and MoE). The Pashtun population belongs to a variety of Ghilzai tribes, of which the Wardakis are the largest. There are also two prominent Hazara leaders from Wardak: Mohammad Karim Khalili, Second Vice President during the Karzai administration, and Modaber Sadeq, who held several government positions, including Director General of the Office of Administrative Affairs and the Council of Ministers Secretariat.

Figure 15: Map of Wardak



Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1b/Wardak_districts.png

Maidan Shahr is the capital of Wardak Province. Based on the NRVA (2007-08 and 2011-12 surveys), the provincial poverty rate dropped from 54 percent in 2007-08 to nearly 40 percent in 2011-12, but remains above the national average of 36 percent.

¹⁰⁵ Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, "National Area-Based Development Program: Wardak Provincial Profile," <http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/254/Wardak%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>, no date (accessed 8 March 2015).

4.2 History and nature of the violence in Wardak

Wardak Province was hardly affected by the Taliban insurgency until 2005, when the Taliban, who had left without a fight after surrendering Kabul, started to re-appear.¹⁰⁶ In 2002, factional conflict and tribal rivalries appeared to be potentially threatening the province's stability; however, toward the end of the year, the provincial governor (PG) was able to calm the local *shuras*. He was also able to pacify the rivalry between Ghulam Rohani Nangiale, a local Pashtun commander of Jaghatoo District, General Muzaffaruddin of the United Front¹⁰⁷, who was the government's military commander in Wardak, Abdul Ahmad Durrani, the province's police chief and presently an MP, and Turan Amanullah, described as the "most famous mujahideen" of the Hezb-e Islami Hekmatyar party.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, the local political settlement was fragile because, as a former government official explained, it excluded important sections of the population and the local Taliban:

The Bonn Agreement was a bad start in terms of increasing the insurgency in the country. Why would you bring the warlords to the Bonn Agreement and use them as ground forces, but deliberately isolate Hezb-e Islami and the Taliban, who were the real opposition? The warlords were not the opposition; they were allies. You should bring peace and security to those whom you are fighting, not those who are eating with you (KL: IDI-63).

From the early years of the Karzai era, the Hazara districts of Wardak were *de facto* handed over to the control of Khalili's Hizb-i Wahdat, whose members were usually appointed as governors and chiefs of police. As President Karzai gradually incorporated Hezb-e Islami networks into his coalition and into the elite bargain from 2003 onwards, these networks were rewarded with the appointments of their members in the provinces, including Wardak—again, as governors and chiefs of police. Both Wahdat and Hezb-e Islami are relatively well-organised parties by Afghan standards. In Wardak, in particular, they appear to have maintained a presence at the grassroots level.¹⁰⁹

The US-led pursuit of the Taliban contributed to violence in the province according to a former provincial government official. The partners of the secondary elite bargains in Wardak colluded to turn US against their local rivals, be they genuine Taliban or not. The opinion of this former official coincides with an international political analyst and researcher as well as a national media correspondent interviewed in Kabul. They both said that these local partners used the US-led coalition, which was unfamiliar with the "ground realities," to suppress their rivals. The former government official of Wardak said that the reports received by the international military forces did not come from people in insecure provinces, but solely from the members of the United Front. In his words:

The International Security Assistance Force and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) reports or the inputs on their policies were coming from the Northern Alliance's group that has fought the Taliban and Hezb-e Islami since 1992...They had the most access to foreign ambassadors, presidents...All the information was coming from the [Northern Alliance] people who were not just against the Taliban, but also against almost any person who was from the insecure areas. [They thought] anyone [from the insecure] areas was bad, a generalisation. [For them], anyone with a turban, with a beard, is a Talib. Anyone who speaks Pashto is a Talib or is an enemy...(KL: IDI-63).

106 Sonya Merkova, Christian Dennys and Idrees Zaman, "Conflict Analysis: Chak and Sayedabad Districts, Wardak Province" (Kabul: Cooperation for Peace and Unity, 2009); World Bank, "Study of Sub-National Administrative Structures in Afghanistan: Wardak Political Context and Security Structures," http://www.wardak.de/wardak_09_backup/PDF_Files/WB_Wardak_political.pdf, April 2003 (accessed 19 May 2015).

107 The United Islamic Front is the formal name of the Northern Alliance, the military alliance of *jihadi* commanders that came together in 1996 to fight the Taliban in the north of the country.

108 See also Merkova, Dennys and Idrees, "Conflict Analysis."

109 Noah Coburn and Anna Larson, *Derailing Democracy in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 43; "Hikmatyar's Son-in-Law Calls for National Unity," *Quqnoos*, 5 June 2008; "Hizb-i-Islami Members are Busy with Politics," *Wakht News Agency*, 12 July 2008; Matthew Rosenberg, "A Group Taking Politics and Military Strategy to the Same Extremes," *New York Times*, 21 May 2013.

Since 2008, the Taliban have significantly destabilised Wardak, resulting in several areas becoming inaccessible to government officials.¹¹⁰ As of autumn 2015, it was difficult for provincial level government officials to travel from Maidan Shahr, the provincial capital, to any of the district centres.¹¹¹

4.3 The local and provincial elites and their interactions

Interviewees identified provincial and local elites as *maliks* (tribally recognised heads of villages), *muallims* (intellectuals), *mullahs* (clerics), MPs, and former *jihadi* commanders (who could also be MPs). District governors, who tend to be local, were also mentioned, as were some provincial department heads, such as the Provincial Education Department (PED) director.¹¹² Not all government officials, however, are in a position that resembles that of the PED director. For instance, those from the main component of the United Front, Jamiat-i Islami, a party that is strong in the north of the country but weak locally, have weak roots in Wardak.

All those politicians located in Kabul do not have a strong influence over the public [in Wardak]. Of course, in general, they have an influence, such as Jamiat-i Islami, which has a strong role at present. The chief of police and other officials always¹¹³ belong to the Northern Alliance (WK: IDI-18).

The identified provincial and local elites are considered politically powerful, because they have financial resources, occupy high governmental posts (in the case of MPs, district governors, and the PED director), and are respected as useful representatives (elders).¹¹⁴ A special case is that of the PED director, who appears to have earned a reputation for pushing through unpopular reforms in 2010.

This education head organised all the work. He is a very serious person. He tried hard to do his job according to the rules and regulations, and he made the employees do their jobs well. However, some people and powerholders were against him, because their personal benefits were at risk or the benefits of their relatives were at risk, because there were some employees who only took a salary and did not work. When this head of education came, he told everyone to come to do their job and work honestly for the community (WK: IDI-02).

Nonetheless, the PED director did not always have his way; for example, by having to give in to the provincial council members at times regarding school locations.¹¹⁵

None of the Wardakis who have made a career in Kabul, such as Farooq Wardak (who occupied several ministerial and other posts and was Minister of Education until 2014) and Rahim Wardak (former Minister of Defence), were mentioned as wielding much provincial influence, except by one interviewee who mainly attributed district-level influence to them. Instead, the tribal *maliks* are said to wield the most influence.¹¹⁶

Yes, the traditional leaders are more influential in the province than those elites who are at the national level, because the latter do not have large families in Wardak. They could not even enter Wardak. They went out, gained a higher education, and Karzai got them these positions in order to have someone represent the province, given its proximity to Kabul. So they did not get the positions because they have large families or clans in the province. They use Wardak as their last name just to show that they are from the province. But they do not have a constituency in the province. Their families do not even have positions in the community (KL: KII-49).¹¹⁷

110 Merkova, Denny and Idrees, "Conflict Analysis."

111 Government official in Maidan Shahr, contacted October 2015.

112 WK: KII-03; WK: IDI-01 & 04; WK: FGD-06, 07 & 11; WK: KII-13.

113 In reality, this has not always been the case in Wardak.

114 WK: KII-03; WK: IDI-04 & 08; WK: FGD-06 & 07.

115 WK: KII-01; WK: IDI-04.

116 WK: IDI-18.

117 Also WK: IDI-17.

These actors have not tried to build a local powerbase, instead being absorbed into Kabul politics.¹¹⁸ As one Pashtun elder commented on Farooq Wardak and others, “They cannot even go to their village.”¹¹⁹ Kabul’s proximity, which also facilitated recruitment into NGOs, international organisations, and so forth, had positive effects for Wardak, but it also absorbed many leading Wardaki personalities, a fact facilitated by the absence of major sources of revenue in Wardak. In reality, politicians like Farooq Wardak, who does not formally belong to any party, benefit from the support of Hezb-e Islami networks, which has ramifications in many villages, even if such individuals lack a personal powerbase. Hazara political parties, like the different factions of Hizb-i-Wahdat, are also active locally and act as a chain of transmission for top politicians like Karim Khalili.¹²⁰

Elders are sometimes organised into tribal *shuras*, although only a few tribes have all-Wardak *shuras*. The Pashtuns of Wardak have stronger tribal representative structures than those in Badghis, although they do not compare with the eastern tribes.¹²¹ Among the Hazaras, the *ulema* are said to wield the most influence, as they are usually networked into the political parties. The Hazaras, too, have village *shuras* as well as some district-level *shuras* that bring together the most senior elders.¹²² The existence of *shuras* tends to magnify the influence of elders and make them more attractive partners in secondary settlements.

Perhaps partly because of the relatively strong role played by *shuras*, interactions among these elites were described to be generally good with a fair degree of coordination.¹²³ In this sense, the secondary settlements appear to have demonstrated some resilience, despite not being inclusive. In the case of the construction of schools, for example, the looting of state resources and extortion are practised in a consensual way.¹²⁴

Their interaction and relationship are very good, because they have mutual and shared benefits. As in the case of any construction project, they benefit from it in terms of giving a contract to construction companies, and then their relatives are hired to work on the project. If they face problems, they solve them as soon as possible (WK: KII-07).

Some interviewees nonetheless alleged friction between former *jihadi* commanders and government officials, an example of how secondary settlements could sometimes be out of tune with the centre.¹²⁵ Elite bargaining is still going on as MPs compete to place their cronies in government jobs; further, this is often ostentatious. Some mentioned that former commanders were having sessions with people in the community, probably to show off their social base to the government.¹²⁶

4.4 The politics of education service delivery in Wardak

4.4.1 Sectoral elite bargains

There appears to have been sectoral elite bargains over schools in Wardak even before 2001. There were armed clashes between rival provincial commanders, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, but this did not result in the closure of schools. Interviewees mentioned that the commanders kept the schools open as their children were attending them, and as a result, this underscored their commitment to their constituents.

118 WK: IDI-18.

119 WK: IDI-14.

120 WK: IDI-10 & 11.

121 WK: IDI-14 & 18.

122 WK: IDI-10, 11 & 13.

123 WK: KII-09 & 13; WK: FGD-18 & 23; WK: KII-01, 03 & 07.

124 WK: FGD-04 & 07.

125 WK: FGD-12 to 14; WK: KII-10 & 11.

126 WK: FGD-12 to 14; WK: KII-10 & 11.

The main factors that kept the schools open were the jihadi commanders, village elders, ulema, mullah, imams, and maliks. People gave land for school buildings and they maintained the security of the schools, because on the one hand, their own children were attending these schools, and on the other hand, it was a service for their villagers. Although there were conflicts among the jihadi parties, they tried to support schools and they did not plan to close them (WK: KII-01).

Tribal and party competitions were the highest in this area. This means that each party and commander had his own government in his area. But most of the people agreed with the delivery of education services and supported education. I can give you an example of their support to education. In Chak District, there was a government school building in the Shir Khana area. In this area, there were different parties. The members of each of these parties occupied a room of this school building; they were living there. When the people of the community asked the commanders to leave the school building so that it could be used for teaching and studying, they also ordered their personnel to leave the school buildings. Finally, all of them left the school building and classes started again (WK: KII-02).

The main *jihadi* party in Wardak in the 1980s and 1990 was the Islamist Hezb-e Islami, which favoured scientific and technical education, albeit within an Islamic framework; they therefore did not prevent service delivery,¹²⁷ and even had close relations with Lajnat, an NGO delivering education at the time.

In the 1990s, however, education quality was poor because of the lack of infrastructure, and very few students attended school. Teachers were also seen to be unprofessional, except for those in Lajnat schools, who were described as “intelligent and expert teachers.”¹²⁸ Very few schools had girl students; those that did were located in the Hazara-dominated districts.

With the arrival of the Taliban in 1995, girls stopped attending school, and most of the schools were turned into *madrastas*. A national political analyst and civil society actor claimed that the elders kept the schools open because they had funds to do so, even rejecting Taliban demands that religious subjects be allocated many extra hours. “During the time of the Taliban, of course they insisted that religious education be included. The elders told them that if they wanted this course taught, they should pay the teachers’ salaries themselves.”¹²⁹ Sectoral elite bargains were therefore taking place even at the time of the peak of Taliban power in the province, although on a smaller scale than previously seen.

Elites in Wardak have a history of supporting local education services. Even before the arrival of the Taliban in the 1990s, they were committing some of the remittances coming from abroad to education. Although this is particularly true of the Hazara areas, schools were also built and the salaries of teachers increased in other parts of the province.¹³⁰

The reason for this openness might be that Wardak was exposed to the state education rollout relatively early because of its proximity to Kabul compared to the more remote provinces, and thus it quickly became attached to it once its advantages became clear. The elders’ support for education could partly explain why, based on some indicators, Wardak service delivery has performed relatively well since the launch of the EQUIP project given its volatile security condition. According to a former Wardak government official, the “coordination and cooperation between elders and government in the province is much better compared to other provinces.”¹³¹ The elders even claim to have been able to impose their desire to see schools open in areas with a high Taliban presence. The Taliban’s presence in any given area is seen as dependent on the elders, who regard themselves as the village gatekeepers to approach “for their entry.”

127 WK: KII-05 & 06.

128 WK: IDI-02; WK: KII-02.

129 KL: KII-48.

130 KL: KII-48.

131 KL: IDI-63

You see, the strength of the Taliban is highly dependent on the support of the people...The Taliban approach the leaders of the community like the maliks, and this is their entry to the community. If the maliks feel that they are being neglected, they begin supporting the Taliban (KL: KII-42).

Last year, a girls' school was blocked or stopped by the Taliban. They [pointing to the elders in the room] went to some Taliban members and mediated for the opening of the girls' school. Those problems are not resolved by the government; those issues are solved by these elders (WK: IDI-14).

In contrast to Pashtun elders, however, Hazara elders have little pretence of being able to influence the Taliban in any way.¹³² Nonetheless, in some cases, they admitted to having contacts with the Taliban, as even some Hazara areas are starting to be affected by the Taliban's presence. Further research would be required to explain how Hazara elders started being drawn into negotiations with the Taliban and how this might have affected service delivery.¹³³

Competition between different insurgent groups, with Hezb-e Islami also being militarily active, might be facilitating sectoral bargains. Hezb-e Islami is against attacks on state schools, which might be forcing the Taliban to pay more attention to the demands of elders.¹³⁴

As much as possible, they [the Taliban] do not want to put pressure on the traditional leaders of the villages, because then they would back Hezb-e Islami, and they would fight against them. Hezb-e Islami is not against education. Most of them are highly educated; they are engineers and professionals. The Taliban would not want to make these elders take the side of Hezb-e Islami. These two groups are against each other, so they are balancing their acts (KL: KII-48).

In reality, the Taliban of Wardak are mostly former members of Hezb-e Islami and belong to a network that is more favourable to modern education.¹³⁵ Hezb-e Islami is an Islamist party and differs from the Taliban's fundamentalist views. While the original Taliban rejected the modern state, Hezb-e Islami embraces it and aims to turn it into an agent of social transformation – towards a more genuine Islamic society. Therefore, the particular composition of the Taliban in Wardak and their ideological leaning might have facilitated sectoral bargains over education. Some interviewees explicitly said that deals are negotiated whereby schools are allowed to stay open in exchange for concessions, such as changes to the curriculum:¹³⁶

In most of the districts, the government curriculum is being taught in schools. But in some areas, where there is the Taliban, there is a slight change in the curriculum, which the government does not favour...The Taliban...keep control over the curriculum of education in their controlled areas...We have not heard that the Taliban has made any problems with either ministry [MoPH and MoE] or their work in Wardak Province (WK: IDI-18).

When the Taliban closed schools, the Ministry of Education asked the tribal elders to talk to the Taliban. Then there were discussions between the tribal elders and the Taliban, and some of their requests were accepted. Actually, only the tribal elders could convince the Taliban to keep the schools open (WK: IDI-16).

If there were a problem with the curriculum, the Taliban would go to those schools and would advise for those subjects to be taken out and suggest which subjects to include...(WK: IDI-14).

Other informants even reported how local communities sought the help of the Taliban to manage the abusive behaviour of the Afghan local police and other security forces against pupils and their establishment of checkpoints near schools:

132 WK: IDI-12.

133 WK: IDI-12.

134 KL: KII-48 & 49.

135 See also Giustozzi and Franco, "The Battle for the Schools"; Giustozzi and Franco, "The Ongoing Battle for Education."

136 Giustozzi and Franco, "The Ongoing Battle for Education."

A few years back in Jalriz, the Hazara arbakis were disturbing schoolboys. So the people went to the Taliban and asked them to clear the area of these arbakis. The checkpoint of the arbakis was located next to the school building. So the Taliban came and finished them all. Now, there is no problem (WK: IDI-15&16).

That sectoral bargains have been crucial to the delivery of education in Wardak seems to be confirmed by the fact that in the absence of agreements, the schools did not open, as in parts of Jaghatu and Daimirdad.¹³⁷

If there are extensive sectoral bargains in Wardak regarding access to education, why then did female attendance in primary schools and male attendance in secondary schools fall between 2007-08 and 2011-12 (see Section 2 above)? Girls' education is a priority of EQUIP, but its progress in Wardak remains minimal.

Taliban violence started in Wardak exactly at the time the first NRVA survey was undertaken and escalated thereafter. It is thus not surprising that the intense violence might have affected attendance rates at the time. The level of violence in Wardak meant that many families were afraid to let their children outside to attend school. Even sectoral settlements between the local elites and the Taliban could not resolve this issue, which pushed school attendance down as the violence worsened. However, the fact that enrolment rates continued to grow suggests that local communities were still looking to educate their children. Secondary schools for boys were disproportionately affected, because they are more sparsely distributed than primary schools, with students having to travel longer distances in dangerous areas to reach them.

As for declining girls' attendance rates in primary schools, very few interviewees mentioned access to girls' education as a local issue, as compared to those who noted the shortages in the number of schools and school materials. Except in Hazara areas where girls have long had much greater access to education, elders in Wardak were clearly less interested in promoting their education as opposed to that of boys. The Taliban were also generally critical of girls going to school, presumably making sectoral bargains to allow boys to attend school at the expense of girls. In recent years, the Taliban have moderated their education policies, allowing schools for girls up to the age of six years and, under certain conditions, schools for older girls, but there is no sign yet that this change in policy has impacted girls' attendance in Wardak.¹³⁸

The sectoral elite bargains were also disrupted by the periodic arrival of insurgents from outside the province. Some local representatives consider "those Taliban who are not independent" (out-of-area Taliban coming from Pakistani territory) as well as the security forces to be equally responsible for school attendance disruptions in some areas.¹³⁹ By contrast, "local" Taliban are more amenable to sectoral bargains, to the point of allowing the establishment of "unofficial" schools:

Until last year, girls in grade six did not have any problems. But due to some concerns, for girls in higher grades, between grade six and ten, the Taliban and the local people advised renting a specific house where these girls could attend school until the 10th grade (WK: IDI-14).

4.4.2 The impact of secondary settlements on education

Despite a positive attitude toward education among the local elites (community elders), Wardak's elites clearly view education as an opportunity for extending their patronage and capturing resources. Lobbying by economic and political elites about school location is another factor disrupting educational development in Wardak, resulting in sub-optimal location choices that might leave some communities too far from the schools, and others much closer.¹⁴⁰ MPs would approach the minister, while provincial council members would talk to the PED director or the SMCs. Interviewees labelled this a challenge to education service delivery in Wardak and assumed that the PED director simply accepted the status quo. Allegations of widespread administrative

137 WK: IDI-18.

138 Giustozzi and Franco, "The Ongoing Battle for Education."

139 WK: IDI-18.

140 WK: KII-01.

corruption are also common.¹⁴¹ EQUIP II's Semi-Annual Progress Report from July to December 2013¹⁴² noted these irregularities and stated that the MoE was terminating contracts. However, the report did not say which provinces were affected by these terminated contracts.

4.4.3 Impact on EQUIP and adaptation

Although several interviewees stated that EQUIP was implemented without many challenges, especially in Maidan Shahr, those claiming that insecurity was one of the main problems affecting its implementation in Wardak mentioned that it affected the monitoring and evaluation of the project's activities,¹⁴³ such as the construction of schools. The interviewees did not indicate any particular measure taken to resolve these problems, which, in their view, were related to government failures. The secondary settlements were discussed in generally positive terms as having eased the impact of violence and Taliban hostility against state schools,¹⁴⁴ although EQUIP staff were not directly involved in these settlements.

4.5 The politics of health service delivery in Wardak

4.5.1 Sectoral bargains

From 2008 onwards, the general security condition of Wardak started to deteriorate. By 2010, the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (now called the International NGO Safety Organisation) had declared Wardak as highly insecure. Interviewees reported armed clashes between the Taliban and government forces as the primary driver of violence and a challenge to health service delivery. At the very least, skilled medical personnel would refuse to be deployed to villages:

My cousin is a doctor living in Kabul. He always comes to the village on weekends [Thursday and Friday]. People do not take their children on weekdays to the doctors here. They would say that the doctor is coming [on the weekend], and they would take their patients to him when he is at his home. This is because we don't have [quality] doctors and nurses in our area. The nurses mostly serve in remote areas, and quality doctors do not work in remote areas, as they like to work in cities (WK: IDI-18).

Fortunately, the health and health management infrastructure was in place by 2010 (it was non-existent until 2003). Health *shuras*, mostly composed of local elders, had been established as part of SHARP. As mentioned earlier, these local elites are the most influential actors in the province. As in the case of education, elders negotiated health delivery with the Taliban:

The second problem was the presence of insurgent groups against the government; that is a threat to everyone's life. Through the establishment and communication of the health shuras, this problem was solved...The shura talked to insurgent groups about the need for health services...With that, [the insurgents] agreed to service delivery and that they will not interfere with the health sector staff (WK: KII-13).

There were security checkpoints near the clinic, which were attacked by [the Taliban]. Due to the fighting between opposite groups and security checkpoints, it was difficult for patients to come for treatment to the clinic or patients did not refer to the clinic. This problem was shared with health shura members, and to some extent, the problem was solved. The health shura and elders talked to the group of insurgents about not disturbing during the day when women, men, and children go to the clinic for treatment, which they accepted...All the problems regarding the security of the health sector were solved by the health shuras (WK: IDI-07).

About the interaction of these powerholders with the insurgents, they agreed to the delivery of health and education services in the area, because of the involvement of the elders of the shura. They verbally agreed that they would do no harm to health and education service delivery (WK: KII-09).¹⁴⁵

141 WK: IDI-18.

142 Ministry of Education, "EQUIP Semi-Annual Report: July-December 2013" (Kabul: Ministry of Education, 2013).

143 WK: KII-03; WK: IDI-04; for a discussion of infrastructure grants, see also Ministry of Education, "EQUIP Semi-Annual Narrative Report: July-December 2012" (Kabul: Ministry of Education, 2012).

144 WK: IDI-03.

145 Also WK: KII-12.

Similarly to the local education sector, the elders' successful mediation in facilitating health services delivery is described by interviewees to be the result of the elders' power and influence:

We had this experience once where two trucks of medicines were taken away by the insurgents. We approached the community elders and explained to them that these were their medicines, not ours. [We told them that] they were meant to be used by their children and women in the clinics, but they had been taken away by the insurgents. We asked them what they would do while there weren't any supplies. As a result, the community elders mediated a lot with the people who took away the medicines. Eventually, we succeeded, with the first truck released after a few days and the second truck after one or two weeks (KL: KII-47).

Again, however, the accomplishment of sectoral elite bargains appears to be the result of a convergence of interests between local elites and the Taliban, rather than the former putting pressure on the latter. As discussed earlier, the Taliban also have a policy concerning health facilities, which is designed to reconcile the self-interest of the local Taliban with wider Taliban aims and the interest of local communities.¹⁴⁶ While local staff might not be aware of the substance of the deals, they are well aware that the Taliban are restrained in their behaviour toward health facilities and health staff:

Medical staff does not have security problems, as the Taliban and militants only targets military convoys. Ambulances can easily travel around, because the Taliban and militants need health services. They are treated in these clinics, and their relatives also come for treatment to these clinics. Therefore, they do not prevent the delivery of health services (WK: IDI-07).

The Taliban also has a level of commitment, because if they wanted to stop the delivery of health services, they could have already done it. For instance, there are robbers or other criminal groups who want to interrupt services or harm our medical staff. Sometimes, the Taliban protect our staff and they do not let people or criminals interfere in the health service delivery. So yes, there is this level of commitment present (KL: KII-47).

Even female nurses are reported to be able to travel trouble-free in Taliban-controlled areas.¹⁴⁷ The main Taliban demand is to have access to health facilities for their fighters. When settlements cannot be reached, regardless of what the elders might say, the clinics are forced to close down:

It is the same for clinics; [tribal elders negotiate to keep clinics open]. An example is in Shikhawak village. There was a clinic belonging to the Red Cross. The Taliban made some demands that the Red Cross did not accept, so the clinic was closed. Tribal elders and whitebeards are busy talking to them now (WK: IDI-16).

Furthermore, the 2013 report by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) entitled "Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict" noted that anti-government elements such as the Taliban looted clinics "to obtain healthcare for their injured fighters."¹⁴⁸

By and large, however, sectoral bargains appear to have sheltered health facilities in Wardak from Taliban violence, to the extent that the interviewees often attribute violent incidents not to the Taliban, but to Afghan security forces establishing checkpoints very close to clinics and health centres:

This is in reference to the Jalriz incident that happened a few days ago. To be honest, I was a member of the investigation team. We saw a clinic being used as a police checkpoint. When we told them that what they were doing was not appropriate, as clinics and schools should not be used as defence locations, the police belonging to Nazm-e-Ama (Public Protection and Discipline Department) of the Ministry of Interior said, "We are here temporarily and will leave soon." They had broken the doors and other stuff. We have shared these issues with high-ranking officials for their consideration. In another place, in Jalriz District, in Khawaja area, another local police unit has established a checkpoint near the clinic and school. If

¹⁴⁶ WK: IDI-18.

¹⁴⁷ WK: IDI-18.

¹⁴⁸ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, "Afghanistan Annual Report 2013: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict," http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf, February 2014 (accessed 15 April 2014), 63.

there had been actions done [against establishing these checkpoints], how is it possible that another checkpoint had been established in a nearby area? It means that no one is taking care of it. Sometimes, the Afghan local police say bad things when women go to the clinics... (WK: IDI-18).

4.5.2 The impact of secondary settlements on health services

As in the case of education, the secondary settlements that keep together the provincial and local elites affect the distribution of health services. For instance, provincial council members of the two Hazara-dominated Behsud districts in Wardak Province had several local clinics, despite not being in accordance with the SHARP/BPHS structure.

They have many recommendations for upgrading a health facility, for downgrading a health facility, for establishing a new health facility. In the two Behsud areas, this is very common. Therefore, we have an extensive number of health facilities in Behsud, because every time they go to the minister, he is not brave enough to face these MPs. The minister refers the case to the Grants and Service Contracts Management Unit and then to us. What began as a small clinic eventually became a well-established clinic. We now have 23 clinics in two Behsud areas; 40% of our clinics in Wardak are in Behsud (KL: KII-47).

The same interviewee narrates a related event, this time involving the provincial health office director:

He forced us to accept what he thought was right in terms of the staff in one of the clinics, where he had some personal interest. That clinic was previously supported by the government and was later taken over by the SCA. He still had links in the clinic. He wanted to be involved in all of the recruitment and everything that was happening in the clinic. He was frequently supervising it. He forced us to upgrade it from a Comprehensive Health Centre (CHC) to a CHC+, and he succeeded. But he did not stop with the CHC+, as he said that it should be a special CHC+. So he went to the new minister and gained special approval to hire people (KL: KII-47).

Compared to education, however, reports of undue interference in health services are limited to efforts to manipulate decision-making in selecting the location of clinics; the research team received no report of resources being diverted or embezzled, or staff being hired for patronage purposes.

4.5.3 Impact on SHARP and adaptation

The effects of violent conflict on the general health sector, such as the lack of health staff,¹⁴⁹ particularly female health workers,¹⁵⁰ the inability to use government vehicles to deliver services,¹⁵¹ and the checking of clinics for insurgents by the Afghan National Police and International Security Assistance Force,¹⁵² were also witnessed during the implementation of the ARTF/IDA-funded SHARP project. The interviewees admitted that they were generally not able to adapt to these challenges. In some cases, however, SHARP staff used rented vehicles to travel, thus easing Taliban concerns over the circulation of government vehicles in the areas under their control. As to the lack of health professionals in the area, NGOs also resorted to hiring locals to fill the posts. In this case, too, SHARP implementation benefited from the secondary settlements negotiated by the health *shuras*, despite having had no direct part in them.

149 WK: KII-12; WK: IDI-05; see also World Bank, “Afghanistan—Strengthening Health Activities for the Rural Poor.”

150 WK: KII-12; see also World Bank, “Afghanistan—Strengthening Health Activities for the Rural Poor.”

151 WK: KII-09.

152 WK: KII-12 & 13; WK: IDI-05.

4.6 Conclusion

The convergence of interests between insurgents and local elites allowed comparatively successful sectoral bargains to be negotiated in Wardak. Not all of these sectoral bargains, however, were necessarily “developmental” in character, considering that girls’ education was neglected by both the Taliban and local elites.

These successful sectoral negotiations explain why the health sector did relatively well in Wardak, building on the extensive NGO presence prior to 2004. These also explain why Wardak’s performance in education was mixed: progress only really being made as far as boys’ schooling was concerned. Wardak was not, however, immune to other factors disrupting access to health and education services, namely: a) the overall violent environment that discouraged many families from sending children to school, even if the threat of direct attacks against schools had receded, and b) provincial elites seeing service delivery as an opportunity to seize local resources for patronage and personal gain.

5. Case Study 2: Badghis Province

This section seeks to explain why Badghis performed relatively well in education delivery despite its limited resources, while its health delivery was much poorer than the two other provinces. It also discusses whether there is evidence of Badghis being negatively affected because of its remoteness and weak political representation in Kabul.

5.1 Overview of Badghis Province

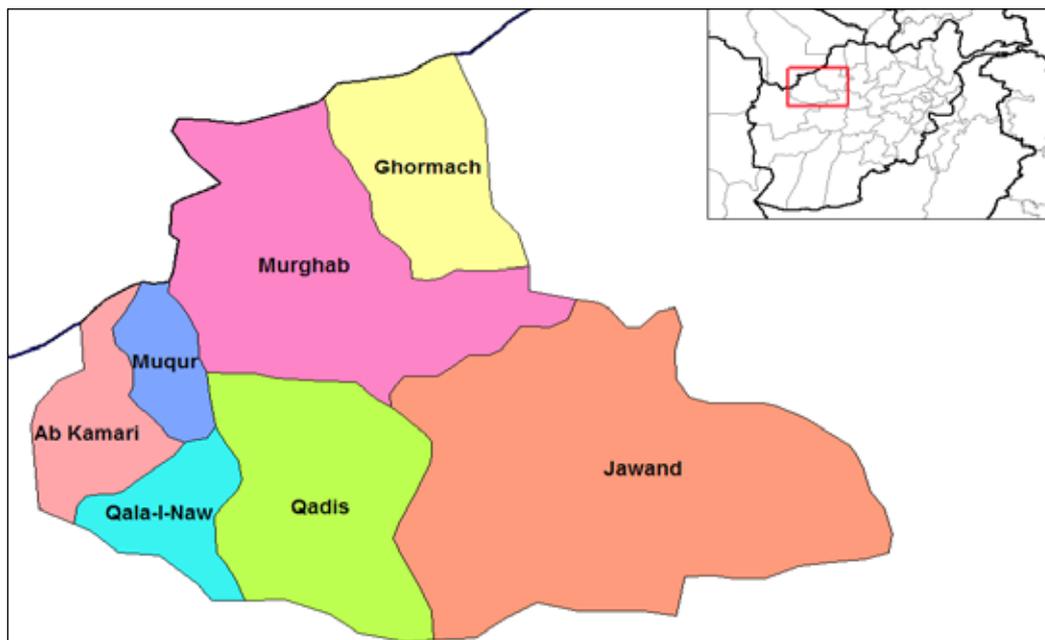
Badghis is a predominantly Aimaq province located in the isolated hills of northwestern Afghanistan. It shares its borders with Herat, Ghor, and Faryab provinces as well as Turkmenistan.¹⁵³ The province is composed of seven districts, with Qala-i-Naw as its provincial centre.

Badghis remains “extremely underdeveloped, especially outside the provincial capital.”¹⁵⁴ In describing Badghis, one national key informant said:

Badghis presents a different case than that of Wardak, because it is a huge province with a small population. The province is dry, and it was never an agricultural area. The first generation of people who lived there was never really exposed to education and was mostly involved in labour. They also usually go to Herat to work as labourers, as there is nothing much to be done in the province. For those who have obtained some degree of education, they tend to leave and never go back to the province, because there is nothing for them there. So there is really not that much to do in the province (KL: KII-49).

Moreover, the roads in the province are of poor quality, thus preventing business people from trading.¹⁵⁵

Figure 16: Map of Badghis



Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a2/Badghis_districts.png

The poverty rate in the province has slightly decreased from 40 percent in 2007-08 to 38.6 percent in 2011-12, which is still slightly worse than the national average.¹⁵⁶

153 Naval Postgraduate School, “Badghis Province,” <http://www.nps.edu/programs/ccs/Badghis/Badghis.html>, 15 November 2011 (accessed 7 March 2015)

154 Naval Postgraduate School, “Badghis Province.”

155 United Nations Development Program, “Regional Rural Economic Regeneration Strategies (RRERS) Provincial Profile for Badghis Province,” <http://afghanag.ucdavis.edu/country-info/Province-agriculture-profiles/badghis-province-information/Badghis.pdf>, October 2006 (accessed 8 March 2015).

156 These figures are taken from NRVA 2007-08 and 2011-12.

5.2 History and nature of the violence in Badghis Province

Violent conflict in Badghis is characterised by armed clashes between insurgents and government forces as well as periodic conflicts between rival warlords.¹⁵⁷ Although the Taliban insurgency in Badghis was greatly understated when it started in 2003 in a large Pashtun pocket in the districts of Ghormach and Bala Murghab, where it remobilised old Taliban networks from the 1990s, it has since spread to several Aimaq areas. The local Afghan security forces operate in very difficult conditions, particularly in the case of remote outposts over winter, which has led to several group defections to the Taliban over the years.¹⁵⁸ Tribal fragmentation among the local Pashtuns might have facilitated Taliban penetration, although this does not rule out significant sympathy for the latter, even among the elders.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the Taliban in Badghis have themselves suffered from isolation, having been forced to rely on long and insecure supply lines from Pakistan for many years, before supplies started coming from Iran and Central Asia as well. Despite suffering heavy losses over the years, with their leadership being repeatedly decapitated, the Taliban have shown resilience and have renewed their activities in 2015 while exploiting government weakness. Jawand District was briefly abandoned to the Taliban in May 2015.¹⁶⁰

Unlike Wardak, Badghis Province has a history of various influential warlords trying to assert control over it, both before and after the Taliban Emirate. Abdul Malik, Abdul Rashid Dostum, and Ismail Khan all had some influence over the province at various stages, but could never assert full control.¹⁶¹ Badghis is difficult to dominate due to several reasons: its sparse population, the lack of roads and poor general accessibility, and the lack of easily exploitable local resources. Dominating Badghis is therefore an expensive enterprise that brings few rewards. For years, Badghis has been a *de facto* buffer zone between the areas dominated by Rashid Dostum in northern Afghanistan and Ismail Khan in the west (1992-95), and between the Taliban and Dostum thereafter (1995-98). Continuous fighting disrupted even the limited services that Dostum, Ismail Khan, and the Taliban provided in other areas. After 2001, Ismail Khan and Dostum were on better terms, and as a result, Badghis lost the strategic importance that it had acquired. Ismail Khan reduced his local expenditure, preferring to concentrate on more important areas, as did Dostum, although even more so, the latter tried to control the wealthy province of Balkh in addition to his home territory of Jawzjan. In recent years, Ismail Khan has tried to prevent the emergence of major hostile players from Badghis that may be inimical to his interests, particularly after the Naibzada brothers, the main local strongmen, switched sides and supported Kabul against him in 2004:

Other than them [MPs], there is Ismail Khan. Due to some problems, he was prevented from the Turkmenistan border by the [Badghis] governor and other key powerholders. So he stood against the entire Badghis Province. He didn't bring proper electricity and didn't work on our drinking water. The Taliban of Daizangi and other places in Badghis are all his men. If he wants to stop us from going to Herat or anything else, he can do it (BS: FGD-28).

Early attacks from 2004 onwards on NGOs active in the health sector might have contributed to keeping qualified health staff away from Badghis. INGOs such as Maltezer and MSF left after their staff were killed:

157 Naval Postgraduate School, "Badghis Province."

158 See Naval Postgraduate School, Badghis Executive Summary," http://www.nps.edu/programs/ccs/Badghis/Badghis_Executive_Summary2.pdf, 13 April 2009 (accessed 12 June 2015).

159 On the issue of tribal fragmentation, see Fishstein and Wilder, "Winning Hearts and Minds?"

160 Abdul Latif Ayubi, "Taliban Governor for Badghis killed," *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 6 October 2010; "Afghan Troops Liberate District from Militants," *Iran Press TV*, 12 May 2015; Bill Roggio, "US Troops Kill Taliban's Shadow Governor for Badghis Province," *The Long War Journal*, 16 February 2009; "Taliban Take Control of Badghis' Jawand District: Officials," *Tolo News*, 10 May 2015.

161 For details, see Antonio Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud: War and Warlords of Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

We should not forget that after 2006 or 2007, Badghis was faced with security issues. Some of the districts became insecure and some staff from Maltezer and MSF were killed by the Taliban.¹⁶² They [INGOs] then left the province. In 2009, BRAC left Badghis, and the BPHS contract was given to MOVE. But I can say that these two cases of killing the Maltezer and MSF staff were the only cases of Taliban attacks against health service delivery in Badghis (BS: KII-21).

In reality, the killing of MSF staff occurred in 2004, two or three years earlier than the interviewees recalled. Further, it was not attributed to the Badghis Taliban, who were barely active at the time, even in Ghormach and Bala Murghab, but to a local warlord.¹⁶³ Indeed, armed groups linked to local strongmen continue to create problems with service delivery, reportedly even to a greater extent than the Taliban. They behave like “roving bandits”:

There is no doubt that the biggest suffering of Badghis comes from these unauthorised armed groups; they will be a big problem in the future. You know that a wrong policy was previously welcomed—to support militias. But this was happily decided by the central government to prevent a build-up of militia groups, since their existence can be a very big threat. But look at Abkamari, for example. It used to be the district of peace; now...unauthorised armed groups create problems that the Taliban doesn't (BS: IDI-32).

The fluidity of the provincial-level secondary settlement and the predominance of roving banditry made it virtually impossible to construct provincial-level secondary elite bargains. As a result, any form of settlements are difficult to negotiate, even with the local strongmen. Another consequence is that the Taliban have faced no organised opposition and are now able to assert their exclusive control at least over most of Ghormach and Bala Murghab, where they have set up parallel shadow governance structures:

See, here in Badghis, we have two governments: the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban. They have their own government. In the Taliban areas, no one can go there. No one can go through Daizangi or Muqor (BS: FGD-27).

All interviewees agreed that Badghis roads are mostly unsafe, partly because of the Taliban and partly because of bandits.

5.3 The local and provincial elites and their interactions

Four types of local and provincial elites were mentioned in the interviews: community leaders, MPs, provincial council members, and local strongmen. These actors are mostly connected to Jamiat-i Islami at the national level and, secondarily, to Junbesh-i Milli¹⁶⁴ and Hezb-e Islami. Amir Shah Naibzada, who survived his brother, is usually described as the most powerful strongman in Badghis, yielding influence not only in his native Qadis, but also elsewhere.¹⁶⁵ By contrast, high-ranking provincial government officials, such as the PG and chief of police, are dismissed by several interviewees as marginal or unconcerned with the welfare of the province.¹⁶⁶ Elders, like elsewhere, lobby the authorities through their *shuras*, although in Badghis they tend to represent relatively small communities because of the province's social and tribal fragmentation. This is a peculiarity of Badghis, compared to the other two provinces and particularly Balkh: local elders form a key focal point of elite bargaining.¹⁶⁷

162 MSF has always claimed that Amir Shah Nabihzada was responsible for the death of their staff.

163 Ewen MacAskill, “Aid Agency Quits Afghanistan over Security Fears,” *The Guardian*, 29 July 2004; Holger Munsch, Daud Saba, Sadiqa Basiri, Merete Taksdal, Sarah Grey, and Richard Ellert, “Afghanistan: Findings on Education, Environment, Gender, Health, Livelihood, and Water and Sanitation,” ed. Arne Strand and Gunnar Olesen (Norway: CHR Michelsen Institute, 2005) .

164 Junbesh-i Milli is a largely Uzbek party led by Abdul Rashid Dostum.

165 BS: IDI-28, 30 & 33.

166 BS: KII-17 & 22; BS: IDI-22; BS: FGD-27.

167 BS: IDI-28, 30 & 33.

The province has suffered from neglect from major (that is, resourceful) non-state actors (see Section 5.2 above);¹⁶⁸ the small strongmen based in Badghis have always been dependent on handouts from external actors in order to mobilise significant forces. Without that, no one has been able to impose solid control even on single districts, let alone a large portion of the province. With its lack of local resources, Badghis resembles Wardak but with the key difference that Wardak is situated closer to Kabul, thus enjoying privileged access to higher education and career opportunities in the capital and abroad. In addition, Badghis is not a strategic province. In the words of one key informant:

If you look at it, it is far from Kabul, and unlike Herat and Faryab, it is not in a position to create problems for those in the centre. So yes, it is left out. Also, it is not significant in terms of border relations, and there are no connecting roads leading to Kabul...It is not that politically significant (KL: KII-49).

Kabul's perceived lack of interest in Badghis is invoked by interviewees as one explanation for the poor level of services in the province, leading, among others, to a much higher student-teacher ratio in Badghis' schools as compared to Wardak as well as a lack of school buildings despite reports of a higher number of government schools as compared to Wardak (Table 11).

Table 11: Selected education indicators for Badghis and Wardak

Indicator	2009		2012	
	Badghis	Wardak	Badghis	Wardak
No. of primary education pupils ¹	73,548	96,696	103,068	116,643
Government general education students to teachers ratio ¹	55	39	66	34
Student-teacher ratio ¹	52.02	32.51	64.96	33.19
Adult literacy (15+ years) (%) ²	8.2	31.5	16.9	42.4

Source: 1) Afghanistan Statistical Yearbooks (2009 and 2012); 2) NRVA 2007-08 and 2011-12; 2008 data is given instead of 2009.

Although statistics and surveys show Badghis as doing comparatively well in terms of education delivery, particularly compared to health, a lot of issues were reported by interviewees in the education sector. The poor quality of education delivery was summarised by one interviewee in the following manner:

In Jawand District, they do not have buildings for schools, and everyone studies under tents...So we can't say that education [in Badghis] has reached even 50 percent of its quality standard. In many areas, there is the name of a school, but there is no school or teachers in reality. So we can say that the education situation in Badghis is not good (BS: IDI-30).

Another consequence of Badghis' political marginality is that local strongmen do not have any other option but to focus their efforts on mobilising resources locally by seizing land and taxing the small opium poppy harvest.¹⁶⁹ Again, this is not unlike Wardak, but with the difference that some of Wardak's ambitious political actors have moved to Kabul and have been tapping resources available at the centre. In Badghis, by contrast, political actors have to rely exclusively on whatever little their province can provide in terms of resources. They therefore appear to have identified state funds as a major source of rents, allowing them to maintain some degree of influence (see below). The particularly bitter competition among strongmen for these limited resources prevents the consolidation of a stable secondary political settlement in Badghis:

We haven't always been faced with only one side that is against the nation and the government, which is the Taliban. There are other people who have also caused violence and conflicts, and who are responsible for our security facing doom; thus, Badghis doesn't have a good situation (BS: IDI-30).

In describing the interactions among the strongmen, some of the interviewees' narratives suggest that these were highly fluid and subject to contestations and renegotiations (Box 2).

¹⁶⁸ BS: IDI-32.

¹⁶⁹ See Naval Postgraduate School, "Badghis Executive Summary."

Box 2: Relations among Badghis' strongmen

They have their own agreements with each other in terms of what to do. Sometimes, they fight with each other...sometimes, they make deals, especially during the pistachio harvest...It is good that they come to an agreement on how to share it, so then there is no argument between them. Even when they lose four or five men, they know how to deal with each other. Whitebeards and elders from their communities come and pacify them. They become calm until another time or next year (BS: KII-15).

I don't understand how they interact with each other. They are sometimes at war with each other and sometimes at peace (BS: IDI-22).

...We can see the security situation and some conflicts inside the centre or in the districts of Badghis. This is a sign of powerholders not having good relationships. However, they portray themselves as honest and friends with each other to show the community that they are not against each other and that they are just working for the province. They are not honest; they are not supporting each other. Everyone looks out for his own position and power. If they show themselves to be allies, it is just to keep their own positions. We all know that they are against each other and that they are in different political parties... The interactions between the powerholders are not so good and not so bad...It is just based on their own benefits. When they come to inauguration parties, and when the PG or a group of people ask them to some public gatherings, they act like close friends with each other. When there are contracts for some projects or other sources of money that they can benefit from, they compete to gain a greater share than the others and show their power to each other. They are looking at their own benefits without taking into account any relationships. They just think about their personal benefits (BS: IDI-23).

This fluidity can be attributed to the failure of major Badghis powerbrokers to bring the multitude of small local strongmen together and consolidate a secondary elite bargain at the provincial level, or at least, a few oligopolies of power that can guarantee stability in some portions of the province. As one MP stated, "we do not have anybody in Kabul."¹⁷⁰ The only oligopoly in Badghis is that of the Taliban in the Pashtun pocket of Bala Murghab and Gormach, but due to lack of district-level service delivery data it is not possible to assess in detail the impact this has had on service delivery outcomes in those two districts. This situation might be in the process of changing as a potential oligopolist is emerging to consolidate Jamiati support in the province: Atta Mohammed Noor, the main strongman of northern Afghanistan. In recent months, he has been reaching out to Jamiati circles in Badghis, extending his influence into the province.¹⁷¹ It is too early to say whether he will succeed in becoming the main political player in the province, around whom a secondary settlement might take shape.

A recurring feature of Badghis has been that some of the local strongmen have on-and-off relations with the Taliban or have disguised their men as them. This process can be described as the power of attraction of the Taliban's oligopoly: it offers protection to its members and support in the event of conflict. This is the case of the Hazaras of Daizangi (AbKamari):

Actually, the government made this Taliban. If they really wanted to finish them, it's not too difficult [looking at other FGD participants]. [What about those in] Daizangi, [don't you think that] the government made them? We think that the insurgents in Daizangi were made by the government, as most of them are Ali's (not the real name of an MP) men. Ali Sahib protects them. They kill government officials. In Daizangi, Bismillah's men killed them.¹⁷² When the government wanted to act, Ali said, "They are my men." We thought that if they were his men, then he is Talib, because those armed men get guns and other equipment from the Taliban. Everyone knows this (BS: FGD-27).

Again the lack of district level service delivery data prevents a detailed assessment of what the impact of this might be.

Similar to the situation in Wardak, insurgents maintain relations with elders and village representatives. One of the KIIs emphasised that the ethnic and tribal system remains strong in

¹⁷⁰ BS: IDI-31.

¹⁷¹ BS: IDI-31.

¹⁷² Bismillah is a commander who rules the armed men in Daizangi. It has been rumoured that he is supported by Ali (not his real name) who is an MP.

Badghis province, although the discussion in the following pages on education service delivery will show that it is more durable in Wardak. The interviewee also stated that elders sometimes have relatives among the Taliban, a fact that he assessed positively, as the elders could thus exercise their influence:

...We should not forget that here, the tribal and ethnic system is still...powerful. For example, between Pashtun people here, the Taliban who are from the Achakzai tribe respect the elder/head/arbab¹⁷³ of that tribe. They also respect other elders in the community, too. Anyone from these tribes, Brabqary, Daizangi, Mamaka, or Kondilan, who is in power in the community, is respected by the Taliban as well. They are even related, that is, a Talib is not someone else. He [the Talib] can be the powerholder's cousin, brother, or any other relative. So these communities' powerholders have an effect on them [the Taliban], and through this, they can help us (BS: KII-18).

Not all elders, of course, are in such a position; the Taliban still have stronger roots among Pashtuns than Aimaqs, and no Aimaq interviewee expressed any confidence in being able to lobby the Taliban in favour of keeping schools and clinics open.¹⁷⁴

5.4 The politics of education service delivery in Badghis

5.4.1 Sectoral elite bargains

Although Badghis performed much better in education delivery than in health delivery, there was no widespread support for education voiced by local elites. Contrary to Wardak, interviewees from Badghis had little sense of their local Pashtun elites in particular being supportive of state education or showing a strong interest in it. In a focus group discussion in one of the districts, two participants expressed how some elders were not very interested in seeing children go to schools:

[He faced the other participants, who were also elders.] For years, I have requested from the PED and from you whitebeard people to send your children to school. Look at the mother of Basit. She is a widow. She went to the city and became a cleaner somewhere. She worked hard, but she didn't prevent her children from going to school...I always tell these people [whitebeards] to send their children to school. If you have complaints against any teacher who is not teaching well, you have my permission to grab him and send him away. I told them all to monitor teachers and every family in their area, but no results; not even 10 percent (BS: FGD-27).

[When asked what he meant by compulsory classes:] Compulsory means there should be pressure on these people for them to understand and send their children to school. During King Zahir's time, if the responsible person of the mosque was not there, people would not go to the mosque to pray. Naturally, people in a place would not be interested in education, because the old people [elders], who did not have an education, showed no interest. They don't allow their children to go to school. They have more authority and power over them, so the children do not go to school (BS: FGD-31).

One of the interviewees also recalled how an *arbab* admitted to being against education. The *arbab* thought that educating people in his village would be detrimental to his authority over them:

In Moqor District, one of the SMC heads said, "If I send my children to school, all would go to school. But I don't want to send them. If people go to school, they will become educated, and then they will not accept me as arbab" (BS: KII-17).

A provincial programme implementer also recalled instances in which school construction given to the SMCs had poor outcomes, as they divided the money among themselves¹⁷⁵ and engaged in patronage politics. This implementer, who is a former *jihadi* commander, said that they could not reprimand the elders, as challenging them would invite difficulties in the delivery of education services. The accounts of programme implementers that reveal the divergent interests of elders are shown in Box 3.

¹⁷³ An *arbab* is a village representative usually appointed by the people who confer him with a quasi-official capacity among those in the village and the government. *Maliks* or *qaryadars* are other terms used in Afghan villages to refer to this figure.

¹⁷⁴ BS: IDI-30.

¹⁷⁵ BS: KII-18.

Box 3: The attitude of elders toward education

Elders facilitating education service delivery

Let's tell a recent example. Last year, we sent 14 *kamaz* [a type of truck] full of materials such as books, furniture, and other teaching materials to Murghab District. Before, for 11 years, nothing was sent to Murghab. You know, the distance between Murghab and Qala-i-Naw is 120 km, and the route to the district is controlled by the Taliban. The only way that the government could send the materials was in an armed caravan. But there were many risks of the caravan being attacked and burned by the Taliban. So we contacted the whitebearded/influential people of Murghab. They helped us through the Taliban, who are their relatives. They got a letter from the Taliban and then we sent a whitebearded person from Murghab with the *kamaz* with the letter from the Taliban. This way, we were able to get the materials to Murghab education department (BS: KII-18).

They [the SMC] are working for gender equity too. They encourage people to send girls to school. Our social workers trained the councils regarding girls' education according to the *sharia*. This is a very important point. The percentage of girls participating has increased over the last few years (BS: IDI-20).

Elders posing a challenge to education service delivery

In some remote areas where we lacked teachers, we used a *mawlawe*, *akhond*, or any person who had some education as a teacher. When we got a professional teacher and sent him there, the powerholders threatened him, because the person currently serving as a teacher is from that community; maybe he is a powerholder's relative. They would say [to the professional teacher], for example, "We can't assure your security. We are not responsible for whatever happens to you." With that, the professional teacher left the community and didn't want to go back. Such teachers prefer to do manual work in the city rather than take that risk. So that's why we can't send teachers to remote areas or districts like Jawand, Murghab, and Qadis, as most of these areas are under the control of the Taliban. As much as they [the elders] facilitate our work, they create obstacles, too, because of their own benefits (BS: KII-18).

In Murghab District, we wanted to implement this project [school construction] in the centre, but the governor didn't accept it...Then we changed to another place, which was a little bit secure but still within Murghab. Our engineers can go there to monitor the work, and we can go there to have meetings with SMC members. We gave it [the project] to the head teacher. We decided to select a person who is a government employee, to whom we could inquire or make investigations. If he didn't work well, we could stop his salary. When the head teacher got the money, his father, who is the head of the SMC and who had donated land for the school, selected another person to have the contract...We took him to see a school that had been completed. Our engineers explained the maps to him for about two days. He was an experienced person who had worked in Dubai, too. When this person went back to the district, the head of the SMC said that if this person got the contract, he would not give land for the school. I don't know why he introduced him to us. Then he introduced another liar, Hajji. Now, we have this problem with this Hajji. He has done only 30 percent of the work, but he says that he has done 60 percent. Now he asks for the remaining money (BS: KII-14).

At the beginning of this government, as I was in the provincial office, the governor was a former *jihadi* commander. He was illiterate, but he fought against the Taliban a lot. Because of that, most of the NGOs had contact with me. I made this document for UNICEF and Doctors without Borders, with the help of UNAMA. I went around Badghis for three years to complete this document, also with the help of UNAMA. These people are very traditional; they are not very interested in schools and education. If you ask them to send their daughters to school, they will say, "Oh, girls are made to do housework" (BS: KII-18).

Not every interviewee was so negative about the attitude of elders and communities toward education. One elder provided a somewhat more optimistic assessment of education in Badghis, pointing out how the trend was toward greater acceptance of state education:

Now, people know what would and would not benefit them. Before, people gave money to get their children out of schools, as schools were compulsory. But now it is not like that. Now, people from very far places send their children to the centre of the province, to Herat, and to Kabul for education, even if they have a poor economic situation. They rent rooms for their children so that they can become educated. People are now thinking about the future of their children (BS: IDI-33).

Although most interviewees shied away from openly discussing ethnic attitudes, one source stressed that there was no resistance to state education among Aimaq elders, therefore implying that resistance was concentrated in Pashtun areas.¹⁷⁶ The lack of district-level education data prevents assessing the exact degree to which different attitudes towards education among

176 BS: IDI-31.

elders of different ethnic groups impacted on education delivery. The reasons for this are mainly cultural—yet this is a separate issue about how the past, cultural background, and customs of specific areas or sectors of the population affect service delivery.

Despite the prevailing attitude of elders toward education, the Taliban of Badghis had not been particularly active against state schools. The elders who supported state education found that the Taliban were quite forthcoming in this regard:

It is clear for every one of us that the Taliban doesn't have a problem with schools in their areas. The Taliban have allowed schools to open, and their leaders have instructed them not to close the doors of schools... We haven't encountered the Taliban being against girls going to school or against clinics (BS: IDI-32).

The Taliban in Badghis are not that much against schools. In many areas under the Taliban, schools are active, except for girls' schools... Before, the Taliban didn't even let boys' schools open, but in many places, boys' schools are now open. People have even made the Taliban encourage other people to send their boys to school. In our tribe in Mushkawani, we opened two to three schools ourselves and went to the Taliban and convinced them that it is for the benefit of everyone. We asked them whether it is better for their sons to be educated or illiterate; that the war would not go on forever; that education is not a political problem. We told them that there would be peace one day, the war would be over, and at that time, we will need educated people. We asked them, "Will it be better for your son to be educated or illiterate at that time?" We asked them that. In this way, we convinced them and opened schools for Mushkawani, which is in the Taliban's territory (BS: IDI-33).

As in Wardak, regardless of the Taliban's attitude toward schools *per se*, insecurity makes the hiring of qualified teachers very difficult, contributing decisively to the poor quality of education and the high student-to-teacher ratio.¹⁷⁷ The success of education delivery in Badghis is therefore a relative one: it could have been much worse given the challenges, and it was certainly much better than health delivery. Negative or opportunistic attitudes among the local and provincial elites (see below) appear to have had less impact than the relatively soft attitude of the Taliban, at least as far as quantitative indicators are concerned. The schools stayed open and children were not prevented in large numbers from flocking to them by the Taliban.

5.4.2 The impact of secondary settlements on education

With no stable secondary settlement at the provincial level in Badghis, the competition between local strongmen for resources is far more vicious than in Wardak. Two consequences of this are the tendency to squeeze as much as possible from service delivery structures as well as from anything else, and to push hard for hiring local allies in government jobs, regardless of their qualifications. However fragmented, the secondary settlements of Badghis could still be connected all the way to Kabul. An example of the strength of patronage networks in Badghis is that of a non-performing provincial programme implementer who could not be terminated from his post, as he represented a large tribe.

These are provinces that are a little bit insecure. It's hard to find a qualified person who can work there. That is one thing. Second, Badghis' EQUIP officer had been officially terminated. He was given a written warning letter twice and later terminated. But it did not stay like that for long, because we received a decree from Karzai that he could stay... [Dry smile] Believe me, even for the recruitment of an EQUIP officer, we received an order from the President. We received the instruction from the President... signed by him... This person [whom we want terminated] belongs to one of the big tribes of Noorzai in Badghis. He is an influential person in that tribe. He facilitates political negotiations and discussions with people in the tribe. He is one of the representatives of the Noorzai tribe over there; that is why he also became the EQUIP officer... We did not receive any complaints from the PED director, but from the community. The PED director should have received it... But it seems that both are at the same level or on the same side, and that is perhaps why they are not complaining. But we received complaints from the community, and they clearly mentioned that [EQUIP] is poorly implemented or not properly implemented. They had some pictures and photos, and they have records of it. These came from the SMCs. They came here to the office from Badghis and so we took action; I'm referring to the situation I mentioned earlier (KL: KII-37).

177 BS: IDI-31.

Bargains also occurred between the MoE and MPs, who try to direct resources toward their constituencies.¹⁷⁸

If a local powerholder of a village requests a school, they go to the PED, then the PED sends it to the MoE in Kabul. How would the MoE know where a school should be built and whether or not it is needed? The PED should decide on that, as they are in the province and they know about it. But the MoE gives the order according to the wishes of MPs and others (BS: KII-15).

Examples and anecdotes of local powerbrokers and political entrepreneurs squeezing funds from the state were also provided.¹⁷⁹ The quantitative expansion of education therefore took place despite a lack of commitment to education delivery by these actors. A provincial programme implementer, for example, reported how the PG tolerates district governors requesting a “share” before signing any education-related documents:

So, if I want to recruit an employee, I would have a standard for that, such as work experience, level of education, etc. When you see a person who is not educated, he has not even gone to a mullah to become literate, he is illiterate. Apparently, there is corruption or something wrong, as he has been recruited as district governor. I haven't seen any district governor in Badghis who is selected properly. For example, if I were the PG, there are so many other problems in the country that I would have no time to select district governors. So, what I can do is to select acting district governors, whomever I like...In Murghab, we have 70 schools. If a district governor does not receive his share, he will not sign any documents relating to education or schools. As acting district governor, he will not have all of the benefits that a district governor has. So he would try different ways to make the PG happy (BS: KII-14).

5.4.3 Impact on EQUIP and adaptation

Insecurity in some areas of Badghis affects EQUIP by preventing the effective monitoring of school building projects¹⁸⁰ and the attendance of training seminars by teachers.¹⁸¹ There were also instances of SMC meetings being delayed due to insecurity.¹⁸² The interviewees generally viewed the issue of violence as being beyond their ability to manage,¹⁸³ but several interviewees implicitly admitted that sectoral elite bargains over education (in which they were not involved) reduced the extent to which violence affected the delivery of education.¹⁸⁴

5.5 The politics of health service delivery in Badghis

5.5.1 The impact of the primary settlement

Regardless of the data discussed in Section 5.1 above, there is a sense in Badghis that the province has been neglected and that the health sector suffers from a lack of qualified personnel and insufficient supplies. A few of the provincial interviewees mentioned the central government's neglect of health services.¹⁸⁵ Reportedly, the quality of available medicines is also poor (see Box 4 below), although this is a common complaint from other parts of the country as well.¹⁸⁶

178 BS: IDI-22; BS: KII-14.

179 BS-IDI-32.

180 BS: KII-14 & 17. See also Ministry of Education, “EQUIP Semi-Annual Narrative Report: July 1st, 2011 till December 31st, 2011” (Kabul: Ministry of Education, 2011).

181 See Ministry of Education, “EQUIP Semi-Annual Narrative Report: January 1st, 2011 till June 30th, 2011.”

182 BS: IDI-20

183 BS: IDI-20 & 21.

184 BS: KII-16.

185 BS: KII-21 & 22; BS: IDI-27; BS: FGD-34 to 36.

186 BS: IDI-31.

Box 4: Commentaries on the quality of health services in Badghis

We don't have proper doctors in Badghis. Our healthcare is not in a good situation either. We don't have good doctors in surgery and other fields. I also raised a complaint to the central government that we do not have students in engineering and medicine from Badghis province. We have requested the government several times to have students in these two fields. But even if we have a few, they are not going to return from studying soon. We don't have doctors in villages either (BS: IDI-30).²

Unfortunately, one of the main problems for our people is healthcare. There aren't sufficient doctors in Badghis; it isn't even sufficient in the central hospital. A few doctors are from other provinces, which is not sufficient to respond to the needs of the people, and they think more about their own business than about healthcare. One of the biggest problems is that we don't have specialist doctors. Currently, the situation regarding our hospitals and healthcare is very critical. Believe me, you can't even find a needle in the central hospital, not to mention healthcare or treatment resources. Doctors who come from other provinces all think about their own business. When these doctors come to Badghis, they don't even have one dinar, but, believe me, these doctors build houses, mansions, buildings, cars, and everything within one year with the money of these poor people. We would thank God if the native sons of Badghis went to study medicine and in near future, inshallah, come back to serve their people. There are no doctors in the villages (BS: IDI-28).

Unfortunately, our hospitals are currently faced with a lack of personnel, and the villages have this problem too. When we don't have enough personnel in central hospitals, and in clinics and villages, there is absolutely a lack of doctors and nurses. Currently, some doctors and nurses have come from other provinces. We are always suffering from this problem. The MoPH has to convince doctors or give them high salaries and send specialists to our province to work. For example, we don't have an eye doctor, an orthopaedic doctor, or a laboratory with a proper X-ray. The doctors that we have now, those who are from Badghis and elsewhere, are not enough (BS: IDI-33).

But not all of the interviewees agree that the problems of Badghis' health sector are due to neglect from the centre. One of them believed that the MoPH is gradually attending to this concern:

As you may know, there are 50 positions empty in Badghis Hospital. The MoPH says that they are doing their best to bring doctors, and day by day, we can see that the number of doctors is increasing. There are also mobile teams who are ready to help and bring assistance to villages when needed (BS: IDI-32).

5.5.2 Sectoral elite bargains

Unlike in Wardak, reaching sectoral elite bargains over health delivery did not follow a smooth path in Badghis. The establishment of health boards institutionalised the role of elders in helping to deliver health services, but, in practice, this is what the elders had always been doing. In fact, once talks with the Taliban began, the elders sometimes found that the Taliban were proactively trying to facilitate the provision of health services to the areas where they operated:

Doctors say that the Taliban have even told them to go to insecure areas and treat people (BS: IDI-32).

As in the case of Wardak, the elders in Badghis claim to be able to impose a more positive attitude toward health delivery on the Taliban:

The next story is about a Taliban commander who prevented vaccinators from entering a village that is very far from the centre of the district. He verbally abused the vaccinators and community health workers (CHWs) going to that area and didn't let them deliver the services. When the CHWs reported this to us, we met with the health shura, who are powerholders of AbKamari, and told them about the issue. The shura went to that village, talked with the commander, and told him that if he would not allow the vaccinators [to do their jobs], then [the village], including his family, would be affected by health issues. They said to him, "It is not just for other villagers. Your family and your relatives will receive these services, too. If you are avoiding these services, then you have to leave this district." It was agreed between the elders and the Taliban that they should not create problems for schools, health workers, and local people (BS: IDI-25).

In reality, most programme beneficiaries who participated in a focus group discussion mentioned that some Taliban do not heed the words of elders.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, an interviewee from MOVE indicated that there remains hesitancy about bringing health services to insecure areas, even with the assurance of local elders. The Taliban's heterogeneity forces them to consider whether all of the Taliban have acknowledged the elders' guarantee regarding the security of health personnel.

There is a difference between the Taliban. The local Taliban know that these health workers are working for their people and their families; they are from the province. So they know that these people are working for their families in these areas. And, of course, these Taliban have families who are living in these areas and so they need the services. Because of this, even some of the elders would say that the Taliban have said that there is no problem for health workers to be there, even the staff of NGOs. But, for the other sectors, it is very difficult as there is no guarantee, but for the health workers, there is no problem. But still, I think that even this is not guaranteed, because up to now there is [still the question] about who the Taliban really are. We don't even know who the leaders of these Taliban are and what they want (KL: IDI-64).

The policy of the Taliban leadership toward the health sector prescribes that clinics must operate, via signed agreements, and agree to treat members of the Taliban while also promising not to spy on them.¹⁸⁸ In spite of this, it is still necessary at a local level to reconfirm these arrangements with local Taliban commanders as access is not always clear-cut. If the Taliban are from the local area themselves it is much easier to negotiate access with the help of the local elders.

5.5.3 The impact of secondary elite bargains

The fluidity of provincial secondary political settlements resulted in a lack of stable secondary elite bargains, as pointed out in Section 5.3 above. Resource-poor provincial elites and local strongmen target health service delivery with an aggressiveness not seen in Wardak: rogue "Taliban" and "bandits" linked to local strongmen are alleged to steal medical supplies with the complicity sometimes of the health authorities:

Clinics are in general open at the provincial level; the Taliban or anybody else doesn't have a problem with clinics being open. But unfortunately, some authorities who run the clinics and some Taliban groups are involved in stealing medicine when it is transported to insecure places (BS: IDI-33).

In one fight involving land, one of the parties blocked the delivery of medicines to the opposite party's village. Even if their disagreement was settled through the local elders, the health materials were never recovered. Subsequently, MOVE had to resupply medicines to the village.¹⁸⁹ Stealing medical deliveries is the most extreme form of exploitation at the expense of the health service. As in the case of education, local powerbrokers also use the health department for patronage purposes and for raising resources to spend on political campaigning and maintain influence.

Healthcare is something that benefits everyone and so everyone, including powerful people, supports this and agrees with these services being provided to the people in a good way. But there are also people who would like to see their own benefit and would fill their own pockets (BS: IDI-30).

Some influential and powerful people with the authorities as well as some armed groups are interested in having more clinics in their areas, because they can misuse the medicine and resources (BS: IDI-29).

Furthermore, an interviewee at the national level mentioned how the MoPH accommodates MPs' requests to hire staff that they recommend. Should the MoPH fail to comply or should the recommended individual fail to pass the application process, the MoPH has to struggle hard to pacify the MPs.

187 BS: FGD-40 to 46.

188 Taliban cadres in Pakistan, contacted in June 2014.

189 BS: KII-21.

5.5.4 The impact on SHARP and its adaptation

Similar to EQUIP, monitoring health facilities and their performance was a challenge in insecure parts of Badghis.¹⁹⁰ The lack of adequately trained health staff was widely attributed to the presence of violent conflict in the province alongside the low salaries paid.¹⁹¹ One should recall that some INGOs had left the province due to the killing of their health personnel.¹⁹² As in the case of EQUIP, many of the interviewees did not see violence as a problem in itself to the delivery of services so long as it was possible to identify the key players and negotiate access to the services. It became much more difficult when local strongmen competed against each other or “criminal gangs” were involved without any clear incentive to ensuring services were sustained over the longer term.

5.6 Conclusion

In sum, Badghis’ remoteness and fragmented politics may have diminished its lobbying power in Kabul. Nevertheless, links between local and provincial elites could still be established with Kabul. The limited availability of local resources, however, provided an additional incentive for local powerbrokers to compete against each other, as they relied on looting state resources to fund their activities, hurting both health and education delivery.

The comparison between education and health services in Badghis illustrates that hostility toward the provision of services *per se* is not the main issue. Nobody seriously opposes health delivery, but general insecurity, caused by the presence of Taliban and the rivalries of local strongmen, as well as a lack of infrastructure, discourages doctors and nurses no less than teachers from working in Badghis, particularly in the rural areas. Indeed, the latest available data (Table 7) shows that there are no female doctors in Badghis. Local demands for one health centre for every 300-500 households are impossible to meet for the MoPH, as even the much sparser existing infrastructure cannot be adequately staffed.¹⁹³ The lack of a stable provincial-level settlement among the main political actors is ultimately a major cause of insecurity and lagging performance in service delivery, given the historical background of poor health and education delivery. A provincial council member and former MP argued it this way:

There are powerful commanders who, I think, if the government would appoint and support in the leadership of the security sector, would resolve the security challenges to some extent (BS: IDI-30).

If we had those kinds of powerful warlords, then the central government would have feared them and our province would have received attention (BS: IDI-33).

More surprisingly, perhaps, a civil society activist expressed similar views:

No, we don’t have warlords or militia that can be counted as a threat; regarding a powerful commander or leader, we can say that if Badghis had one, we wouldn’t be in this situation. We wouldn’t be deprived of all the things that we are now (BS: IDI-28).

The hope of these local actors is that the arrival of a strong leader in Badghis would act as a catalyst for the formation of a stable secondary settlement in the province. Atta’s patronage could perhaps reduce the predatory attitude of Badghis’ “roving bandits” and offer them the chance of turning into “stationary bandits” like Atta himself. That would be about as good as Badghis could get, even in the eyes of its elders and activists.

The success in getting education to most of Badghis was due to the sectoral bargains being successfully negotiated. Access was not an issue. The “roving banditry” that characterised Badghis affected instead the quality of education being delivered, because few qualified teachers would want to be deployed to Badghis. It affected health delivery even more, because while schools could be kept open even with barely literate teachers, NGO clinics needed at least qualified nurses and could often not find them, so many outlying areas were left unserved.

190 BS: KII-21 & 22; BS: IDI-25.

191 BS: KII-19 & 22; see also World Bank, “Afghanistan—Strengthening Health Activities for the Rural Poor.”

192 BS: IDI-25.

193 BS: IDI-31.

6. Case Study 3: Balkh Province

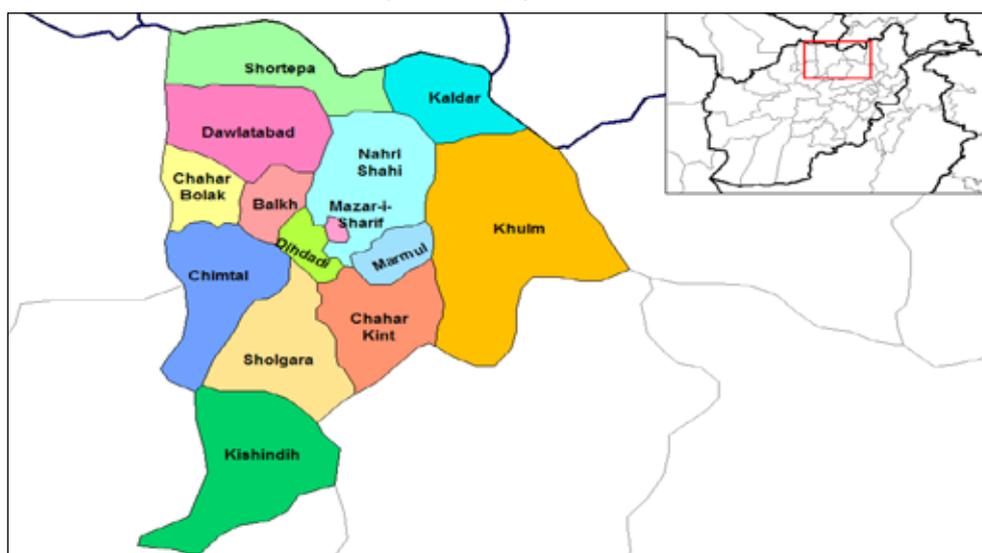
This section discusses why Balkh, while performing well in many regards, was outperformed in health and education delivery by the less resourceful and more insecure Wardak Province. Balkh's performance in terms of child immunisation stands out as particularly poor, despite Balkh having greater human resources available. This section also discusses whether Balkh's strategic and economic importance played a role in facilitating health and education delivery.

6.1 Overview of Balkh Province

Balkh Province is one of the five provinces of northern Afghanistan. It shares a border with Turkmenistan to the northwest, Uzbekistan to the north, Tajikistan to the northeast, Kunduz Province to the east, Jawzjan Province to the west, and Samangan and Sar-e Pul provinces to the southeast and southwest, respectively. Its capital city, Mazar-i-Sharif, is one of the country's largest commercial and financial centres. Fishstein and Wilder described Mazar as “the *de facto* political, economic, and administrative hub of northern Afghanistan.”¹⁹⁴

Balkh has a slight majority of Tajiks and large minorities of Pashtuns, Hazaras, and Uzbeks. Reflecting its strong economy, its poverty rate more than halved between 2007-8 and 2011-12, dropping from around 60 percent to just less than 22 percent respectively.¹⁹⁵ Half of the province is flat, with the remaining portions being mountainous or semi-mountainous.¹⁹⁶ Fishstein et al. noted that Balkh's political and economic condition prospered because of its “location, security, and relatively effective administration.”¹⁹⁷

Figure 17: Map of Balkh



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Balkh_districts.png .

194 Fishstein and Wilder, “Winning Hearts and Minds?,” 21.

195 Central Statistics Organization (CSO), “National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007/08 A Profile of Afghanistan,” (Kabul: CSO, 2009); Central Statistics Organization (CSO), “National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-12 Afghanistan Living Condition Survey,” (Kabul: CSO, 2014).

196 Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, “Balkh Provincial Profile,” <http://www.mrrd-nabdp.org/attachments/article/229/Balkh%20Provincial%20Profile.pdf>, no date (accessed 15 March 2014).

197 Paul Fishstein, Islamuddin Amaki and Mohammad Qasim, “Balkh's Economy in Transition” (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2013).

6.2 History and nature of the violence in Balkh

The shaping of a secondary settlement at the provincial level took a long time in Balkh. Major waves of political violence repeatedly occurred from 1993 to 1998, when Balkh was affected by infighting between various armed groups, until the Taliban took over in 1998. After the fall of the Taliban regime, the strongmen of Balkh fought internally until the most powerful of them, Atta Mohammed Noor, managed to emerge as the strongest player and thus force the shaping of secondary elite bargains around himself.¹⁹⁸

The strongmen also competed with each other in nurturing political connections with the centre (Kabul). Atta was more successful than any competitor and was appointed governor of Balkh in 2004; he is now the longest-serving governor in the country. Thanks to his links to the primary elite settlement in Kabul (he was a protégé of Vice President Fahim, but also had direct relations with President Karzai), Atta was able to strike a deal with General Rashid Dostum to accept his governorship of Balkh in return for accepting the latter's control of Jawzjan province and ending the fighting. From 2004, the province's security condition was definitely better than that of Badghis and Wardak. None of the interviewees, especially in the first provincial field visit, could clearly recall a particular moment when the province had experienced severe violence, although there have been isolated events such as the attack on the United Nations office in Mazar in 2012.

Even in Balkh, however, the Taliban appeared in a few Pashtun districts¹⁹⁹ beginning in 2007, creating waves of occasional worry throughout the province.²⁰⁰ Taliban violence has, however, been limited to specific areas of the province, such as the Pashtun pockets of Chimtal, Dawlatabad, Balkh, and Charbolak, although after 2010 they have also started establishing a presence in some mountainous Uzbek areas.²⁰¹

6.3 The economic and political powerholders and their interactions

The recent history of Balkh Province has been dominated by Atta Mohammed Noor. Atta successfully brought order within the ranks of his own party, Jamiat-i Islami, and then formed alliances, co-opted, or intimidated into submission all competitors. In the words of Mukhopadhyay, "The governor manages their behaviour through a combination of carrots and sticks that keep them in check, but still at his disposal."²⁰² A few of the interviewees also held the same view:

After the time of Taliban until now, the only political powerholder in Mazar is Atta Mohammed, the provincial governor. There is no other political powerholder against him. This is why there is no conflict inside Mazar-i-Sharif, and at the district level there are just insurgents who are against of the government and Atta Mohammed (BK: IDI-36).

I said before that there is no conflict; this is a secure province. No political person has any effect on any programme. It is all because of good leadership. The governor of this province has a good control of the conflicts. All the programmes are going well (BK: KII-23).

There were at least eight interviewees who mentioned Atta as the dominant political and economic actor in the province.²⁰³ In the words of one of them:

The provincial governor, Ustad Atta, is a political powerholder as well as an economic powerholder. The other economic powerholders are Kamal Nabi Zada, Kamgar, and Mohebullah. They have companies, and they are best friends and partners of Atta Mohammed Noor, the provincial governor. You know that Ustad Atta is the main man in Mazar and the others are merchants. He is the top powerholder and decision-maker in Balkh. No one can go against his decisions and power (BK: KII-23).

198 Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud*; Dipali Mukhopadhyay, "Warlords as Bureaucrats: The Afghan Experience" (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009).

199 BK: IDI-37; BK: KII-28; BK: KII-29.

200 BK-IDI-56; Giustozzi, "The Resilient Oligopoly."

201 Antonio Giustozzi and Christoph Reuter, "The Insurgents of the Afghan North" (Kabul/Berlin: Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2011).

202 Mukhopadhyay, "Warlords as Bureaucrats."

203 BK: IDI-43; BK: IDI-44; BK: IDI-37; BK: KII-23; BK: KII-31; BK: IDI-49.

As a result of Atta's leadership, Balkh informants and focus group participants described the interaction between the different economic and political elites to be good. This confirms what Fishstein et al. reported on the greater "overlap than elsewhere between the business community, parliamentarians, provincial council members, and strongmen, with Governor Atta Mohammed Noor playing a central role."²⁰⁴ Interviewees articulated that before EQUIP and SHARP, these economic and political powerbrokers already had good provincial relations.

While Atta presides over the provincial secondary settlement, at the district and village levels, local strongmen and elders such as the *arbabs* and *qalanter*s are also said to be influential. The dynamic economy of Balkh has also created a comparatively strong business class, whose members sometime compete for political influence as well. This is particularly the case of Ahmad Shah Ramazan, who is also mentioned as influential among Hazaras. Many of these strongmen, like the security commander in the district of Balkh, Abdul Wadood Khan, are part of the secondary settlement built around Governor Atta.²⁰⁵ The same applies to businessmen:

None of them hindered the programme. Generally, they facilitated and helped its implementation. For instance, Nabi Zada foundation, Ghazanfar group, Yunosi Sahib, Ghawhari Sahib, and some private companies financially supported the education department. These people who support education programs have links with ministries in Kabul and are close friends of Ustad Atta. They report to Ustad Atta about their support (BK: IDI-42).

One interviewee, referring to businesspersons in the province, stated that the economic and politically powerful in the province were "friends" with the PG.²⁰⁶

As usual in Afghanistan, the local *maliks* in the villages and neighbourhoods represent the local population before the authorities. In the village, residents approach these actors for solutions to local problems. Pashtuns have a province-level *shura*, which represent their interests; there are also multi-ethnic district-level *shuras*, but they are not well respected,²⁰⁷ as allegations of corruption have surfaced:

Because people in those shuras collected money in the name of the shura and put it their own pockets. That is why the shura is disrupted (BK: IDI-58).

Unlike the other two study areas, MPs and the Taliban were rarely mentioned as powerbrokers in Balkh. Almost all of the MPs are connected to Atta and effectively subsumed into the provincial secondary settlement.²⁰⁸ Indeed, they appear to be very much part of Atta's constituency:

...Noorullah Daudzai is an MP from Kabul. He came to Mazar and built a school with US\$35,000. He said, "My father wanted and asked me to build one school and one hospital. So when the provincial governor, Ustad Atta, asked me to build a school in Mazar, I accepted and built this school here in Mazar." The good relations between this MP and the provincial governor caused the school to be built (BK: KII-26).

This does not mean that Atta is universally popular; his reconciliation with Haji Mohaqqueq, the main Hazara leader in Balkh, split Mohaqqueq's party and led to the formation of a new group, currently known as "Jabha" (Front). Some Hazaras describe Atta as a dictator and allege that he discriminates against them in the distribution of resources, including in education and health.²⁰⁹ Pashtuns sometimes tend to agree, even those who are close to Atta.²¹⁰

204 Fishstein, Amaki and Qaasim, "Balkh's Economy in Transition."

205 Most of the SHARP interviews were conducted in the district of Balkh, as the provincial centre had a regional hospital and was not a participant in the project.

206 BK: KII-23.

207 BK: IDI-57; BK: IDI-58.

208 Giustozzi, "The Resilient Oligopoly."

209 BK: IDI-53; BK: IDI-58.

210 BK: IDI-56; BK: IDI-57. The latter interviewee disagreed about discrimination, although he confirmed the lack of health and educational services in Pashtun areas. BK: IDI-58 also disagreed.

*The few clinics that we have in Balkh are all in areas that are populated by Tajiks, like Char Sang and Samarqandeyan, and maybe every village has a clinic and every village has a school for girls and boys. Maybe some of the villages have high schools, too. They have been given private clinics, too. The problem is that some of us feel distant from the government.*²¹¹

Overall, however, the level of opposition to Atta is modest. At the time of writing, the launch of “Jabha” had stalled due to pressure from Mohaqqueq and other influential Shiite figures, who did not want to compromise their relationship with Atta.

6.4 The politics of education service delivery in Balkh

6.4.1 The impact of the secondary settlement

The existence in Balkh of a comparatively stable elite bargain as a result of a consolidated “stationary bandit” means there is little competition between strongmen over rents. While Atta co-opted people and networks and shaped the provincial secondary settlement, he also had to accommodate their financial interests. However, the extent to which private interests affected service delivery in Balkh was much less than in Badghis and especially Wardak. One national programme implementer could not recall the Balkh PED building schools in locations that were not approved by EQUIP and MoE.²¹² Atta also pushed his partners in the secondary settlement to show a more positive attitude toward service delivery, as a result of which they engaged in a positive competition with each other through building schools²¹³ or donating land for the construction of clinics.²¹⁴ SMCs were able to seek out financial assistance for schools from local businesspersons.²¹⁵ To cite one account:

I can tell you that the best change after 2009 has been the school shura. It is composed of community and religious leaders who provide support to schools and awareness to the community. Many financial funds came to the schools through the school shura because it went to some organisations and merchants and asked companies for financial support for the schools (BK: KII-25).

Box 5 contains further descriptions by interviewees of Atta Noor’s stewardship of service delivery.

Box 5: Balkh’s PG managing education service delivery

They [referring to other elites in the province] have good interactions with each other, but their interaction and relationship are not for the benefit of the education sector. They have not done any joint project for education. It was just Ustad Atta Mohammed Noor, the PG, who insisted that companies and the PED develop and support the education sector. Most of the powerholders are just thinking about how to remove the other powerholders from this province. They are not supportive of each other. They do not even engage in fundamental support for the education sector. If they had a good relationship, we could have more financial support from them (BK: KII-27).

...we all know that Mazar is better than most of the provinces in terms of education quality; but it is all because of the greater attention given by the PG and PED [to the sector], as well as the support of donors (BK: IDI-42).

Ustad Atta is one of those people who love education, and he is an open-minded person. He always supported the improvement of education in Balkh and encouraged NGOs to do something for the education of Balkh. He pays attention to education and insists on the security of schools. He has told the PED that if there is a need for police or security, he should be told and he will send more police for security. He told us that we should encourage the principals to go to companies to seek financial support and, if needed, he will also ask them to provide some financial support to schools (BK: IDI-43).

The PG Ustad Atta has facilitated the delivery of education services. He has helped and supported education a lot. For example, he encouraged the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to construct a building for the teacher training centre and so they made this building that we are in right now. He invited [JICA] to help, because Balkh was in need of a building for a teacher training centre and so JICA accepted (BK: KII-23).

211 BK: IDI-56.

212 KL: KII-37.

213 BK: IDI-39.

214 BK: KII-28.

215 BK: KII-25; BK: KII-26; BK: IDI-45; BK: IDI-42.

6.4.2 Sectoral elite bargains

The accounts of the interviewees appeared to indicate that the Taliban did not establish informal arrangements with Balkh's local elites, such as *arbabs* and *qalantars*, to an extent comparable to that seen in Badghis or Wardak. This was largely due to the comparative weakness of the Taliban in Balkh and to Atta's firm opposition to any such relationships being established. So far, however, the Taliban have not campaigned very aggressively against either schools or clinics in Balkh. A report from CARE International in 2009 revealed increased attacks on provincial schools, and an interviewee recalled an event when the Taliban warned the community not to build schools. When this issue was brought to the attention of the PG, he requested a joint army-police military operation.²¹⁶ Despite Atta's opposition to sectoral bargains with the Taliban, they nonetheless seem to happen under the surface in those relatively few areas where they have influence:

The Taliban are not against schools and clinics at all. Six or seven years ago, I was working in Chimtal District, which was under control of the Taliban at the time and they were burning government vehicles, but they weren't preventing the clinic services; even they themselves were taking medicine from us (BK: IDI-60).

Two sources confirmed that in some areas, the SMCs or school *shuras* had to strike deals with the local Taliban.²¹⁷

6.4.3 The impact of the primary settlement

After a major crisis in his relationship with Kabul in 2009 when he supported Dr Abdullah Abdullah in the elections against Karzai, Atta was able to successfully link with the elite bargain in Kabul. While Kabul might not entirely trust him, his presence in Mazar became indispensable to the projection of state power in the north. This allowed him to eventually build a strong and usually positive relationship with various government departments. A World Bank study in 2011 that included Balkh district in the province stated that the relationships between the PG, PED, and the Mustoufiat were critical for administrative procedures to flow. The Mustoufiat is the provincial counterpart of the MoF. Similarly, the PED seems to have been able to operate without hindrance from Atta: in the account of a former NGO worker who delivered teacher training programs, PED disapproval resulted in delays, restrictions, and unfavourable hiring practices.²¹⁸ The good relationship between the PED and PG in Balkh is further substantiated in this World Bank study,²¹⁹ and another one in 2014.²²⁰

6.4.4 Impact on EQUIP and adaptation

The interviewees indicated that interference and pressure from MPs and strongmen for favours or bribes were the main factor disrupting the implementation of EQUIP. Either they admitted that there was no way to avoid such interference and that it could only be "managed" while implying the need for some compromise, or they vaguely referred to solutions being found, but refused to elaborate on them. In a few areas where the insurgents were a source of concern, especially in the hiring of teachers²²¹ and monitoring of schools,²²² EQUIP staff asked the *shuras*, elders, and clerics to mediate and remove the obstacles, leading to secondary settlements with strongmen and the Taliban.²²³ However, the interviewees mostly remained vague over any

216 BK: KII-25.

217 BK: KII-25 and BK: KII-26.

218 BK: KII-24.

219 According to a WB report from 2011, "The relationship with the Governor's office also impacts the O&M [operations and maintenance] of the PED, not so much in terms of procedures, but due to the Governor's fund being a resource provider. In Balkh, the PED was provided with vehicles as well as furniture from this office. Of course, these provisions are not made according to any formal procedures, but more in a sporadic manner." See World Bank, "Afghanistan—Public expenditure tracking survey," 50.

220 In all of the provinces surveyed, with the exception of Balkh, PEDs required the governor's approval for small expenditures. See Dany et al., "Critical Administrative Constraints to Service Delivery."

221 BK: KII-25.

222 BK: KII-25; BK: IDI-42.

223 BK: KII-26.

concessions that might have been made during the bargaining process, despite repeated probes by the interviewers. In a few cases, they reported that the strongmen, MPs, and so forth were convinced to drop their demands.

6.5 The politics of health service delivery in Balkh

6.5.1 The impact of the secondary settlement

As in the case of education, the secondary settlement solidly built around Atta has imposed a degree of discipline on Balkh's economic and political powerbrokers. Implementing NGO CHA claimed to have experienced no problems when it came to dealing with them. Although elites from Kabul such as MPs recommended people for some posts, the NGO claimed to have been free to hire these people or not. The CHA staff claimed to be able to resist undue pressure: if the candidates were qualified for the post, they would be hired; if not, staff would correspond with the powerbroker to explain the refusal to hire such persons. Other sources cast some doubts over this optimistic assessment, indicating that the local authorities have ways to exercise pressure on NGOs. To cite an example, the PHD director and CHA had some conflict.²²⁴ The PHD director did not issue certificates of completion to the midwives who were trained by the NGO:

We had coordination meetings with the MoPH, but they said that we should solve the problem at the provincial level. How we can solve this problem? Please give us something. How can we do that? From where? It is not the policy of CHA to pay people (KL: KII-38).

The NGO also believed that their being overlooked to implement SEHAT was influenced by the PHD director. Although a national programme implementer explained that the selection was a fair process,²²⁵ the NGO was still sceptical. The NGO approached the PG to discuss the matter, but was referred to the PHD director.

In the districts, Atta appears to have tasked his local allies, such as the district security commander of Balkh, to ensure the delivery of health services.²²⁶ In the narrative of one of the village programme implementers:

...with the coming of the new system, the security commander and influential people from Mazar told the qaryadars to support vaccination groups and CHWs in providing social awareness and health services for women and children, not just men. When I started working eight years ago, some of the qaryadars in the remote areas were against me and were telling me to not go to their village. But when I reported this to the hospital manager and he reported it to the security commander, this issue was resolved. The security commander asked all the qaryadars to support the CHWs and health programs all over Balkh District (BK: IDI-49).

This seems to be part of a general pattern of local strongmen playing to Atta's tune and supporting service delivery as a strategy to consolidate their power and appeal to the local population:

With the establishment of the new government, the former powerholders, I mean the jihad leaders, were removed from power in the district. Now there are other people who are in the high ranks of the government and are powerholders as well as economic powerholders... These people are economic and political powerholders, because they have money and are in high ranks of the government. With the coming of the new government, these powerholders came into place... These people are open-minded; they never hindered programs; they are supportive of education and health programs. These people made the area secure and provide opportunities for people to send their children to school; they encourage people to go to the hospital to receive health services and they take care of the security of the vaccinators when they go to districts to do vaccinations. Like Qumandan Wadood: although it is not his duty to support health and education programs... he does this beside his other works (BK: FGD-68).

Rather than diverting resources away from service delivery, provincial elites fill their coffers in a number of other ways, including by diverting patients toward private hospitals that they and their business partners control (see Box 6). All considered, however, this overlap of public and private interest is less disruptive to health delivery than the roving banditry reported in Badghis,

²²⁴ One of the informants who was a doctor sought permission from his overseer to talk about this issue with the interviewer.

²²⁵ KL: KII-38.

²²⁶ BK: IDI-49; BK: KII-30; BK: IDI-46; BK: IDI-48.

and not too dissimilar to what happens in the more developed economies of North America and Western Europe. However, in terms of actual health outcomes Balkh appears to lag behind Wardak. The data collected is not sufficient to make categorical statements about this, but perhaps grassroots political parties in Wardak played a role more conducive to basic health care delivery than private clinics in Balkh, which many poor households cannot afford.

Box 6: Overlap of public and private interests in Balkh's health system

The head of the public health department has about four private hospitals and governmental doctors work in his private hospitals as well. Most of the time, the doctors ask patients to refer to private hospitals like Mawlana Hospital (BK:IDI-53).
 There are lots of doctors at the provincial level, but they do not serve the people heartily. I will just tell you an example. When a patient is referred to the governmental hospital, the doctors don't take care of him or her, but instead refer them to the Mawlana Hospital...The reason is this that Mawlana is the private hospital of the head of the public health department of Balkh Province (BK: IDI-55).
 All the new equipment...the government provides for the governmental clinics, but instead of using them in governmental clinics, our government officials send them to private clinics, and instead they bring similar devices that do not work from China or Pakistan to governmental clinics (BK: IDI-60).
 Yes, most of the doctors have private clinics. They send patients to the private hospitals. The MoPH provides lots of medicine for the public hospital of Mazar, which contains 400 beds. But the patients aren't using these medicines, so no one knows who actually uses them. Let me give another example, suppose you are sick and I take you to the hospital. We are not sure that we would find a doctor. Perhaps, we might find a night shift staff and he will tell you that you should go out of the hospital and take some syrup. Don't they even have one syrup to give? Most of the patients are poor people. If they have enough money and property, so that they won't go to the governmental hospitals, they will refer them to private hospitals (BK: IDI-61).

6.6 Conclusion

In sum, the delivery of education and health services in Balkh Province benefited from a stable secondary settlement, which turned Balkh's strongmen into "stationary bandits" by giving them incentives to think long term, thus addressing their immediate financial needs and removing much of the extreme competitive pressure found in Badghis. The relative security in Balkh that has facilitated social services can also be read as stemming from the PG's monopoly of power. Unlike strongmen in Badghis and Wardak, Atta has accumulated sufficient political, military, and financial power to force a settlement on his rivals. He also used his powerbase to bargain with the centre from a position of strength, aligning Balkh with the primary settlement in Kabul (although not without many trials along the way). Some of the benefits have trickled down to education and health delivery, although not necessarily in a balanced or fair or developmental way. It would therefore be wrong to assume that a stable settlement must necessarily be developmental. As the partners to the secondary settlement were essentially strongmen of various sizes and shapes as well as businessmen, health delivery might have been somewhat more skewed toward ensuring financial benefits for the partners than to the wider population, compared to Wardak, for example. So elite interests and motivations with respect to service delivery matter. The links between Balkh and Kabul appear to be of relatively limited importance in securing performance in service delivery, except when they contribute to keeping the provincial elites aligned with the state administration.

The Balkh provincial elite bargain appears in other words to have been less conducive to certain types of service delivery (for example, the most basic ones like immunisation) than Wardak's more diffuse secondary bargains, centered around grassroots political parties as opposed to strongmen.

7. Summary and Conclusions

The core question at the centre of this study is the extent to which the discrepancies in the delivery of health and education in the three provinces chosen as case studies can be explained by the nature of the political settlements at the provincial and national level. The main discrepancies that emerged in comparing education and health data across the provinces were as follows:

1. Badghis had lower staffing levels despite high demand for education services;
2. Wardak had strong performance in education and then experienced a very sharp drop in attendance rates between 2007-08 and 2011-12;
3. Badghis, starting from a low level, performed much worse than Balkh in terms of education delivery, but better than Wardak against some metrics, e.g., attendance rates;
4. Badghis had much lower level of access to health facilities compared to the other two provinces and compared to education delivery in the same province;
5. Wardak's performance in health delivery was better than Balkh's despite the latter having more resources at its disposal, particularly in basic health delivery (such as immunisation).

The first finding of this study is how, depending on their economic resources and nature of political settlement, provincial powerholders are able to take advantage of the primary settlement (at the national level). A province like Balkh, characterised by a strong secondary settlement around a charismatic and resourceful strongman as well as a flourishing economy, was able to exert considerable influence on Kabul. The PG, Atta Mohammed Noor, has established a powerbase large and important enough to get easy access to Kabul-based ministers and senior civil servants. A province like Badghis, strategically unimportant, economically underdeveloped, and deprived of a provincial-level secondary settlement is unable to lobby Kabul effectively and form strong alliances with actors who are part of the primary elite bargain. Only when strong relations with Kabul are established can the state machinery be effectively leveraged in the interests of provincial powerholders, including in the delivery of health and education.

The case of Wardak is interesting, because it hints at a “third way” between the neglect of provincial powerbrokers that characterises Badghis and the consolidation of provincial control in the hands of a single man as in Balkh. In Wardak, the main provincial-level networks were co-opted through the incorporation of their representatives into Kabul's state machinery, where some of them obtained prestigious appointments. Wardak is thus aligned with the primary settlement, as Balkh is. These networks are better organised than the personal retinues of Badghis' strongmen, and are better able to run the province through their local associates, who are given control over much of the machinery of government at both the provincial and district levels. They were and are, in fact, quasi-political parties, relatively well organised by Afghan standards. As such, they have a corporate interest in the development of the province.

A second finding is that the nature of secondary settlements at the provincial level varies greatly, thus altering their impact on the delivery of services. The powerbrokers of Badghis have never managed to form a durable provincial-level secondary settlement and have thus remained “roving bandits” throughout the post-Taliban era. Their attitude toward service delivery is predatory, and they have no interest in the long-term development of the province, being instead preoccupied by securing funds for the short-term objective of furthering their petty struggles. Health services are particularly targeted, resulting in the province lagging dramatically behind in this field. At the other end of the spectrum, the secondary settlement that has taken shape in Balkh since 2004 has successfully turned Balkh's roving bandits (who depredated the province until 2004) into “stationary bandits.” Reassured over the long-term prospects of their shared control over the province, these stationary bandits pay more attention to the long-term development of the province, realising that there would be returns for them as well. Atta's Kabul leverage does not necessarily mean more state resources per capita being poured into Balkh. What Atta definitely provided was political stability and security, which contributed to economic investment. He invested massively in the province himself, exploiting his position to his own advantage and to that

of his cronies. The net effect was faster development in and around Mazar-i-Sharif than perhaps anywhere else in Afghanistan. The new wealth must inevitably have had positive ramifications: more people from Balkh, for example, could afford private health care, both in Afghanistan and abroad; some wealthy businessmen helped to build schools and clinics, etc. Atta appears to have encouraged donations to the education and health sectors, but these are not an exclusive feature of Balkh, as the interviewees reported similar practices in Wardak, for example. If businessmen donate more in Balkh, it might simply be due to their greater wealth.

The Balkh model brought major private investment, at least at the curative end, into the health sector, but still Balkh performed more poorly than Wardak in basic health service delivery. Wardak is a case study that sits between the other two provinces. The secondary settlement at the provincial level is not inclusive, although its exclusiveness allows provincial and local elites to remain relatively cohesive. Compared to Badghis, the secondary settlement in Wardak requires less rapacious behaviour from the provincial elites, but in the absence of a strong leader to act as a catalyst for collective action and given the lack of a strong provincial actor such as the insurgents, the provincial elites never developed a strong vision of the future and never really turned into stationary bandits as in Balkh. It is the community elders and possibly the grassroots party organisations connected to them who have rescued health service delivery in Wardak: they are sufficiently cohesive and aware of the potential benefits to lobby the provincial elites and keep them on track to deliver. This marks Wardak as an alternative model of service delivery to Balkh's. The long tradition of unhindered NGO activity in Wardak has also helped in laying the ground for effective health services.

The third finding of this study is that sectoral bargains are essential to allow services to function in a conflict area. In all of the three provinces, sectoral bargains came into being to allow the delivery of health and education services even in areas controlled by the insurgency. By and large the Taliban saw it in their interests to respond positively to community demand for services, particularly where they could shape the way services were being delivered, e.g., by increasing the religious content of the the education curriculum. They also benefitted directly from the medical care provided by health facilities. Where these local settlements tended to breakdown was when there was competition between different groups or groups from outside the immediate area became established. Still, there are differences in the character and impact of sectoral elite bargains in the three provinces. In Balkh, their role is more marginal because of the more limited reach of the insurgency in the area. The dominance of a stationary bandit among opponents of the insurgency also represents an obstacle to the negotiations required for these bargains to come into being. In Badghis and Wardak, sectoral elite bargains play a much more important role. The main difference between these two provinces is that in Badghis, the local and provincial elites have been less interested in developing service delivery, instead regarding them as a source of short-term benefits—they may have even colluded with insurgent groups in looting medicines rather than in developing health services. In Wardak, the provincial elites are somewhat more cohesive and therefore more interested in long-term development. The Wardak local elites appear to be more interested in service delivery than those in Badghis for a number of reasons, mostly associated with Wardak's greater exposure to earlier modernisation drive coming out of Kabul.

The role of local elites such as community elders is not always virtuous from a developmental perspective. For example, in Wardak, elders are not interested in girls' education and do not lobby for it, resulting in poor outcomes when it comes to girls' attendance rates at school.

As sectoral elite bargains are formed among actors and their interests, they tend to be negotiated piecemeal and locally, usually leaving pockets of vacuum where indiscriminate violence might impede service delivery altogether. Sectoral bargains might protect certain assets from violence, but not eliminate violence as such. As a result, health and education staff is unlikely to volunteer in large numbers to serve in violent areas, leading to the poor quality of the service delivery, even in the presence of quite stable sectoral bargains. Another difficulty of the sectoral bargains in the study sites is the role of mobile insurgent teams, usually deploying during the fighting season from neighboring countries. These groups are not linked to a particular community and usually do not stay long enough to establish smooth communication channels with local elders. They

therefore might not feel bound to any sectoral elite bargain and are indeed sometimes reported to be a disruptive force. Finally, sectoral bargains might have facilitated service delivery, but at a price. In the case of health, this involves sharing health assets with the Taliban, a concession that, at the very least, does not negatively affect delivery to the rest of the population. In the case of education, however, the dramatic expansion in hours dedicated to religious subjects is likely to damage the overall quality of education.

A fourth finding is that the alignment of primary, secondary, and sectoral bargains (such as in Balkh province) is very likely to lead to a virtuous cycle, including for service delivery. Unfortunately, this also means that provinces better positioned politically, economically, and strategically end up being even more privileged. At the bottom of the scale of virtue are those provinces where the three types of settlements are all misaligned, as in the case of Badghis.

In Wardak, too, the settlements and the elite bargains are aligned at the three levels, although the mechanism leading to this alignment differs from Balkh's. It is not the powerbase of a single strongman who convinces the Kabul elites to link up, but rather the connections of Wardak's political networks and parties with the national leaderships of the same organisations, not to mention the proximity of the province to the centre.

Although the number of case studies used for this study is limited, the Atta-dominated environment in Balkh appears to have been conducive to faster economic development than the fragmented environment of Badghis and the political party-dominated Wardak. As Atta has long-term plans and has invested so much in Balkh both politically and financially, he has an interest in ensuring a modicum of service delivery and containing (but not eliminating) the corruption that affects it. He and his business partners also have sufficient resources not to have to rely on state resources to the same extent as smaller and less resourceful actors do. In an environment characterised by a multitude of small and not very resourceful actors like Badghis, more predatory attitudes are inevitable. While Atta has excelled in accumulation and reinvestment, in Wardak, the party networks beat Atta in their ability to manage health service delivery because of their greater grassroots presence.

This study cannot conclusively explain the differences in the performance of each sector in each province given the poor and limited statistical data available, which inhibits longitudinal comparisons. In particular, Wardak's performance in the health sector compared to Balkh is startling, and it cannot just be explained by the state and history of political settlements in the two provinces. An explanation may be found in Wardak's historical advantage, exemplified by the primary elites' interest in education, dating back to before the long period of wars starting in 1978. However, the present study cannot confirm this. Charting the long-term impact and consequences of opening one particular area to service delivery might be worth another research effort, as the case of Badghis seems to imply that resistance to service delivery is strongest when the local population has never experienced it on a large scale before. Once again, valid and reliable quantitative figures on performance are critical to track these longer term changes.

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix A: Tabular presentation of national figures for selected education and health indicators

Appendix A Table 1: Selected education indicators

Indicator	2007-08	2012-13
Adult literacy rate (15+ years) (%)	25	31.4
Adult female literacy rate (15+ years) (%)	11.4	17
Government general education student to teacher ratio	38	44

Source: Central Statistics Organisation, “Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2008-09” (Kabul: Central Statistics Organisation, 2009); Central Statistics Organisation, “Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2012-13

Appendix A Table 2: Selected health indicators

Indicator	2004	2005	2008	2012
Access to skilled antenatal care (%)	14.4		36.7	51
Proportion of births attended by a skilled attendant (%)			25	40
No. of polio vaccinations for children aged 12-23 months		2,096		31,982,631
Birth deliveries in a health facility (%)	11.1			36

Note: Central Statistics Organisation, “Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2008-09” (Kabul: Central Statistics Organisation, 2009); Central Statistics Organisation, “Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2012-13.”

8.2 Appendix B: Comparison of selected education and health indicators for the three study sites

Appendix B Table 1: Education indicators

No	Indicators	2004	2005	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1	No. of primary education students	Wardak: 74987 Balkh: 274607 Badghis: 80270 National: 4780438	Wardak: 88820 Balkh: 268084 Badghis: 45263 National: 4282921	Wardak: 89819 Balkh: 297928 Badghis: 61057 National: 4669110	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: 96696 Balkh: 285633 Badghis: 73548 National: 4800210	Wardak: 94108 Balkh: 258747 Badghis: 83645	Wardak: 115010 Balkh: 295562 Badghis: 102823 National: 5422348	Wardak: 116643 Balkh: 338872 Badghis: 103068 National: 6118138
2	No. of primary education students, female (%)	Wardak: 11.09 Balkh: 39.94 Badghis: 15.15 National: 24	Wardak: 23.84 Balkh: 42.38 Badghis: 19.58 National: 35.78	Wardak: 27.64 Balkh: 42.48 Badghis: 26.44 National: 37.23	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: 30.56 Balkh: 42.63 Badghis: 26.77 National: 38.7	Wardak: 29.17 Balkh: 41.4 Badghis: 26.66	Wardak: 37.25 Balkh: 44.14 Badghis: 27.78 National: 41.31	Wardak: 32.43 Balkh: 43.8 Badghis: 26.19 National: 40.5
3	No. of primary education teachers	Wardak: 1524 Balkh: 2832 Badghis: 1021 National: 67978	Wardak: no data Balkh: no data Badghis: no data National: no data	Wardak: no data Balkh: no data Badghis: no data National: no data	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: 814 Balkh: 1037 Badghis: 890	Wardak: 1416 Balkh: 1503 Badghis: 1213 National: 48921	Wardak: no data Balkh: no data Badghis: No data National: No data
4	No. of primary education teachers, female (%)	Wardak: 6.56 Balkh: 26.15 Badghis: 8.91 National: 21.98	Wardak: 31 Balkh: 58 Badghis: 19 National: no data	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: 7.62 Balkh: 24.59 Badghis: 10.67	Wardak: 17.51 Balkh: 26.02 Badghis: 10.96 National: 17.43	Wardak: no data Balkh: no data Badghis: No data National: No data
5	Overall netenrolment rate (6-13 years)	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:
6	Adult literacy rate (15+ years)	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: 69.3 Balkh: 73.2 Badghis: 86.8 National: no data	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: 42.4 Balkh: 37.8 Badghis: 16.9 National: 31.4
7	Adult female literacy rate (15+ years)	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: 91.1 Balkh: 88.2 Badghis: 98.3 National: no data	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: Balkh: Badghis: National:	Wardak: 10.8 Balkh: 26.8 Badghis: 5 National: 17

2012	Wardak	75.6	80.9	33.19		34
	Balkh	49.4	84.28	44.88		44
	Badghis	29.3	88.71	64.96		66
	National	45.4				44
2011	Wardak					33
	Balkh					45
	Badghis					58
	National					44
2010	Wardak		78.28	32.87		
	Balkh		84.28	44.56		
	Badghis		88.71	58.25		
2009	Wardak		91.96	32.51	0.69	39
	Balkh		82.33	40.44	0.86	37
	Badghis		85.31	52.02	0.71	55
	National				0.69	39
2008	Wardak	no data				35
	Balkh	no data				36
	Badghis	No data				55
	National					38
2007	Wardak					38
	Balkh					34
	Badghis					44
	National					39
2005	Wardak	46.1				
	Balkh	58				
	Badghis	76.2				
	National					
2004	Wardak					
	Balkh					
	Badghis					
	National					
	Indicators	Adult male literacy rate (15+ years)	Provincial attendance rates	Student-teacher ratio (%)	Girls to boys enrolment ratio (age 6-12 years)	Government general education student-teacher ratio
No	8	9	10	11	12	

No	Indicators							
1	Access to skilled antenatal care (%)							
2	Women receiving at least 2 doses of TT (%)							
3	Births attended by skilled attendants (%)							
4	Polio vaccination (children aged 12-23 months; 3+ doses)							
5	Immunisation for diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus (DPT) (children aged 12-23 months; 3+ doses)							
6	Delivery in health facility (%)							
		2008						
		Wardak	72		74	1.73	0.5	72
		Balkh	87		49	4.99	0.382	39
		Badghis	14		Unreliable data	1.81	0.308	Unreliable
		National	51		40	31982631		36
		2007						
		Wardak				1.83		
		Balkh				5.08		
		Badghis				1.91		
		National				29700066		
		2005						
		Wardak				1.52		
		Balkh				4.09		
		Badghis				1.86		
		National				28274874		
		2004						
		Wardak						
		Balkh						
		Badghis						
		National						

8.3 Appendix C: Selection criteria and the respective attributes of the province

Group 1	MoPH's SHARP/BPHS and MoE's EQUIP implemented in an area characterised by:	O ₁ SHARP/BPHS O ₂ EQUIP
WARDAK (Central)	High level of insecurity; Strong health and education sector (public institutions); Highest employment-population rate among the three provinces (65.8%) and unemployment rate second to Badghis (6.8%) in 2012; High poverty rate as compared to both provinces.	
Group 2		O ₃ SHARP/BPHS O ₄ EQUIP
BALKH (North)	Deteriorating security condition; Strong health and education sector (public institutions) as compared to Wardak and Badghis; Employment-population rate and unemployment is lowest among the three provinces; Lowest poverty rate among the three provinces	
Group 3		O ₅ SHARP/BPHS O ₆ EQUIP
BADGHIS (West)^{3*}	Moderate insecurity; Weak education and health sector (public institutions) as compared to Wardak and Balkh Second to Wardak in its employment-population rate but highest unemployment rate among the three provinces; Second to Wardak in terms of poverty rate.	

*The study used four criteria to select the study areas: a) security condition; b) status of public institutions, particularly education and health; c) economic profile; d) poverty rate. Badghis was proposed as the third province in the study. Considered as medium-risk province in the EQUIP Semi-Annual Report from January to June 2013, the province has different conditions compared to the original provinces, Balkh and Wardak. The inclusion of Badghis Province as the third study site, instead of another insecure province, aims to provide a more comprehensive picture on education and health service delivery.

8.4 Appendix D: Number of MoE and MoPH employees

	2003	2004	2005	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Government employees by ministries									
Total no. of employees	260,539	276,344	295,169	307,288	329,911	328,977	333,260	362,276	382,076
Ministry of Education (%)	58	57	60	62	62	62	61	64	66
Ministry of Health (%)	7	7	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

Source: Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook.

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Feb 2015	Politics and governance in Afghanistan: the case of Nangarhar province	Ashley Jackson	✓	✓	Sustainable Livelihoods	Policy Note
Feb 2015	Labour markets, social inequality and the tailors of Kabul	Adam Pain & Richard Mallet	✓	✓	Sustainable Livelihoods	Policy Note
Feb 2015	The social life of the onion: the informal regulation of the onion market in Nangarhar, Afghanistan,	Giulia Minoia & Adam Pain	✓	✓	Sustainable Livelihoods	Policy Note
Nov 2014	The Dilemma of Women and Leadership in Afghanistan: Lessons and Recommendations	Aarya Nijat	✓	✓	Gender	Policy Note
Dec 2014	Why do children undertake the unaccompanied journey?	Chona Echavez	✓	✓	Social Protection	Issues Paper
Sep 2014	Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium Afghanistan Research Programme	Chona Echavez			Sustainable Livelihoods	Policy Note
Sep 2014	Gender, youth, and urban labour market participation: evidence from the tailoring sector in Kabul, Afghanistan	Adam Pain & Richard Mallet			Sustainable Livelihoods	Working Paper
Nov 2014	An Overview of Citizen’s Fundamental Rights: Opportunities and Challenges,	Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta	✓	✓	Governance	Case Study
Aug 2014	Afghanistan’s Constitution Ten Years On: What Are the Issues?	Dr. Mohammad Hashim Kamali	✓	✓	Governance	Issues Paper
Aug 2014	The state of electoral dispute mechanisms in Afghanistan	Aruni Jayakody	✓	✓	Governance	Policy Note
Aug 2014	Despair or Hope? Opium Poppy Cultivation in post-2014 Afghanistan	Paul Fishstein & David Mansfield	✓	✓	Natural Resources	Policy Note
June 2014	Politics and Governance in Afghanistan: the Case of Nangarhar Province,	Ashley Jackson	✓	✓	Sustainable Livelihoods	Case Study



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