

ACSFO: A Commitment for Justice, Citizen building and Nation building!



# Kunduz after Taliban

A Research for the HRDs and CSAs

Advocacy and Research Team

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10/20/2016

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## OBSTRACT

ACSFo conducted a research on HRD from 20 Feb -19 March 2016 in Kunduz province. This research aimed to collect data on the level of damage that the war and looting had created (on the fall of the city on 28 September 2015) in terms of human and resources in the city and what measures are required to restart normally.

During Kunduz fall, 97% of human rights defenders faced psychologically and materially damages. Within the 97% personal damages were 35% and property or house damages were 16%, theft of living property 33% and theft of organizational property 16%.

The community members' distrust on national security forces was 62% consisting of main factors such as weak leadership and management of security forces in Afghanistan.

The findings show a huge gap between citizens and government in Kunduz province. The key reasons for gap were corruption (12%), poor rule of law (12%), poor government service delivery (6%) and the oppression of illegal gunmen (61%).

In this research, the Kunduz HRDs suggestion on building trust between the community and government covers:

- 6%: Fight against corruption
- 20 %: Prioritize rule of law
- 25%: Improve the government services delivery
- 20: %: Dissolve the Afghan local police (ALP)
- 29%: Disarm illegal gunmen

The HRDs needs on the normal restart of the work included the internet as the first priority, chair and desk, computer, sessional clothes and rebuilding home and clean water were other as the other priorities in Kunduz.

The main lessons learnt from Kunduz fall were concluded as:

- The HRDs are more vulnerable in such security situations and they were targeted by Taliban and gunmen.
- There is no protection strategy for HRDs that has been recognized by the government or agreed among the CS activists and HRDs themselves.
- There has been no real coordination between Kunduz local government and HRDs.
- A regional strong network for HRDs and an emergency evacuation plan is missing

## ACRONYMS

ACSFo	Afghan Civil Society Forum-organization
AIHRC	Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANDS	Afghan National Directorate of Security
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
CSA	Civil Society Activist
CSAs	Civil Society Activists
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
GO	Governor Office
HRDs	Human Rights defenders
NWCs	Neighborhood Watch Committees
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NUG	National Unity Government
SCs	Steering Committees

## INTRODUCTION

Afghan Civil Society Forum-organization (ACSFo) having worked for a decade in Kunduz, was seriously lost in the catastrophe of the city fall into the hands of Taliban. The organization had been engaged in Kunduz for a decade and for the last five years worked with police under the community policing program. Through this project, ACSFo had access to almost every single district of the province with a number of active Neighborhood Watch Committees (NWCs) and the Steering Committees (SCs) around the province. None of the staff had even guessed such a catastrophic fall. The Board of Directors, Management and the Kunduz beneficiaries of the organization tasked the research team<sup>1</sup> strongly recommended convening a research that could lead us to an understanding and analysis of the situation, reasons for the fall, assessing the CSOs and HRDs status during and after fall, what are their needs; and provide recommendations for HRDs in the future.

In addition, this decision was made to understand what the public think of the process, how they perceive it and what the needs and the recommendations are? The initial data collection for the research started in a time that the city was recaptured by the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). However, most of the people still believed that the city may fall back to the hands of Taliban. Thus, the research was not focused on the past reasons and causes but also a broader future set of recommendations on how to secure and stabilize the city (or perhaps the region) in the future.

This research was also undertaken to help the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), the activists, the government and other stakeholder in the critical moments of such.

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The numerator for data collections included Mr. Abdullah Zarifi, Mr. Wais, Mr. Yasin and Mrs. Palwasha Safi.

## SUMMARY OF RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

### THE ANALYSIS

Kunduz<sup>2</sup> the Capital of Northeastern region of the country collapsed on 28 September 2015. In eight hours, starting from 2:00 AM on 28 September, the city changed to a graveyard. City inhabitants fled the city massively, without caring of their properties. The city created a traumatic picture of terror and torture and the normal social status changed to a war one. The shops did not open at the morning, the economy and bazaar was closed and the citizens' fear went up. Most of the civil society activists got into a traumatic status and addition to losing their jobs and properties both in the office as well as at homes.

The unexpected fall of the city, made the city inhabitants' not only homeless but also hopeless of their future after fourteen years of investment for peace, reconstruction and stabilization. Witnesses confirm that during Taliban's control of the city house to house searches were repeatedly occurred over several days. Taliban initially were looking for government (particularly military) officials and public servants. They have also looted the UN, AIHRC and high profile civil society (CSOs and NGOs) offices, immediately. On the second day of capturing the city, Taliban targeted the civil society activists and human rights defenders by killing them (or their relatives), destroying and robbing their houses and organization properties as well as threatening their families. Based on the field reports, most of the human rights defenders and civil society activists left Kunduz right at the beginning of the Taliban control, but their organizations and houses were robbed by Taliban or local thieves in Kunduz province. Some who were not able to leave the city, they were shifted to their close relatives or friends houses as it was propagated that the Taliban has a list of all the HRDs and CSOs in hand.

People lost trust towards the government and did not come back to their business even after the Taliban were kicked out of the city. Still the fear of the city being recaptured by the Taliban was there.

### THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings clearly show that the absence of coordination among the security entities have been the main reason of fall. In addition, the poor leadership and management of the provincial governor office were the other reasons of the fall. Logistical support to the ANSF and loose leadership caused the city to remain in the hands of Taliban for a longer period. Poor and almost lack of services in good governance and rule of law were indicated as the main reasons from citizens' perspective. Corruption, nepotism, irresponsible gunmen, local police and militia, ethnic discrimination, prejudice, pro-Taliban ethnic support and the contrast between the Palace and the Sapidar were mentioned as fueling factors in the collapse of the city.

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<sup>2</sup> The research started with a quantitative random data collection on the 20 February 2016, initially. The interviewees included the victims and witnesses of the event. Later on a qualitative data was also added with a huge number of quality discussions with the field staff and witnesses/observers of the city collapse including the civil society activists, HRDs, media and the inhabitants of Kunduz.

The Kunduz fall has shown that the human rights defenders are more vulnerable than the government in such circumstances. Lack of a proper Protection Strategy and Early Warning System for human rights defenders were mentioned in all meetings. Lack of a poor coordination between Kunduz local government and HRDs have been one of the main reasons for the aftermath security incidents to the HRDs and CS activists.

## DAMAGES AND LOSS

The research shows clearly both the battle and looting has caused huge damages to the personal and public properties of citizens, the HRDs and the CSAs (including CSOs and NGOs). However, the limit and amount of damage were dependent to the location, profile, presence and work of the individuals as well as organizations.

It was clear that only a few and very limited organizations were not looted. Most of the lootings have happened right after the capture of the city but the reports also show that some of the properties were looted during the fighting days and during night time by all war parties. Most of the looting in the second week of the war have taken place by the local police and irresponsible gunmen.

## LESSONS LEARNT

- The security situation in Kunduz is unstable and there is a risk of the city falling back into the hands of Taliban.
- The Kunduz security departments are suffering from controversial leadership, poor coordination and management; and weak timely logistics/equipment of security forces from head quarter (or Kabul).
- The Kunduz fall has shown that the HRDs and CSAs are more vulnerable and they could be targeted by the Taliban and the irresponsible gunmen easily.
- The government and CSOs don't have any pre-approved or pre-agreed protection strategy for human rights defenders.
- There is no emergency security and evacuation plan at the government or non-government level for HRDs and CSAs.
- There are poor coordination and cooperation between Kunduz local government and HRDs.
- There is no networking and information sharing mechanism among the HRDs and CSAs at the provincial and regional level.

## THE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

- The CS and HRDs should more engage in good governance and rule of law programs monitoring, lobby and advocacy in the future.
- The HRDs and the CSAs need to create a strong coordination mechanism and information sharing system among themselves both the provincial and regional level.

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- The mechanism needs to be linked by the HRD Committee in Kabul with other regions at the national level not only for dealing in the emergency situations but also for communication, advocacy, collation building and better protection.
- The HRDs at the provincial level need to develop their own protection strategy for both normal and emergency situations.
- The CS and HRDs should design and agree with the political leadership of the province on a comprehensive protection strategy for CSAs and HRDs in case of facing emergency security situation.
- The Kunduz HRDs should create a network between themselves in order to support each other in the emergency situations in the best possible way on the ground.
- The relation between government and HRDs should be strengthened in order to better protect the HRDs in the emergency security situations.
- The gaps between government and local community should be fulfilled through coping strategies against corruption, rule of law, improving government service delivery, dissolving the local police form and disarming illegal gunmen in Kunduz province.
- A proper coordination and communication mechanism between HRDs, CSAs and the media should be created. This mechanism needs to come under an MOU that should be signed by all parties to get enacted and practiced.
- An emergency support mechanism by the government and donors, with the support of HRDs and SCAs, should be agreed in order to avoid the huge IDP move and migrations inside or outside the country.
- The Kunduz, and the broader region of north and north east, CSAs and HRDs should create a network between themselves in order to support each other in the emergency situations.
- Both government and the CSAs with HRDs should join hands together to shrunken the gap between government and local community.
- A comprehensive localized strategy to fight against corruption, nepotism, ethnicization and discrimination should be developed and implemented.
- Rule of law, improving government service delivery, cancelling the local police form and disarming illegal gunmen in Kunduz province should remain the priorities.
- The city needs to revive and restart immediately. We believed a research on Kunduz inhabitants on their needs and requirements is needed. This research is done within the urban districts to provide some baseline information and data on damage and casualties.



## AIM, METHODOLOGY AND BREAKDOWN

### GOAL

To collect data on the level of damage that the war and looting have created in terms of human and resources in the city and what measures are required to restart normally.

### OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the damages occurred on CS and human rights defenders organizations' and houses'.
2. To find the human rights defenders needs including repairing of their organizations, houses and required items for them.
3. To find the correct measure and factors for a close cooperation between the HRDs, CSOs and the government.
4. To see what is needed to get back to a normal situation.
5. To find out what happened to women activists during the war and the house to house search.
6. To see what lessons can be learnt for any similar situation in the future.
7. To see if we can find reasons for the fall of the city

### METHODOLOGY

This research is the result of interview with 488 people including 61 human rights defenders; and 427 public and government employees in Kunduz city.

In term of methodology two questionnaires were used to collect needed data for research analysis; a specific one for the CS activists and HRDs and another for public views and opinions.

The sampling method was based on multi stage probability method. Choosing samples was random which provided equal opportunity for local community to be engaged in this research study.

The qualitative part was covered in Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) with all the stakeholder in different sessions. FDGs were taken place both in Kunduz but also in Balkh and Kabul with IDPs. Members of HRDs, CS activists and citizens were included in the FDGs.

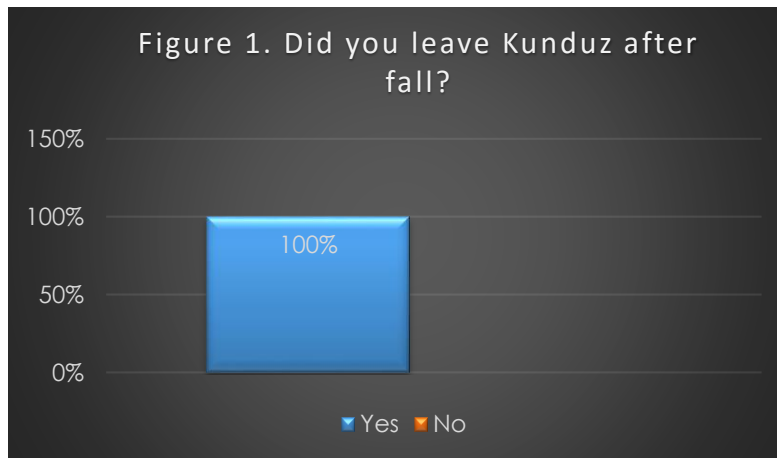
### BREAK DOWN OF INTERVIEWEES

Male/Female Ratio	80% Male 20% Female
Age of the respondents	8 % 18-25 25 % 26-35 51 % 36-45 16 % 46-55
Marital status of the respondents	8 % Single 87 % Married 5 % Engaged
Education	10 % Graduate of high school 90 % Bachelor
Occupation	29% Government employee 19% Human rights defenders'/CS activists 46% Ordinary People 1% Malik/Mullah/Shura member 5% House wife

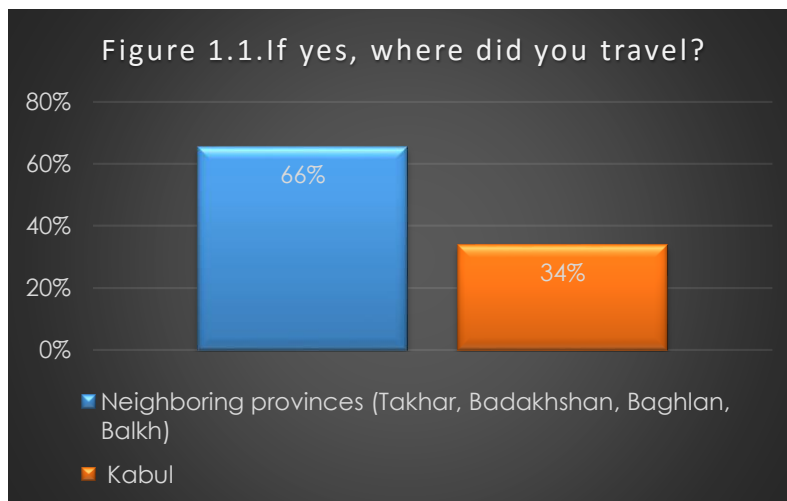
## KUNDUZ RESEARCH MAIN FINDINGS

1. With the question of "did you leave kunduz after the fall of the city?" from the HRDs; the correspondences show 100% agreed statistics. Every HRD and CSA left the city after it fell into the hands of Taliban. (figure 1)

Almost every single interviewee was reasoning that they left because they believed that the Taliban might have killed us. This reason was stressed during the FGDs by the HRDs.

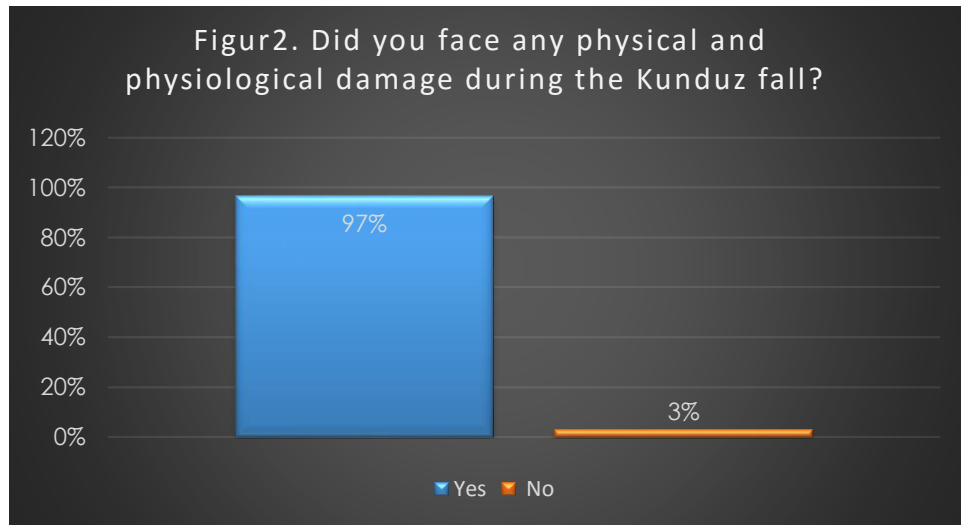


Based on this research finding, after the fall of the city, 66% human rights defenders left Kunduz city toward neighboring provinces (Takhar, Badakhshan, Baghlan and Balkh). The rest 34% of them moved from Kunduz city to Kabul city (figure 1.1). The indicator describes that the human rights defenders could not trust the Taliban at all and could never felt to stay in Kunduz city.

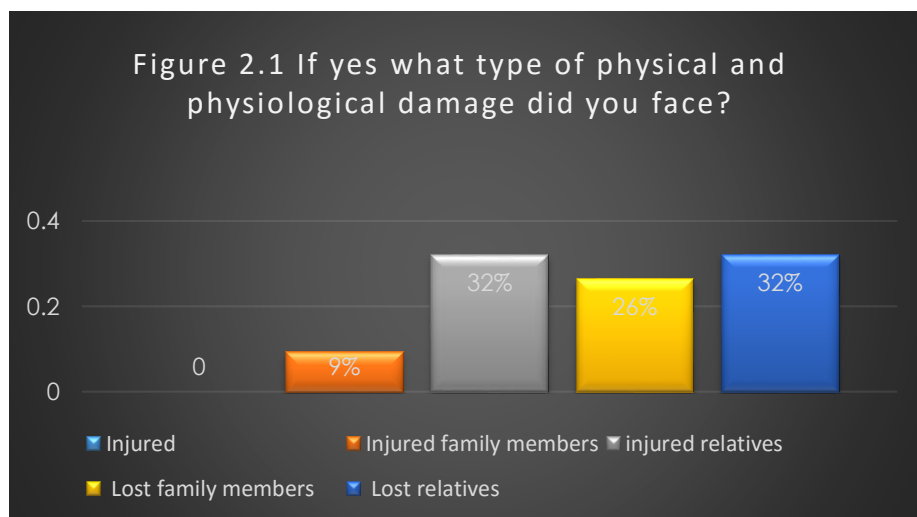


2. Kunduz fall astonished both Afghans people and the international community. Beside so many life losses it also created physical and physiological damage to

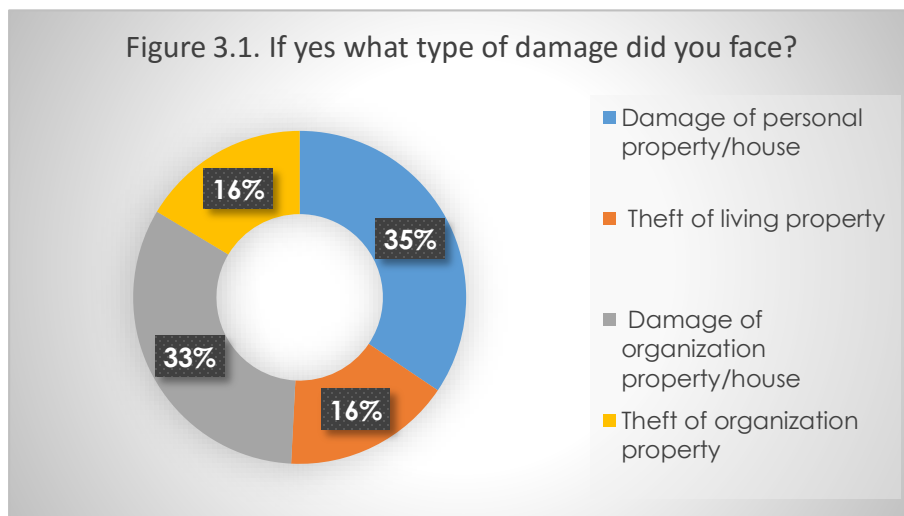
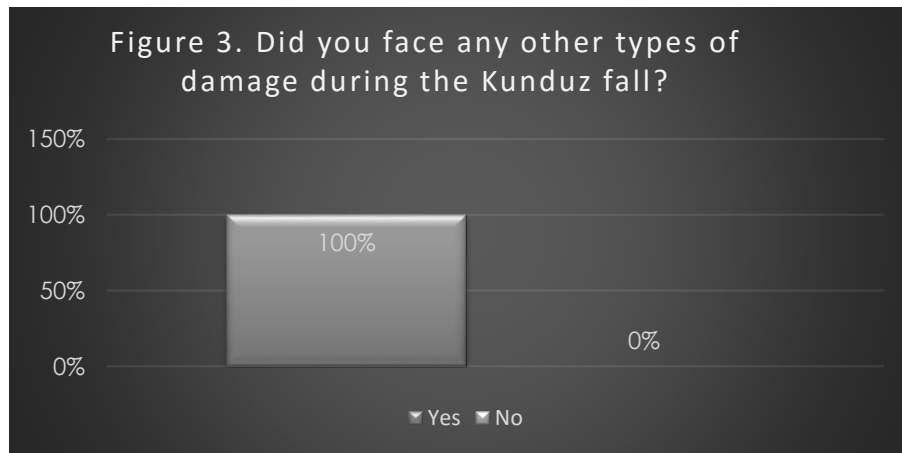
Kunduz citizens especially to human rights defenders. The interviewees responses concluded with (97%) of damages either materially or psychologically. (Figure 2)



With the question on the type of damages, we found it difficult to sometimes even measure it properly. Based on responses (HRDs), we have found; 9 % of human rights defenders' family members were injured, 32% of human rights defenders' relatives were injured, 26 % of human rights defenders lost their family members and 32 % of human rights defenders relatives lost their lives- figure 2.1. The figures were not even guessed before. The damages were so huge that can clearly show the depth of the psychological damage to the HRDs after the Kunduz fall.



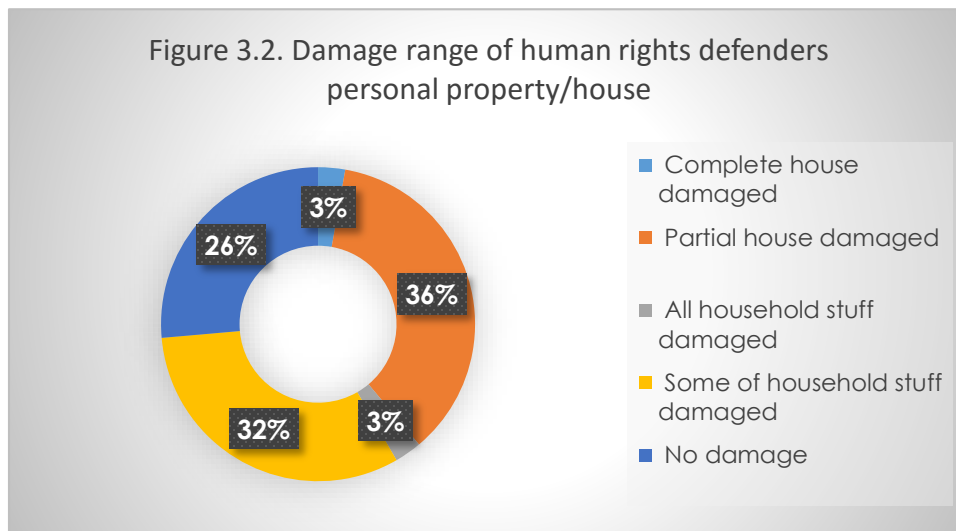
3. In addition to the losses above, the Kunduz human rights defenders were faced other materially losses as well. Their personal property/house were damaged; 35%, 16 % theft (looted) of living property, 33 % damage of organization property/building and 16 % theft of organization property – (figure 3, figure 3.1). The figures show that the losses were so huge that none of the HRDs and the CSOs were able to immediately start their work right after the Taliban were pushed back from the city. In addition, the FGDs clearly show that even after the push back of the Taliban from the city people did not have a full trust to come back and restart the work, as there were propagandas that the Taliban might come back soon. The figures also show that the big non-human loss obstructed HRDs to run their work normally in Kunduz province after ANSF recapturing the city.



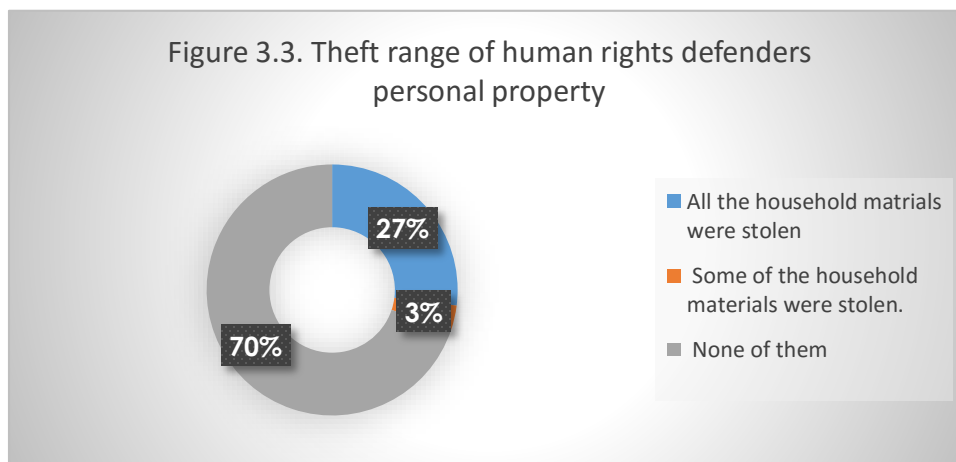
4. Personal property losses to human rights defenders:

Following the result of 35 % HRDs personal property/house damaged, we opened a new question to find the scale of damage to the properties.

The result for the question of damage and theft range were: 3 % houses are completely damaged, 36% houses are partially damaged, 3% all houses facilities are damaged, 32% some of house equipment damaged and 26% of human defenders' houses did not face any damages- figure 3.2.



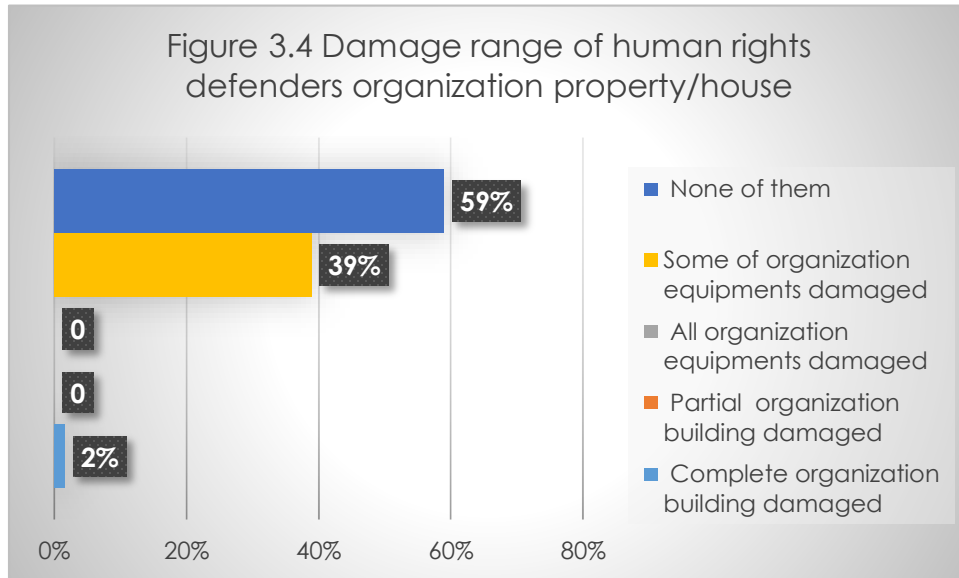
The in-depth analysis of the figures shows that from (35%) in Figure 3.1; 27 % of them told that all their house equipment was stolen after they left their houses, 3 % of them expressed that some of their house equipment were stolen and 70 % of them expressed them that none of their house equipment were stolen- figure 3.3.



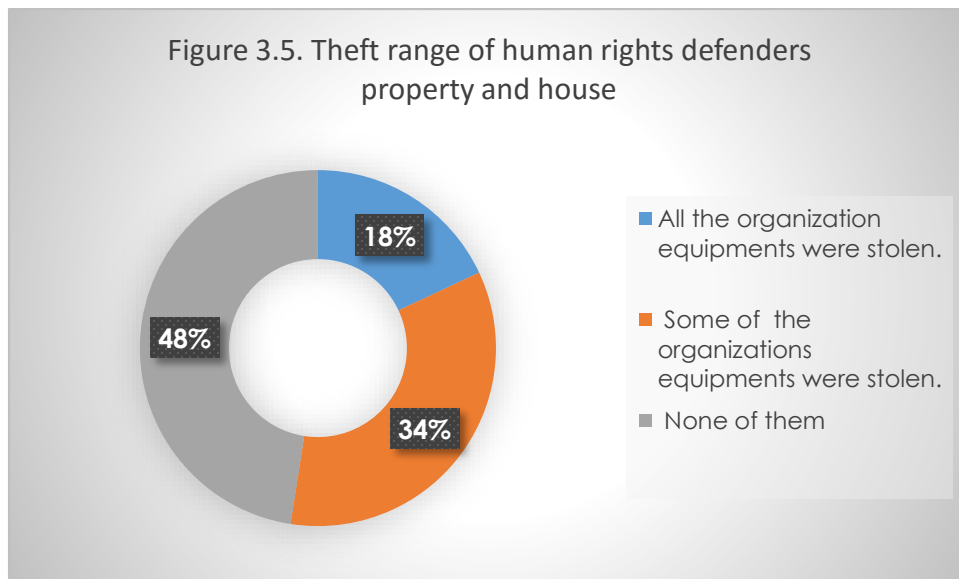
##### 5. Organization losses to human rights defenders:

While Kunduz was fallen by Taliban, the human rights defenders' organizations were also exposed to loot and theft as well as damage. Based on this research, 39% of human rights defenders stated that some of the organizations equipment were damaged. 59% of

human rights defenders expressed that none of their organization equipment were damaged- figure 3.4, and figure 3.5.

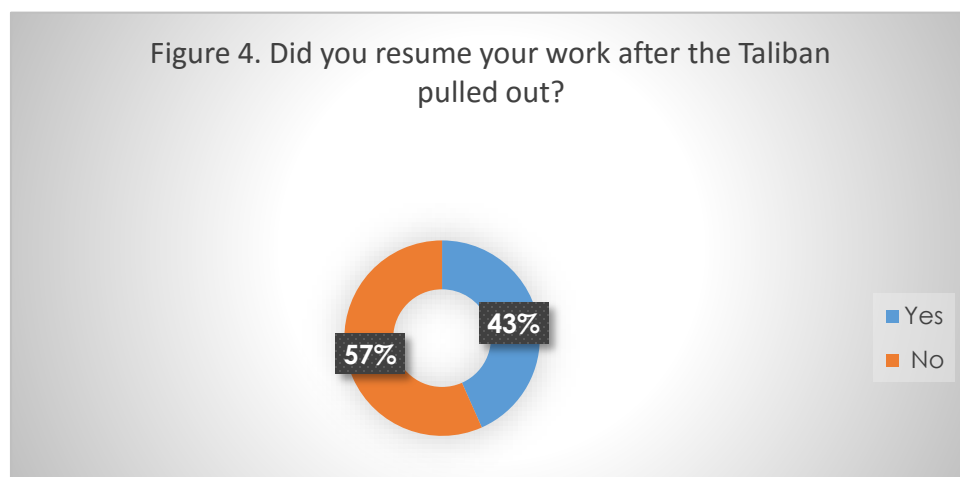


The delay in the city recapture by the ANSF was the main reason of a slow looting by thief in a city with no guards and police. Reportedly the gunmen and the neighbors were involved in looting the house in a duration of a week or so. Most of the houses were searched for food and supplies as the shops remained close for days and then weeks.

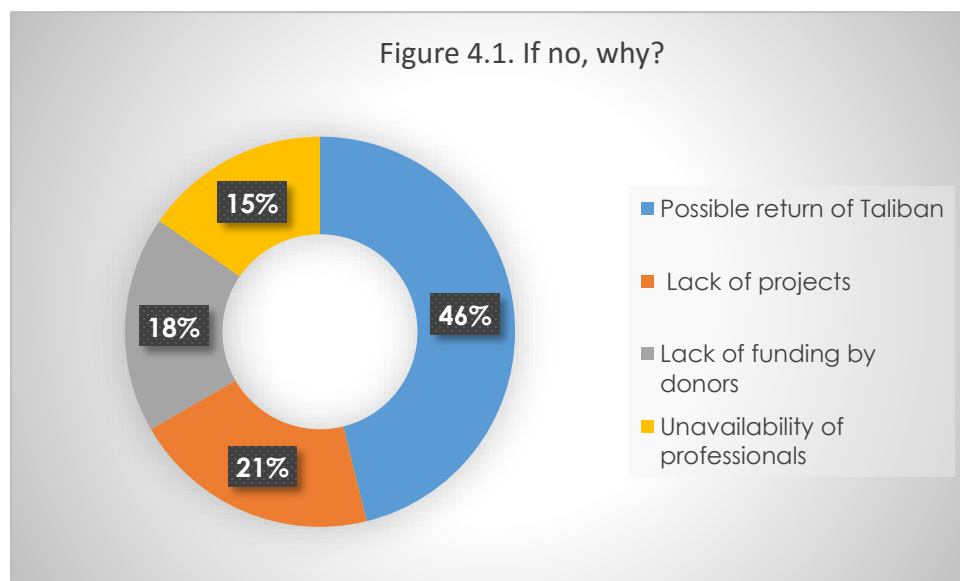


6. Though the Afghan government forces recaptured Kunduz city after a while, but still some of human rights defenders did not resume their work. When we asked the HRDs when they have resumed the work; 43% of them stated that they resumed

their work; however, 57% of them stated that they did not resume their work after the ANSF rescued Kunduz- figure 4.



7. While the HRDs were asked why they didn't resume their work right after the city was recaptured, the interviewees stated; fear of Taliban return (46%), disconnection from project routine work (21%), unclear status of fund release by donors (18%) and lack of professional staffs (15 %) - Figure 4.1.

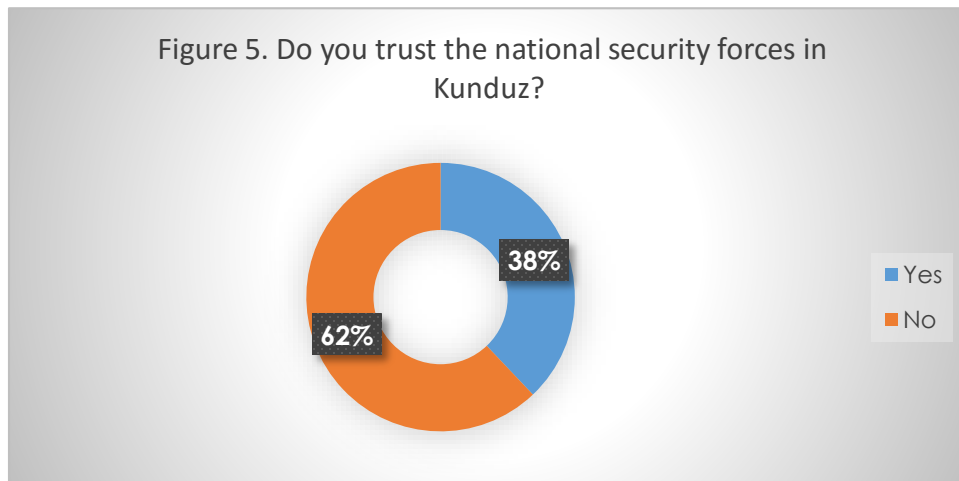


This research (particularly the FDGs) shows a huge gap of trust between human rights defenders and the government. The fear of Taliban coming back, the ethnic divisions and the distrust among the provincial leaders were also identified as reasons of distrust and chaos.

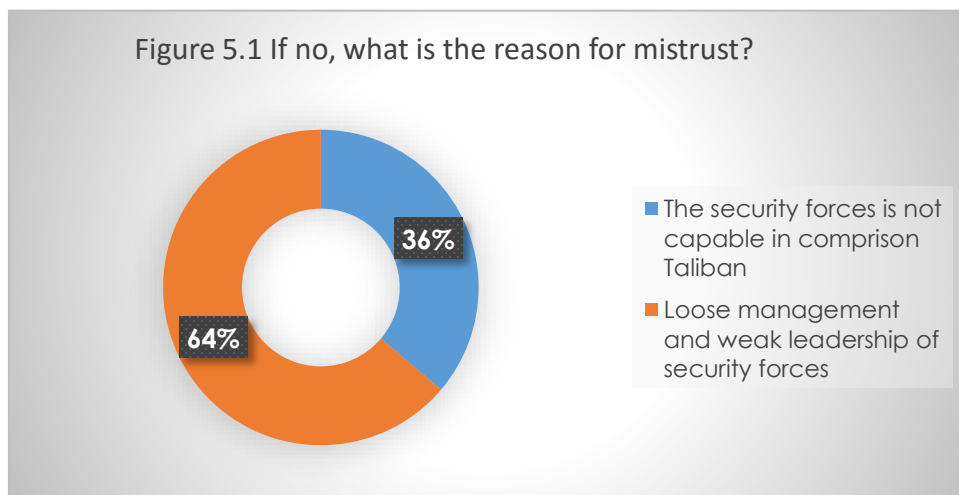
During the FDGs, the participants also stated that even the donors had lost the trust and some could not give us a better advice on how to proceed and what

would be the finding status as the banks were close and no financial resources were available on the ground. Another reason important reason for the delay in the work start was absence of professional staff. Most of the professional and prominent staff left the province and could not dare to come as they were very well known to public and Taliban. Their lives were more in danger and could not feel safe.

8. We did also measure the level of trust both quantitatively and qualitatively. In the interviewee responses, 38 % of HRDs did trust the national security forces; however, 62% did not – Figure 5.

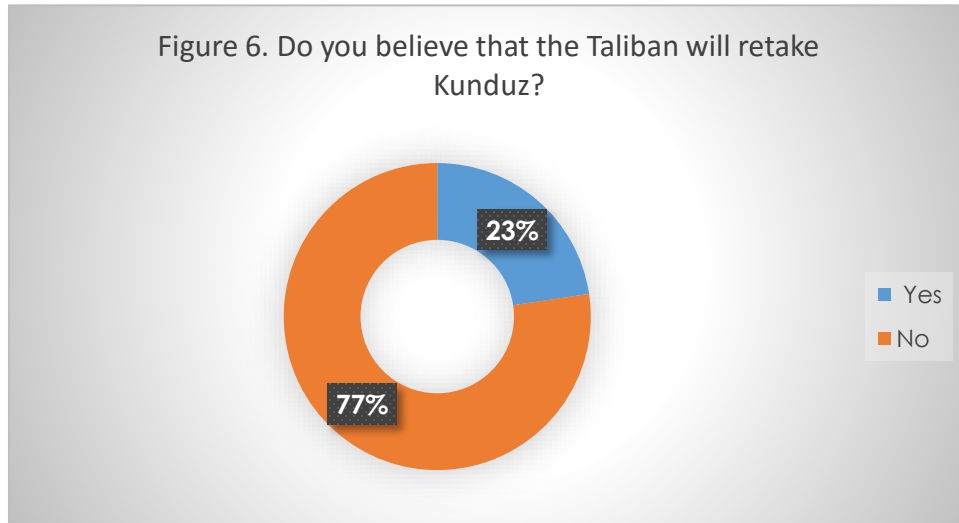


In another question from those who trusted (38%) the ANSF it was showing that 36 % of interviewees think the ability of security forces in comparison of Taliban is weak; however, 64% interviewees believe weak management and leadership of security forces may fall down the Kunduz city to the hand of Taliban again– Figure 5.1. These findings describe that there is a huge gap between government and human rights defenders and it requires to fulfil by the government.

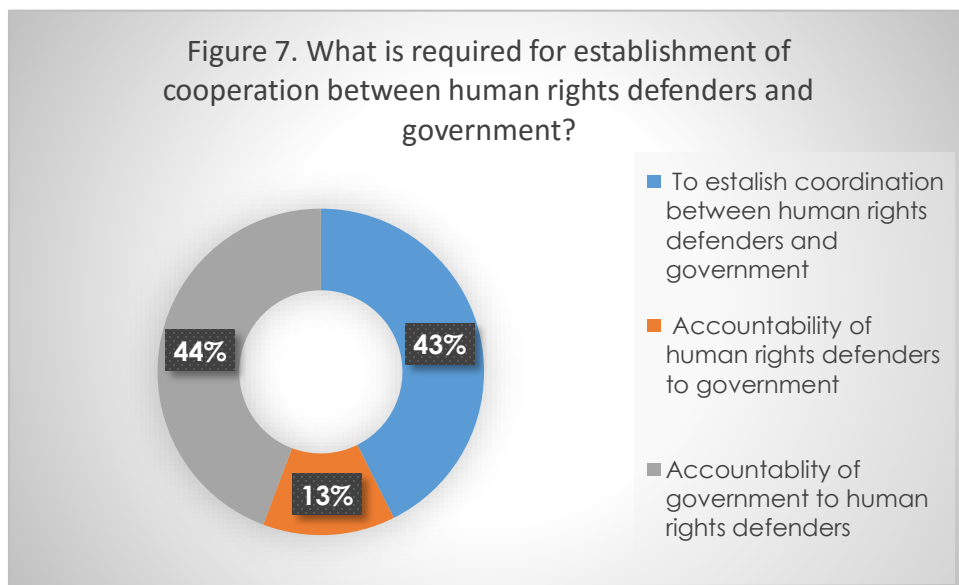




9. Though the majority of human rights defenders don't trust on national security forces, but 77% of them believe that Taliban will not retake the Kunduz city – Figure 6. This finding expresses the opportunities of trust building between government and human rights defenders.

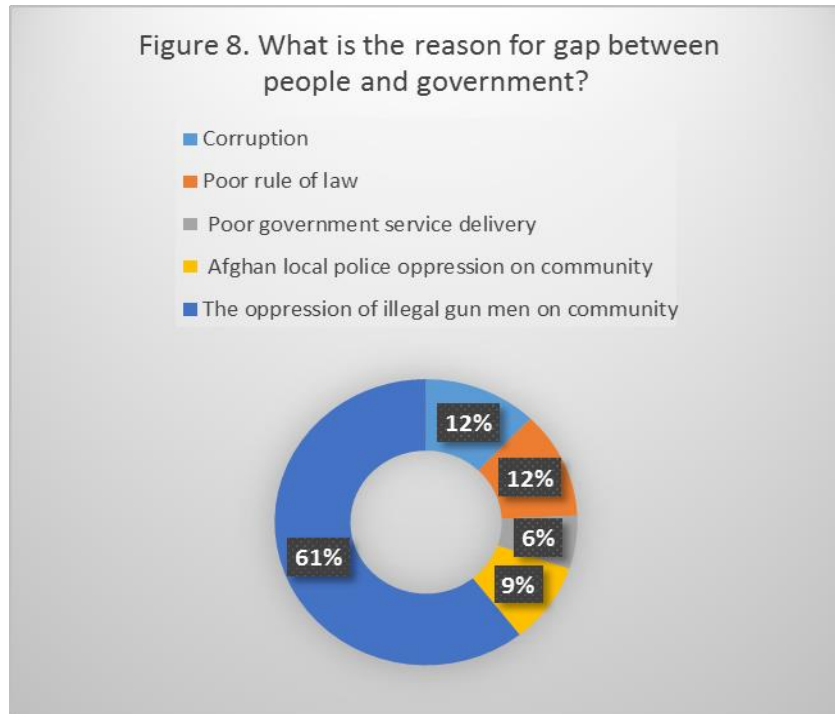


10. Cooperation between the government and HRDs was identified as a main gap among the two. In a question on this particular issues, 43 % of interviewees recommended to establish coordination between human rights defenders and government, 13 % of interviewees stated that it is required that human rights defenders to be accountable against government, but 44 % of interviewees believes that the government should be accountable against human rights defenders. (Figure 7)



11. Why people are getting distant from the government? This question was proposed in all the FDGs and was added to the questionnaire. This question was posed to the 61 HRDs with the following result:

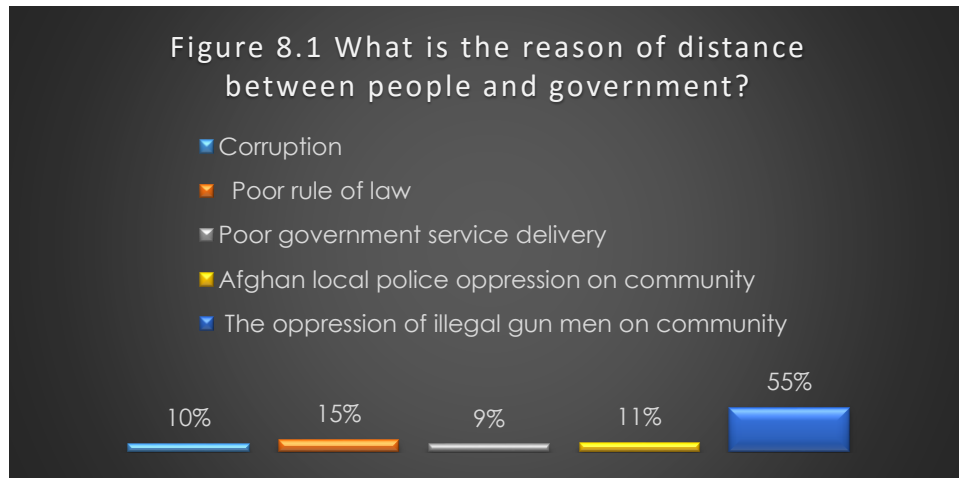
- ✓ Corruption (12%)
- ✓ Poor rule of law (12%)
- ✓ Poor government service delivery (6%)
- ✓ Afghan local police oppression on community (9%)
- ✓ The oppression of illegal gunmen on community (61%)- (Figure 8)



In addition to HRDs, the above question was also asked from 427 individuals including community elders, businessmen and governmental staffs, we have found the following inputs:

- ✓ Corruption (10 % respondents)
- ✓ Poor rule of law (15% respondents)
- ✓ Poor government service delivery (9% respondents)
- ✓ Afghan local police oppression on community (11% respondents)

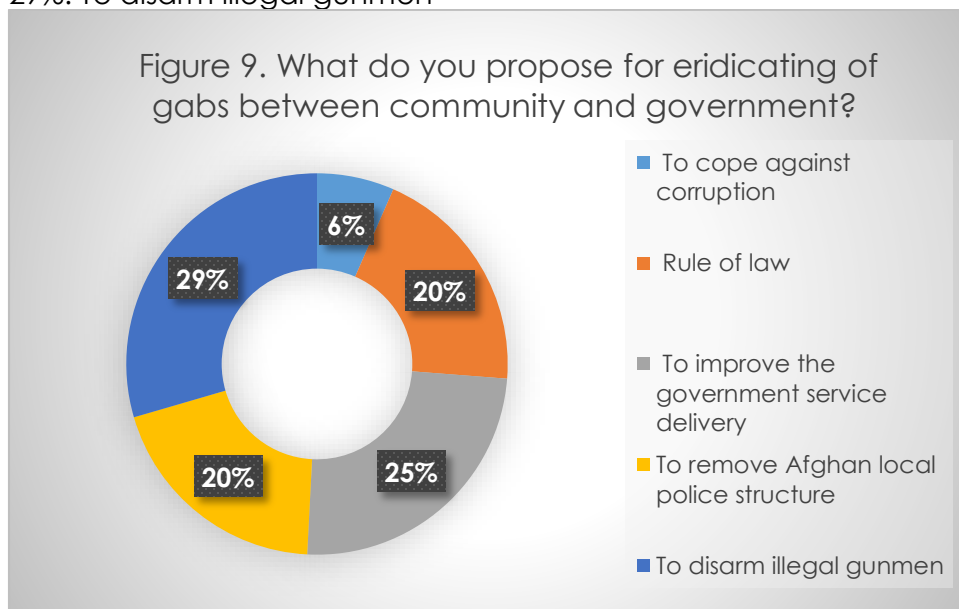
- ✓ The oppression of illegal gunmen on community (55% respondents). (Figure 8.1)



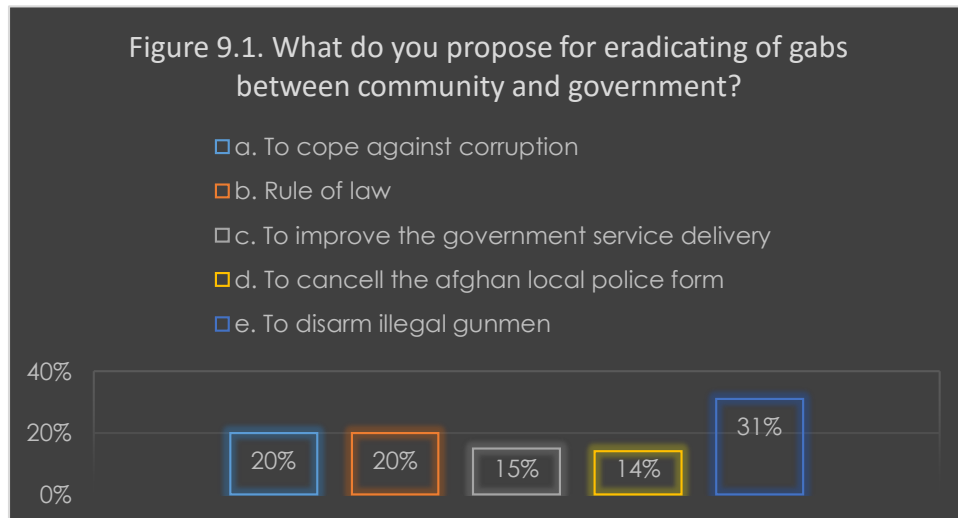
Nevertheless, the findings illustrate that corruption, poor rule of law, poor government service delivery, and Afghan local police behavior and the oppression of illegal gunmen are the combined reasons for the gap between people and government. While oppression of illegal gunmen on community is on the top.

12. When we asked from 61 human rights defenders that how to eradicate the gabs between community and government, they proposed following factors for solving this problem:

- ✓ 6%: To fight against corruption
- ✓ 20 %: Rule of law
- ✓ 25%: To improve the government service delivery
- ✓ 20: %: To cancel the Afghan local police form
- ✓ 29%: To disarm illegal gunmen



Besides the 61 human rights defenders, also we interviewed with 427 community members. They believe that above factors are the main way for establishment trust between community and government.



For fulfilment of gabs between government and community, the interviewees proposed following factors:

- ✓ To cope against corruption (20 %)
- ✓ Rule of law (20 %)
- ✓ To improve the government service delivery (15%)
- ✓ To cancel the Afghan local police form (14%)
- ✓ To disarm illegal gunmen (31%)

Almost everyone believed that the corruption and illegal gunmen disarmament should become the first ever priority for the government. Justice and Rule of Law was also stressed at the second level.

## NEEDS TO RESTART THE WHEEL

Our finding shows the following as the prioritized needs of Human Rights Defenders (both the individuals and the organizations) during/after Kunduz fall. This table was created based on the findings after the interview with 61 HRDs. Starting from internet as the first priority, chair and desk, computer, sessional clothes and rebuilding home and clean water are coming in a clear ranking status.

Needs	1 shows the most top need and 5 represent the least					
	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>First Part: Welfare Needs</b>						
1	Rebuilding Home	28	4			
2	Burning Material	33		1	1	1
3	Sessional Clothes	34	1	1	1	
4	Dishes	26	5			2
5	Health Services	30	7			
6	Clean Water	28	14			
7	Psycho-social Aid	20	1	1		
8	Food	17	2			
<b>Second Part: Organizational Needs</b>						
1	Office Rent	30	11	1		
2	Computer (Laptop and Desk Top)	35	3			
3	Internet	40	6	1		
4	Chair and Desk	38	7	2		
5	Printer, Scanner and Camera	14				
<b>Third Part: Organizational Development</b>						
1	Report Writing	9				
2	Proposal Writing	7				
3	Project Cycle Management	5				
4	Leadership	1				