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# Management of Local Grievances and Complaints in the Afghan Public Sector

Afghanistan  
Sub-National Governance Study Paper No. 4

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ثبت عرایض و اسناد آرشیف

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## Table of Contents

A.	Acronyms and Abbreviations .....	4
B.	Executive Summary .....	5
C.	Introduction .....	9
1.	Objectives and Methodology.....	9
2.	Acknowledgements.....	10
D.	Background .....	11
1.	Public Administration in Afghanistan .....	11
2.	Concepts of Grievance Redress and Complaints Management .....	12
3.	Initiatives and Commitments by GIROA .....	13
E.	Current Procedures for Managing Grievances and Complaints.....	15
1.	Structured Mapping of Grievance and Complaint Management Systems.....	15
2.	Undertakings by GIROA Ministries and Agencies.....	20
a.	High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption (HoOAC) .....	20
b.	Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) .....	22
c.	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) .....	23
d.	Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) .....	25
e.	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) .....	26
f.	Ministry of Education (MoE) .....	27
3.	Innovative Mechanisms.....	27
a.	The practices of the MRRD appear to reflect the most innovative formal methods of public grievance and complaints management currently in place. ....	28
b.	A second innovation is HoOAC’s complaint box system.....	28
c.	A third innovation is the Mol’s Family Response Units (FRUs), dealing mainly with cases of domestic violence against women—a critical need in Afghanistan. ....	28

d.    A fourth innovation is the Citizen Service Centers (CSC) established in some PG offices with the support of ASGP.....	29
4.    Interaction of Formal and Traditional Institutions.....	31
F.    The Way Forward.....	34
1.    Limitations of Current Methods of Complaints Management .....	34
2.    Potential Focus Areas for GIRoA and UNDP .....	35
3.    Thoughts on an “Ideal” Complaints Management System .....	38
G.    Bibliography.....	41
Annex 1 .....	42
Annex 2.....	44
Annex 4.....	46
Annex 5.....	47

## **A. Acronyms and Abbreviations**

A2J	Access to Justice
ACT	Anti-Corruption and Transparency
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
AREDP	Afghanistan Rural Enterprise Development Programme
ASGP	Afghanistan Sub-National Governance Programme
CARD-F	Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development Facility
CIDA	Canadian Institutional Development Agency
CDC	Community Development Council
CMS	Complaint Management System
CSC	Citizen Service Center
DCC	District Coordination Council
DDA	District Development Assembly
DG	District Governor
DGO	District Governor's Office
FRU	Family Response Unit
GDLCA	General Directorate of Local Council Affairs
GHU	Grievances Handling Unit
GIRoA	Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HoOAC	High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption
IARCSC	Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission
IDLG	Independent Directorate for Local Governance
IPG	Important public grievance
LOFTA	Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock
MoCN	Ministry of Counter Narcotics
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NABDP	National Area Based Development Programme
NADF	National Agricultural Development Framework
NIBP	National Institution Building Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRAP	National Rural Access Programme
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
PAA	Provincial Administrative Assembly
PC	Provincial Council
PDC	Provincial Development Council
PG	Provincial Governor
PGHS	Public Grievances Handling System
PGO	Provincial Governor's Office
PGRS	Public Grievances Redress System
PRRD	Provincial Rural Rehabilitation Department
Ru-WatSIP	Rural Water Supply, Sanitation, and Irrigation Programme
SNG	Sub-national governance
SNGDS	Sub-National Governance and Development Strategy
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

## B. Executive Summary

This is one of a series of studies prepared for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country office in Afghanistan, to provide input for the operationalization of its recently-prepared Sub-National Governance Development Strategy (SNGDS) for Afghanistan. Its purposes were to map out available systems in the public sector for handling local grievances and complaints, to identify any useful innovations in recent years, and to make suggestions for improving the management of grievances and complaints.

### 1. Findings

The Constitution of Afghanistan provides strong support to redress of grievances, transparency, accountability, and sharing information with the public. This support appears not to have been fully utilized by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA), as evidenced by the lack fully developed grievance redress, transparency, and accountability mechanisms. Existing mechanisms are focused mainly on central government Ministries and agencies, with far less activity at provincial and district levels.

**Sample of Ministry practices.** Emerging mechanisms to handle grievances and complaints are mainly overseen by the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption (HoOAC) and the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC). The Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development (MRRD) has developed its own unique complaints management systems. Some others, such as the Ministry of Education (MoE), have basic systems for handling to complaints; the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Land (MAIL) and the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) have taken some limited, initial steps to comply with HoOAC and IARCSC guidance. IDLG has an extensive sub-national Governance policy clearly indicating their commitment to putting in place effective mechanisms for handling public grievances and complaints. Some Provincial Governors reportedly hold weekly meetings where the public may present complaints. Overall, the GIROA initiatives underway are mainly focused on the center, with limited trickle down to provinces and lower levels.

HoOAC focuses on corruption-related complaints across all government offices, line Ministries, Ministers, Provincial Councils (PCs), Provincial Governors and their offices (PGs and PGOs), District administration, and other political and bureaucratic units. It has a website dedicated to complaints handling which explains work procedures and approaches for filing a complaint. HoOAC has had Complaint Boxes (*Sandoq-e-Shekayat*) installed in about 41 line Ministries and provincial Departments. MRRD's complaint mechanisms include both Ministry-wide a project-specific initiatives; the latter include capacity development aimed at improving complaint management abilities of Community Development Councils (CDCs) and strengthening the role of District Development Assemblies (DDAs).

### 2. Innovations

For the purposes of this study, "innovation" was taken to mean an attempt to implement a practice not tried previously in Afghanistan, rather than something which had never been attempted anywhere in the world. Among the few identified practices fitting this concept, HoOAC has developed a system of complaint boxes across the country, although there are many places

where it is not functional. MRRD has attempted to standardise public grievances handling through establishment of a specialised cell within the Ministry, with dedicated staff looking after grievances matters. Other noteworthy recent developments are Citizen Service Centers (CSCs) in Balkh and the Ministry of Interior (MoI) Family Response Units (FRUs).

### **3. Assessment**

Afghanistan has a number of mechanisms for handling grievances and complaints, but none of these has reached a high level of public acceptance or user satisfaction, and there is little reach down to the provinces and districts. Government offices at local levels are disempowered by lack of decision-making and budgetary authority, inadequate funding, absence of standardized systems and procedures, and weak professional and technical capacity. In addition, IARCSC and IDLG do not have a common understanding on which organization has the responsibility to develop local government capacities or to put in place systems and procedures for local governance—which is delaying institutional development at local levels.

IARCSC and HoOAC have initiated universal state-supported complaint management systems, and individual line Ministries and programmes are experimenting with other mechanisms, as noted above. The formal system of justice is another alternative, although not one that is seen as particularly effective or trustworthy. In addition, there are well-respected traditional mechanisms at local levels managed by village elders, such as *jirgas* and *shuras*. Some consideration has been given to the possibility of formalizing links between such traditional mechanisms and the formal systems of grievance and complaint management. Finally, on an *ad hoc* basis, individual Ministers, parliament members, and powerful political figures frequently intercede in the workings of public institutions, sometimes to seek resolution of grievances or complaints; however, the use of such channels typically raises other issues which may conflict with improved governance.

In general, the formal system of Rule of Law has not penetrated deeply beyond the urban centers, and people in rural Afghanistan rely mainly on traditional mechanisms and customary law for dealing with problems and disputes. GIRoA is fighting an uphill task in seeking recognition in rural areas, mainly due to: (i) the weak capacity, decision-making power, financial, and human resources available in sub-national public institutions, reinforced by absences of Government representatives from their offices when needed; (ii) the long-established roles and relatively high reputation of traditional mechanisms, in contrast with popular perceptions of GIRoA as corrupt and ineffective; and (iii) security concerns.

Compounding these problems, information gaps at local levels make it very difficult for citizens to complain effectively and seek redress, even where mechanisms for doing so exist. The majority of people at the local level do not have information on GIRoA's development programmes, projects, policies, and initiatives. The causes of and responsibility for inadequate delivery of public services can be difficult for individual citizens to pinpoint, and neither investment plans nor actual development expenditures in local areas are known to many potential beneficiaries, undercutting their ability to hold the state accountable.

### **4. Recommendations**

In operationalizing assistance to GIRoA under its SNGDS, the UNDP seeks both to help strengthen the capacity of the public sector for responsive governance, and to enhance the ability of citizens to hold government accountable. As part of that process, grievance and

complaint management systems can provide a platform for citizens to voice their dissatisfaction about poor or inadequate performance of public institutions, and for those institutions to gather information, prioritize, and monitor their responses. Annex 2 provides a summary of UNDP projects that address these issues.

Developing an organizational culture based commitment to public service at all levels is the foundation of an effective grievance and complaints management system. Complaints are valuable for public Institutions, as a means of strengthening their administration and improving their reputations, enhancing public trust and legitimacy. The complainant should thus be treated as a friend and complaints as an opportunity to improve.

Among the other important conditions for effective grievance and complaints management are clarity about the responsibilities of public institutions at all levels of government, and realistic mechanisms for providing them with the resources necessary to carry out those responsibilities. Without clarity about responsibilities, complaints remain diffuse, citizens have little idea who to turn to for redress, and informal intermediaries both inside and outside the public sector will have opportunities and incentives for rent-seeking, compounding existing problems of governance and service delivery. Similarly, without realism about matching service commitments to resource availability, even the most agile complaints mechanism will inevitably fail to produce the desired results, leading eventually to disenchantment with the whole process.

The main text provides further suggestions in these and other areas, and lays out principles for an “ideal” system of public grievance and complaints management, bearing in mind the difficulties and issues which can arise in trying to apply this in Afghanistan.

**For GIRoA.** Against this background, it would be important for GIRoA and its development partners to review ongoing Public Administration Reform (PAR) efforts and changes introduced so far. This could start with developing a strong central government with functional clarities and properly defined linkages with the provinces (and, ultimately, to other levels of sub-national government). Ultimately, clarity about the government’s responsibilities, channels of delivery of public services, time frames for planning and delivery, and resource costs and availability will enable citizens to gradually develop faith and trust in government, increasing their willingness to come forward to register their complaints.

It would be useful for GIRoA to declare and demonstrate its commitment to public grievance and complaints handling through actions such as:

- Citizens’ Charters stating its commitments, accompanied by a list of designated Complaints and Public Information Officers with their contact information and the turnaround time for responses;
- Establishment of “*Help*” windows in all public offices. MRRD could take the lead in developing a set of work procedures, publicity material, complaint forms and acknowledgement forms, and guidelines for use by citizens in seeking assistance and making complaints; and
- Development of a core team of grievance and complaints management professionals to be positioned in the complaint management system, with proper attitudes and appropriate systems of reward and punishment. HoOAC, IARCSC, and IDLG could work together to develop a comprehensive curriculum to train these individuals.

Any complaints mechanisms would need to be backed up by information collection and analysis systems, with appropriate information technology and capable of incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data. Oversight committees formed to review the complaints management should look at the number of complaints received, number of complaints addressed, the number of issues settled, and the number referred to higher decision-making authority. At the same time, nature of the complaint, frequently asked questions, repetition of mistakes by Government departments should also be recorded and reviewed.

**For UNDP.** In its support for the development of public complaints management systems, UNDP could consider focusing on the following steps:

- i. Review of PAR in Afghanistan, identifying actions needed to complete the organizational restructuring and institutional strengthening;
- ii. Wide consultations across the country on comprehensive systems for PGHS;
- iii. Consensus-building among the line ministries and programmes;
- iv. Empowerment of elected councils at the provincial and district levels;
- v. At the national level, support to the parliamentary oversight committee;
- vi. Gaining increased functional independence and budgetary resources for local government institutions, to empower them, demonstrate their administrative and decision-making abilities, and build trust;
- vii. Engaging women and disabled persons, and related organisations; and
- viii. Comprehensive, consistent guidelines on complaint management processes, including the identification, codification, and classification of complaints.

It would also be useful for UNDP to review its ongoing programmes for institutional capacity building in government bodies at national and sub-national levels, to ensure that there is proper focus and to take advantage of potential synergies.

## C. Introduction

### 1. Objectives and Methodology

The UNDP country office in Afghanistan has recently developed a Sub-National Governance and Development Strategy (SNGDS), aimed at two broad sets of objectives:

**Pillar A – Building capable and responsive sub-national government Institutions for service delivery.** This pillar aims to promote the capacities of sub-national executive institutions at Provincial, District and Municipal levels to provide basic services in an accountable, inclusive, responsive manner, while ensuring more involvement of women.<sup>1</sup> This pillar may be viewed as promoting the “supply” of good, conflict sensitive local governance and accountable service delivery.

**Pillar B – Empowering the population, subnational civic groups, and sub-national elected bodies to hold sub-national governments accountable, ensuring stabilization, peace-building, and inclusion.** This pillar aims to ensure that the population, representative bodies, and civil society organizations have the ability to engage with, influence and hold sub-national government institutions accountable for the effectiveness, quality, and equity of public service delivery. This pillar will seek to ensure that marginalized and vulnerable groups are part of prioritizing and monitoring service delivery. It may be viewed as promoting the “demand” for good local governance and accountable service delivery.

Several studies were commissioned to provide input to the operationalization of Pillar A, for which UNDP expects to design a programme for on-budget and capacity building support at provincial and district levels. The objectives of this study were to:

- i) Map out formal mechanisms to address local grievances and complaints within certain key service-delivery ministries and agencies—IDLG, MRRD, MAIL, MoPH, and MoE;
- ii) Identify practices and innovations introduced to enhance sub-national government responsiveness to citizens' grievances and complaints so that they can be addressed directly at local levels, rather than at the national level;
- iii) Identify constraints limiting or preventing sub-national institutions from addressing grievances and complaints locally, thereby contributing to conflict management;
- iv) Critically assess and appraise the effectiveness and institutional replicability of these practices and innovations, in terms of their impact on responsiveness to citizens' grievances and complaints; and
- v) Make prioritized recommendations with respect to the most promising and replicable practices at provincial, district, and sub-district levels.

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<sup>1</sup> These objectives also apply at the national level, insofar as central government institutions facilitate sub-national governance and service delivery.

This report was prepared by an international consultant, who was based in Kabul throughout most of the study period in late 2012 and early 2013 with a number of trips to the provinces. The study draws upon on information from GIRoA institutions at national and sub-national levels, development partners and the programmes they support, and civil society, along with a review of literature. The study team developed questionnaires for this purpose, held meetings and interviews, observed selected institutions in their ongoing work, and made field visits to the provinces of Balkh, Baghlan, Helmand, Kapisa, Kunduz, Samangan, and Sar-i-pul. A list of individuals consulted is provided at Annex 1.

The report was presented to a peer group and senior management at UNDP, prior to its finalization. Nevertheless, the responsibility for the contents and views expressed in this study rests exclusively with the authors and does not reflect any other commitment.

## ***2. Acknowledgements***

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## D. Background

### 1. Public Administration in Afghanistan

Afghanistan's Constitution specifies the three branches of government—a powerful executive, a legislative branch or National Assembly with two chambers, and a judiciary. The Constitution also calls for a Grand Assembly or *Loya Jirga* to convene under certain situations. All laws are required to conform with the tenets of Islam. The state is obligated “to create a prosperous and progressive society based on social justice, preservation of human dignity, protection of human rights, realization of democracy, attainment of national unity as well as equality between all peoples and tribes and balanced development in all areas of the country. The state shall observe the United Nations Charter, inter-state agreements, as well as international treaties which Afghanistan has joined, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

The Constitution provides for a unitary and relatively centralized system of government, with a strong central administration and provincial administrative structures functioning under central direction. Reflecting the Constitution and customary law, the primary institutions of local governance are the offices of Provincial Governor and District Governor, both of which draw their authority from the center. PGs and DGs have significant influence, which varies according to local conditions and the individual power and connections of the incumbents in these offices. Nevertheless, the operations of the line departments which provide public services and maintain order at the provincial and district levels are subject to approval by their corresponding central Ministries and agencies, which also control the financial resources for these levels of SNG. These resources are generally inadequate for mandated service delivery roles, and administrative capacities at central and—especially—SNG levels are very weak. In contrast, Municipalities have a greater degree of autonomy, including their own sources of revenue.

Line Departments (the de-concentrated provincial sub-units of line Ministries and agencies) are typically located in all 34 provinces, but are not as widely represented at district level. Typically present in districts are bodies with important service delivery and justice delivery functions—the MAIL, MoE, MoI, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Martyrs, and Disabled (MoLSAMD), MoPH, and the *Huqooq, Saranwali*, and *Qazi*. Departments generally function as self-contained units, reporting vertically to the center, with little coordination among them at local levels. Also present at sub-national levels are representative institutions such as PCs, CDCs supported by NSP, and DDAs supported by NABDP.

Because formal SNG institutions operate under strict control and guidance from the center, and with limited budgetary resources, they have little independence in decision-making and service delivery. The quality of public services delivered is considered very weak, and the quantity not commensurate with the statutory responsibilities of GIRoA. Correspondingly, the authority of formal SNG institutions to redress grievances and complaints is very limited, and centers mainly on the PG.

In addition to these official and semi-official bodies, there are numerous traditional or informal sources of service delivery, conflict resolution, and justice at local levels, such as *jirgas* and

*shuras* of local elders, *ulemas*, *maliks*, *arbabs*, and local commanders of armed groups. Owing to weak, ineffective, and unreliable service provision by the public sector, such informal mechanisms are the main recourse for citizens in rural areas, based largely on historical relationships and their relatively high standing in communities.

## ***2. Concepts of Grievance Redress and Complaints Management***

Proper attention to the concerns raised by citizens is an essential aspect of accountable and responsive government. Especially, in democratic states citizens have the right to demand service from their elected governments. Complaint mechanisms may also be considered as tools for citizen engagement in the management of public services, regarding both their quality and their impact on the public.<sup>2</sup> Public institutions tend to receive complaints from the public for a variety of reasons, some of which may be under their control (such as staff capacities and responsiveness or management policies), while others are less so (such as national laws and policies or available economic resources). In principle, they have a responsibility to take such complaints seriously and respond to them as appropriately and on a timely basis, even if not all of them are capable of being resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

The term “grievance” implies that there may be a problem. In practice, however, the nature of feedback that individuals and communities may want to bring to the government’s attention will vary, since individuals and communities often find it appropriate to use the same channels to communicate not only grievances and complaints but also questions, suggestions, and requests for information, services, or support. Citizens and communities may even use channels for grievances and complaints to provide feedback when they think government is doing well.

Governments should keep in mind that even unanswered questions or ignored requests for information and support have the potential to become problems or lead to conflicts, and therefore these should be addressed promptly. It is a good practice to respond to community feedback through the relevant pillars of community engagement, such as disclosure, consultation, and participation in governance at national and sub-national levels. The approach of handling public grievances and complaints begins with having an appropriate policy and management framework in place.

Local grievances redress and complaint management for the purposes of this study is based on the concept enshrined in the Constitution of Afghanistan—that the local administrative unit of government is the province (Article 138) (the constitutional basis of citizens’ rights to redress of grievances is discussed further in the next section). The study therefore concentrates on mechanisms for redressing grievances and complaints at the provincial level, while taking into account as well how to address complaints arising from delivery and non-delivery of services at district, municipal, and village levels.

Typically people in rural areas will turn first to traditional institutions to seek solutions for their problems, even at times including problems with the delivery of public services. When they do turn to an official institution, this is most likely to be at the lowest level of SNG they can access,

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<sup>2</sup> Even for non-official institutions, which do not depend on public resources or invoke the coercive power of the state, the concept of Consumer Protection recognizes that proper attention to the concerns of customers is an essential part of a well-managed and successful business operation.

based on geographical proximity and relative familiarity. Thus, every day people come to government offices, including line departments, PGOs, and DGOs, in large numbers and with varying expectations. However, complaints may also come through other channels, reflecting many different types of issues:

- *Complaints about public employees from public, parliamentarians, ministers, public representatives, opinion leaders, and higher officers*—for instance, about work not done or done with great delay, seeking repeated clarification, work done only after a bribe, mishandling of requests, or misbehavior while attending to public duties;
- *Complaints about systems and procedures*, such as inadequacy of information, formats, and procedures, the malfunctioning of government machinery, or service fees, middle men, touts, bribery, and favoritism;
- *Inquiries*—from ministers, parliamentarians, higher officers, public representatives, trade unions, and other interest groups regarding such issues as the status of work done or not done, follow-up of public representations, and outstanding complaints;
- *Clarification*—from line ministries, ministers, parliamentarians, and others, on topics such as procedures, status of progress, or staff actions and attitudes;
- *Public Representations*: In case of inordinate delay in providing responses or public services, or in the face of corrupt practices, aggrieved persons may send representations to parliament, the President's office, ministers, or the press;
- *Press and other media*: Sometimes radio, television, or newspapers will also make their own comments and complaints regarding the work of government offices.

### ***3. Initiatives and Commitments by GIRoA***

In line with the constitutional mandates, GIRoA has initiated programmes of change and reform in governance. Restructuring the government, reform of the public administration and work processes, and strengthening SNG have been part of Afghanistan's overall development strategy since late 2001, supported by the international development partners and NGOs. GIRoA has initiated the capacity development at all levels to improve delivery of public services, and has expressed its commitment to accountability and transparency, quality service to the public, and economic growth to the international community at the London, Bonn, Tokyo, and Kabul Conferences on Afghanistan. The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework both incorporate strong plans for action to improve government accountability and responsiveness.

Programmes like NSP and NABDP; the establishment of the IDLG; restructuring the PGOs and DGOs; introducing merit-based recruitment; enhancing communication links between the center and the provinces; preparation of the sub-national governance policy; and establishment of HoOAC are all major initiatives directed towards improving accountability and service delivery at local levels.

- Under its Governance cluster, the ANDS commits to improved service delivery and affirms that "A dedicated administrative unit (Business Simplification Unit) is in place within the IARCSC to simplify business practices. The following criteria are used for selection for this programme: level of complications in delivery practices, the extent of negative effect on the public, the degree of vulnerability to corruption, the extent of public complaints, and the extent of impact on the quality service delivery. Reform steps to then

be followed include: (i) the selection of the candidate; (ii) entering into a Memorandum of Understanding; (iii) establishing a working group within an organization; (iv) mapping and analyzing current practices; (v) redesigning business processes; (vi) seeking management agreement; (vii) changing management processes; (viii) and monitoring and evaluating the reforms implemented. Three ministries have already undergone reform through this process.”<sup>3</sup>

- The SNG Policy drafted by IDLG and passed by the National Assembly makes its stand on complaints handling clear by stating that “The local government entities will be responsive to people. They will do this by regular and ongoing consultation and use of user inputs, and by ongoing user participation. They will adopt agreed, measurable standards and services; provide adequate and clear information to the users of the service; and provide complaints handling and redress. They will under the purview of respective elected local council, establish an effective complaints handling scheme that increases the level of user satisfaction with the delivery of services and enhances the user-agency relationship; recognizes, promotes and protects users’ rights, including the right to comment and complain; provides an efficient, fair and accessible mechanisms for resolving user complaints; provides information to users the complaints handling process for the service; and allows for monitoring of complaints and endeavour to improve the quality of services. Complaints handling will provide feedback to the local government entities on the services and the quality of delivery. It will also provide an ongoing "listening" mechanism for these entities, which they would not have otherwise. The complaints handling mechanism of our local government entities will be visible, accessible and responsive. The public will know "where to complain", and "how to complain". It will be relatively easy to lodge a complaint. The complaints procedure will be straightforward. The local government entities will strive to make people feel that complaints are not only invited but are treated seriously, i.e. there is responsiveness within the organisation. User feedback will be used to constantly improve the services. The executive heads of the local government entities will be committed to the complaints handling process and will give their personal endorsement through staff directions and publicity. Overall responsibility for complaints will be handled at the senior management level. The mechanism will be adequately resourced. Complaints handling process will have the capacity to determine and implement remedies. Provincial, District, Municipal and Village Councils will play a monitoring and oversight role in the public complaints handling process.”<sup>4</sup> “All local government entities will establish Public Complaints Handling Mechanism. Provincial, District, Village and Municipal Councils will oversee the public complaints handling process.”<sup>5</sup>

GIRoA is thus committed to put in place appropriate systems for complaints management. Some of line Ministries, programmes, and projects have already initiated practices and procedures to address these issues, as discussed further in the next section.

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<sup>3</sup> GIRoA, ANDS, *Governance Cluster Report*, July 2010, Page 31.

<sup>4</sup> IDLG, *Afghanistan Sub-National Governance Policy*, Page 36.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, Page 40.

## E. Current Procedures for Managing Grievances and Complaints

### 1. Structured Mapping of Grievance and Complaint Management Systems

The presentation below is based on the information available on systems and functions of grievance and complaint management in Afghanistan's public sector—some of it discussed above, and the rest covered later in the current section of this paper. It begins with an outline of the key features of a complaints management system, and continues with a discussion of the functions, categories, and questions addressed.

#### Key Features of Complaint Management Systems in the Public Sector

<b>FUNCTION</b>	<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>QUESTIONS ADDRESSED</b>
<b>Standards</b>	Source of standards	What is the source of standards for complaints? Are they based on human rights law, legal mandatory standards, or non-binding standards?
	Particular Rights	Do they focus on particular rights or do they relate to any human rights concern? Are they tailored to the particular institution or do they reference external standards?
<b>Accessibility</b>	Education and information	Is there an education/information programme on the mechanism's availability?
	Admissibility criteria and Limitations	What are the admissibility criteria? Who can bring a complaint? Against whom can it be brought? Are there other limitations?
	Parallel Grievance Processes	Can the mechanism proceed when the same dispute is under consideration in another forum?
	Resource Assistance	Is there any resource assistance to complaints?
	Non-Retaliation	Are there any measures to ensure non-retaliation against complaints?
<b>Agencies</b>	Administration	Who runs the mechanism?
	Other Participants	Who can take part in the process?
<b>Processes</b>	Description	What types of processes are available under the mechanism and how do these operate?
	Time Limits	Is there a time limit on the process or any part of it?
<b>Outcomes</b>	Range of Outcomes	What is the range of possible outcomes from the process?
	Appeal	Is there provision for appeal, on process and on substance?

<b>Enforcement</b>	Enforcement Systems	What provision is there for enforcing outcomes(e.g. Courts/Referral/Sanctions)?
<b>Transparency</b>	Information Sharing	What provision is there for public transparency at various stages of the process?

### a. Standards for grievances and complaints

The Constitution of Afghanistan guarantees an array of fundamental rights, which provide a wide basis for citizens to raise any issue they may have with the state.<sup>6</sup> In addition to a range of human rights, it provides strong support to redress of grievances, transparency, accountability, and sharing information with the public. The following excerpts from the Constitution throw light on the complaint-making rights of citizens.

#### **Article Fifty**

*The state shall adopt necessary measures to create a healthy administration and realize reforms in the administrative system of the country. The administration shall perform its duties with complete neutrality and in compliance with the provisions of the laws. The citizens of Afghanistan shall have the right of access to information from state departments in accordance with the provisions of the law. This right shall have no limit except when harming rights of others as well as public security. The citizens of Afghanistan shall be recruited by the state on the basis of ability, without any discrimination, according to the provisions of the law.*

#### **Article Fifty-One**

*Any individual suffering damage without due cause from the administration shall deserve compensation, and shall appeal to a court for acquisition. Except in conditions stipulated by law, the state shall not, without the order of an authoritative court, claim its rights.*

#### **Article Fifty-Eight**

*To monitor respect for human rights in Afghanistan as well as to foster and protect it, the state shall establish the Independent Human Rights Commission of Afghanistan. Every individual shall complain to this Commission about the violation of personal human rights. The Commission shall refer human rights violations of individuals to legal authorities and assist them in defence of their rights. Organization and method of operation of the Commission shall be regulated by law.”*

In addition to the constitutional provisions, the Anti-Corruption Law of Afghanistan and the guidelines issued by different line Ministries, HoOAC, and NSP, are general standards that help the aggrieved to approach appropriate authorities for redressing their complaints. Article 75(3) of the Constitution makes it clear that the government is expected to “*Maintain public law and order and eliminate every kind of administrative corruption.*” Other laws enacted for the conduct and regulation of administration of Afghanistan have necessary provisions for complaining against the abnormal conduct of the business of Government. Thus we may conclude that the

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<sup>6</sup> Important provisions include Article (7) and Articles (22)-(59), which together constitute Chapter Two of the Constitution. Additional support for operational matters can be found in provisions such as Article (75) and Article (142).

citizens of Afghanistan are empowered by the laws of the land to have their grievances and complaints registered, including using the available systems of judicial processes for both civil and criminal complaints. However, awareness of these rights and availability of systems to exercise them are two separate questions.

## **b. Accessibility**

Accessibility can be better assessed through answers to the specific questions noted in the outline.

### **(i) Is there any education/ awareness raising/ informational programme on the mechanism's availability?**

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, CSOs, women's rights groups, and PCs have designed and conducted workshops and public awareness programmes on the rights of the people and have provided educational facilities. ASGP has contributed to capacity development for public information in many provinces. Nevertheless, a large number of the Afghans are illiterate and there are security concerns in some parts of the country, both of which constitute barriers to advocating for their rights. Provinces like Balkh, Helmand, and Kunduz have systems of public hearings. However, the public typically have only informal information about this. In addition, HoOAC in the past has conveyed some information on the government's approach on complaint making mechanisms, and has indicated that it is preparing to circulate brochures and pamphlets, and organize TV shows, on anti-corruption approaches and complaints registering mechanisms. MRRD's NSP has also undertaken some information sharing programmes to educate the public. Aside from these, there are no widespread educational programmes on complaints handling.

### **(ii) Who can bring a complaint?**

Responses from the programmes and line Ministries were divided on this question. HoOAC says that anyone can bring a complaint, without restrictions. Other departments, like MRRD and MAIL, have requirements (not widely publicized) that only people aggrieved against their services can bring the complaints. In practice, political leaders, erstwhile commanders, CSOs, faith groups, and other organizations bring complaints to the formal system. In the informal system, any male can take a complaint to a *jirga* or a *shura*.<sup>7</sup>

### **(iii) Against whom can it be brought?**

There is no written clarity on this; however, it appears that the aggrieved can bring a complaint against an administrative functionary, system, or process. In the case of HoOAC, there is no restriction; a complaint can be against anyone or everyone in the country. In informal systems, complaints can be brought against anyone.

### **(iv) Are there any limitations?**

No limitations have come to light regarding the current systems. There is a strong feeling among the administrators of complaint handling systems in MAIL, MoPH, MRRD, and HoOAC that prescribing limitations would lead to further conflict.

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<sup>7</sup> Typically only men can bring matters before such a body, although men may raise matters on behalf of a female relative. There are some women's *shuras*, with limited jurisdiction.

**(v) Can the mechanism proceed when the same dispute is under consideration in another forum?**

Normally in the informal system, when the grievance is being handled at *jirga* or *shura* level, it does not go to other channels. In case of criminal complaints, the *jirga* or *shura* first examines the case and then refers it to formal justice systems if appropriate. In formal grievance and complaints management, these issues have not yet been fully considered by GIRoA. However, under the Constitution, every citizen can approach the formal justice system on any grievance or complaint. The judicial pronouncement will prevail over the administrative decision. Currently available grievance handling mechanisms do not bar a citizen from going to different systems. For example, the Family Response Units to deal with violence against women do not bar the disputants from going to other justice systems.

**(vi) Is there any resource assistance to complainant?**

In formal grievance and complaints handling systems, there is no support available to the aggrieved. However, in the informal mechanisms, local political leaders typically help the needy with support.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission also provides resources to some needy complainants. Furthermore, legal aid is provided to the ones who do not afford hiring an attorney. Such support is mainly to take the cases to the courts and fight the case in a judicial manner. There are rare instances where complaints made against government departments on service delivery are supported.

**(vii) Are there any measures to ensure non-retaliation against the complainant?**

The guidelines drafted by NSP and HoOAC do not speak of any specific measures. However, in accordance with the stand taken by HoOAC on administrative lapses, non-performance is a corrupt practice; and violating citizens' rights is unconstitutional. However, in Afghanistan, complaints against some powerful people may be life-threatening to the complainant, and police protection is not guaranteed.

**c. Agencies administering the Grievances/complaints Systems**

***Who runs the Mechanism?***

The administrative units of line Ministries run the mechanisms. In the provinces, the formal systems still need to be put in place. In the line Ministries like MAIL, MoE, MoPH, and MRRD, there are specifically identified focal points to manage grievances and complaints. HoOAC has a specific Department of Complaints and Information.

**d. Processes**

***What types of processes are available under the mechanism and how do these operate?***

Complaints are received through various sources. Complaints from Provinces also come to the center, where they are registered and reviewed by specially constituted teams to analyze the complaint. If the complaint is found to have a valid reason, it is referred to

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<sup>8</sup> *In practice, parliamentarians (and sometimes commanders well connected politically) are the ones providing assistance. It is much easier (if not sometimes the only way) to get a complaint solved with the assistance of powerful people.*

respective department and simultaneously the complainant is informed. In MRRD, complaints are processed at the reception point itself and communicated to the complainant. If the solution to the problem is not possible across the counter, it is referred to the respective department/section for a response. In a majority of cases, complaints to line Ministries are received from powerful individuals, such as Ministers and parliamentarians, after which the matter is addressed and the answer is sent to the Minister/Parliament Member concerned.

***Is there any time limit on the process or any part of it?***

Fifteen days is the normal time expected for replying to a complaint. However, more typically this either happens more quickly or (in many cases) will take longer.

**e. Outcomes**

***(i) What is the range of possible outcomes from the process?***

In politically volatile Afghanistan the outcome of making a complaint is unpredictable. In practice it depends on who is complaining, against whom is the complaint made, and whether either of them or the institution considering the matter is powerful. The possible outcomes range between immediate redressing of grievance to settling scores with the complainant. Absence of protective mechanisms against the complainant tends toward the latter. In principle, the range of possible outcomes is:

- a. The complaint is false and there is no substance (especially for anti-corruption cases), and the complainant is informed accordingly;
- b. The complainant has a case and a rightful claim, and the department/section is informed of the way forward to settle the dispute/redress the complaint; or
- c. Very rarely, the outcome is used to revise the systems, and to take it to the capacity development modules.

***(ii) Is there any provision for appeal, on process or substance?***

As of today, there is no provision for appeal regarding the process, but the appeal can be made against the answers received.

**f. Enforcement**

***What provision is there for enforcing the outcome?***

In the case of complaints about corruption, the departmental inquiries, disciplinary actions, and sanctions exist. In all other cases of administrative delays and non-extension of services and benefits, there are rare cases of admonitions and warnings.

**g. Transparency**

***What provision is there for public transparency at various stages of the process?***

This question is difficult to answer. In the formal systems, although it is said that there is transparency at every stage, there is no direct engagement of the aggrieved at the stage of analysis of grievance. In the public hearing system that is practiced in a few provinces like Balkh, Helmond, Herat, Sar-i-pul, and Uruzgan, the grievances/complaints are addressed openly. In the formal justice system, the courts are considered open courts

therefore, the process is transparent. In all of the informal systems, the entire process of complaint handling is apparently transparent.

## ***2. Undertakings by GIROA Ministries and Agencies***

In addition to the practices recorded below, some Provincial Governors reportedly hold weekly meetings where the public may present complaints. These and other sub-national practices are touched upon in a subsequent sub-section of this paper.

### **a. High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption (HoOAC)**

Taking into consideration the importance of combating corruption for stability and the sustainable development of Afghanistan and recognizing the inability of existing institutions to deliver, HoOAC was established by Presidential Decree in July 2008. This law was enacted in the light of the provisions of Article (7), item (3) of Article (75) and Article (142) of the Constitution and in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption<sup>9</sup> in order to oversee and coordinate the implementation of GIROA's Anti-Corruption Strategy. It is an independent agency, reporting directly to the President.

**Complaints Management at HoOAC.** Ever since it was established, HoOAC has taken responsibility for dealing with complaints about public institutions. In the initial years, HoOAC was seen as focusing on complaints related to bribery, but its scope has since expanded to include all forms of corruption, as well as administrative and procedural lapses in service delivery. It attaches the utmost importance to complaints management in ensuring transparency and accountability. A Senior Deputy Director General for Oversight has been entrusted with the responsibility to put a system in place for complaints handling. HoOAC also has a dedicated Unit for Complaints and Information gathering, which works on designing regulations and processes for informant protection and reward in collaboration with other agencies, as required by the law.

In association with the IARCSC, HoOAC has developed a system of complaint boxes (*Sandoq-e-Shekayat*) for all public offices (in practice, this system does not appear to be fully functional in all offices). The head of the office where the box is installed is expected to serve the ex-officio chairperson of a board to be constituted to open the box at periodic intervals, analyze the complaints received, and determine where and how they can best be answered. If the board determines that a complaint is relevant and should be tracked further, it is sent to the review team of the Unit for Complaints and Information, to verify the information contained. The results are then passed back to the Unit for determination of further action, which may include recommendations for administrative action or even formal investigation; complainants are informed of such decisions are informed through the leadership of HoOAC. However, there is no system for replying to the complainant if the complaint was not determined to be genuine.

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<sup>9</sup> [www.unodc.org/documents/.../UNCAC/.../Convention/08-50026\\_E.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/.../UNCAC/.../Convention/08-50026_E.pdf). The creation of HoOAC fulfilled the requirement of Article 6 of the UN Convention against Corruption.

The Unit maintains a close relationship with the senior management of the HoOAC, keeping it informed of key issues and problems that arise and seeking its support for recommendations on follow-up action regarding specific complaints. HoOAC receives complaints about corruption at all levels, including high-level corruption involving ministers, members of parliament, and other top political leaders. It will also entertain (and actually receives) complaints related to local services at all levels.

HoOAC has categorized the types of complaints it receives into the following 18 categories:<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For comparison, note the list of common public complaints compiled by the study team on the basis of its discussions, at Annex 4.

1. Bribery
2. Embezzlement
3. Stealing of documents
4. Unauthorised destruction of official records
5. Exceeding of limits of legal scope of authority
6. Misusing of duty power
7. Impeding the implementation of justice
8. Using government facilities and official work hours for personal affairs
9. Refusing to perform duty without legal justification
10. Concealing the truth
11. Illegal increase in assets
12. Forgery of documents
13. Misrepresentation of authority (falsely representing to have official authority to grant or deny government approval)
14. Receiving any kind of gift in order to perform or refrain from performing official actions
15. Delaying the execution of assigned duties
16. Violating the code of ethics of the related office
17. Involving ethnic, regional, religious, partisan, gender, and personal issues in performing entrusted duties
18. Acting or refusing to act in violation of the Anti-Corruption Strategy

To complain about any of these types of issues, HoOAC suggested methods are: use of mobile or landline phone; e-mails; face-to-face complaint; registering on the website; and putting complaints in the complaint box. It provides guidelines to complainants on format of complaints, place of complaining, and accessibility to complaint systems. However, required public awareness raising activities on available systems have not taken place, beyond the printing and distribution of a limited number of brochures. HoOAC intends to broaden its public outreach, put in place systems to link all central and local offices, and standardize complaint-handling systems across the country, for which it is in dialogue with IARCSC, MoF, MRRD, and IDLG.

## **b. Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG)**

IDLG was established by a Presidential Decree in August 2007, to improve local governance and, through this means, to achieve stability and security. Its mission is to consolidate peace and stability, achieve development and equitable economic growth, and to bring about improvements in service delivery through just, democratic processes and institutions of good governance at the sub-national level, thereby improving the quality of life of Afghan citizens.

UNDP has supported IDLG through ASGP, whose objective is to strengthen the democratic state and government institutions at all levels, to govern and ensure quality public service delivery, through advocacy, policy advice, and capacity development.

**Complaints Management at IDLG.** Currently, IDLG is using the complaints handling mechanism devised by HoOAC—based on complaint boxes at the entrances of IDLG offices—in both its Kabul headquarters and in the provinces. IDLG recently prepared an outline of a Strategic Plan for its General Directorate of Local Councils Affairs (GDLCA). GDLCA is proposing to develop establish a mechanism in each PGO to enable citizens to file a complaint about public service, and to ensure that the complaint is dealt with and the result communicated to the complainant. In addition, it proposes to establish a system to ensure that Provincial Councils have access to complaints data and overall performance information. This approach would make the PCs not only stronger public voices at a provincial level, but also empower and

engage them in administrative oversight. GDLCA is seeking support from ASGP and the National Democratic Institute.

ASGP has supported capacity development of the provincial and district administrations to be responsive to public needs and demands. It has supported public hearing of complaints by provincial and district offices, including in the provinces of Balkh, Bamyan, Daikundi, Herat, Kunduz, Minama, Sar-i-Pul, and Uruzgan. It has also helped to strengthen channels of public communication and information sharing. In its initial phase, the programme focused more intensively on public grievance and complaints management systems, and introduced operational manuals at provincial and district levels. A proposal for a Public Grievances Redress System (PGRS) was prepared after wide consultations and submitted to IDLG in 2008. IDLG indicated that it accepted these recommendations and made a comprehensive policy statement on the importance of complaint handling mechanisms.<sup>11</sup> However, IDLG still does not appear to have implemented PGRS, in either its central office or in provinces.

### **c. Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD)**

MRRD was established to develop and implement programmes promoting responsible social and financial growth in rural areas, primarily in the non-farm sector, thereby reducing poverty and promoting socio-economic development. It has presence in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan, and—with support from international development partners—delivers **six main programmes** in keeping with the needs of the local populations: National Solidarity Programme (NSP), National Area-Based Development Programme (NABDP), National Rural Access Programme (NRAP), Rural Water Supply, Sanitation, and Irrigation Programme (Ru Wat-SIP), Afghanistan Rural Enterprise Development Programme (AREDP), and Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development - Facility (CARD-F).

**NSP** was created by GIROA to develop the ability of Afghan communities to identify, plan, manage, and monitor their own development projects. NSP works to empower rural communities to make decisions affecting their own lives and livelihoods. It is funded by 13 donors, the major donor being the World Bank.

**NABDP** began in 2002 with the support of UNDP, and has the goal of contributing to a sustainable reduction of poverty and improved livelihoods in rural Afghanistan. It focuses on designing and delivering locally sustainable programmes for livelihood development, and developing and institutionalizing District Development Assemblies (DDAs) to enable rural communities to organize and participate in the development process.

**NRAP supports enhanced livelihoods by ensuring that rural communities are serviced with access to basic facilities, services, and goods, and helps individuals and households to manage risks through the provision of targeted employment. It provides for the development of quality rural access infrastructure and a mechanism whereby temporary employment can provide a safety net for vulnerable rural people.**

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<sup>11</sup> IDLG, *Afghanistan Sub-National Governance Policy*, 2010, page 40.

***Ru Wat-SIP focuses on access to safe water and sanitation as a basic human right. The provision of safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation to households and communities enhances health by reducing death and disease through waterborne diseases, allowing individuals to fully participate and strengthen their livelihood strategies.***

**AREDP** was established as the ministry's lead employment creation and income generation initiative, aimed at promoting local governance and building rural infrastructure. It is also funded by the World Bank and bilateral donors.

**CARD-F** is an entity jointly established under the auspices of the Ministries of the ANDS Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) Cluster. It is administered by MAIL, MRRD, MoCN, and the MoF; managed by an Inter-Ministerial Committee chaired by MoCN; and led by an Executive Director who reports to the Committee.

**Complaints Management at MRRD.** In addition to the mechanisms suggested and overseen by HoOAC for all Ministries, MRRD has developed its own Public Grievances Handling System (PGHS), and two of its projects (NSP and NABDP) also include specific provisions for dealing with grievances and complaints. MRRD's mechanisms focus on handling complaints at local level, with the engagement and empowerment of local administrative structures.

In compliance with the direction of **HoOAC**, MRRD has put a complaint box at the entrance of the office in Kabul and in a few provinces, where aggrieved people are expected to put their complaints. These are collected from the box periodically and analyzed by a three-member committee within the Ministry in Kabul. Decisions are conveyed promptly to the complainant.

**In its PGHS**, MRRD has also established a separate complaints cell with dedicated windows to receive the complaints related both to programmes and administrative procedures. The cell is located at the entrance of the Ministry in Kabul where a complaints cell manager and other staff sit. Complaints are received and addressed immediately across the counter wherever possible. If this is not possible, the complaint is referred to the complaints manager sitting within the complaints cell for resolution. If the case is beyond his capability, it is received, properly acknowledged, and sent into the relevant office/department for analysis and redress. This ministry-wide mechanism takes care of complaints pertaining to MRRD and to programmes other than NSP and NABDP.

**NSP** has developed a complaints handling mechanism that functions at central and local levels. In Kabul, NSP has established a Grievances Handling Unit (GHU) and developed rules and work procedures for complaints handling. There are reportedly provincial focal points in place with clearly defined terms of reference. At provincial levels, the provincial departments and NSP units are expected to address the grievances and complaints, although procedures are not fully systematized. Within the system NSP has identified categories of complaints emerging from and/or against: mobilization and election of CDCs and their Community Development Programmes; procurement; financial matters; engineering works, social problems; process delays; quality; and the roles and actions of facilitating partners.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Facilitating partners are 29 non-government agencies working with NSP to implement the project. They are both national and international agencies engaged in supporting the activities of NSP.

**NABDP** has three approaches for dealing with potential and actual complaints. First, it has established District Information Centers that provide access to all programmatic and operational information, thereby reducing misunderstanding and conflicts in programme management. Second, it has prepared a Transparency Strategy for DDA activities, which clarifies the roles of DDAs in handling complaints and the procedures they should use. Third, transparency and complaints management are taken into account in the capacity development programme for DDAs. These approaches are aimed at reducing public complaints and addressing them at the place of origin, with ownership of processes from the grass-roots levels.

MRRD thus stands as a good example, in having sought to establish systems for local management of grievances and complaints. Nevertheless, in addition to these systems there is one person in the Minister's office who is responsible for collecting complaints from citizens to the Minister, and people travel even from remote villages to meet this person. Complaints received through this channel are referred to the Minister and programme directors. While this is extremely time-consuming for the leadership of MRRD, many complaints can be resolved only at this level.

#### **d. Ministry of Public Health (MoPH)**

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has a mission to “improve the health and nutritional status of the people of Afghanistan in an equitable and sustainable manner through quality health services provision, advocating for the development of healthy environments and living conditions; and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.”<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, MoPH has set its core values as: Right to Health; Partnership and Collaboration; Community Participation and Involvement; Evidence-Based Decision-Making; Results-Oriented Culture; Quality; Transparency; Sustainability, Dignity and Respect; and Equity. However, MoPH has not made a clear statement of its commitment to receive and respond to public needs, demands, and complaints. The realization of this obligation exists, but it is not translated into action or operational systems.

**Complaints Management at MoPH.** A review of systems in MoPH revealed that:

- The Ministry does not have any formal grievance or complaints handling mechanisms;
- However, they have a “Drop Box” at the Ministry gate and in some provinces, reflecting guidance given by HoOAC;
- At headquarters in Kabul, the box is opened every 15 days and a three-member committee analyses the complaints. Provinces do not report having seen complaints in their boxes;<sup>14</sup>
- If possible complaints are solved; alternatively they are referred to the Minister/GIRoA;
- People typically go either to members of parliament or to the media, and also sometimes put their complaints in the drop box;
- There are large number of complaints about inadequate facilities, weak medical ethics, poor service standards, and non-availability of medical professionals;

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<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Public Health, Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Mission and Vision*.

<sup>14</sup> Baghlan, Balkh, Jawzjan, Kunduz, Samangan, and Sar-i-Pul.

- Inaccessibility to health service at local levels and non-availability of ambulance services in rural areas are major sources of complaint.

MoPH has begun working to introduce dedicated hotlines for registering complaints; receipt of suggestions; receipt of questions on health provision; and to answer general health-related questions. It is organizing consultations and seeking the support of experts to assist in the establishment of sustainable public grievance and complaints management systems.

### **e. Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL)**

As most of Afghanistan's population lives in rural areas and agriculture is the largest source of employment, MAIL works for a great majority of the population. Its National Agricultural Development Framework (NADF) is aimed at reducing poverty reduction and enhancing food security through economic regeneration. The Ministry is currently undergoing a change management process, reviewing its programme structure to address the needs of its policies and strategies, and in the process seeking to clarify the respective roles of the government and the private sector in agriculture. MAIL seeks to create an enabling environment for private sector production and marketing, intervening only where the private sector is not prepared to be engaged. The process will encompass an increased focus on the public sector's responsibilities and MAIL's ability to provide the required services and interventions, including by putting in place systems that enhance public confidence and private sector engagement in food production, processing, and distribution. The policy papers associated with this process do not speak directly to issues of public complaints management.

**Complaints Management at MAIL.** Currently MAIL has some practices of complaints management, which the Ministry itself describes as *ad hoc* and immediate measures taken to address complaints that have high-level influence. More specifically:

- MAIL has put Complaint Boxes in all offices, following the advice of the IARCSC and HoOAC, but no complaints are received through the boxes;
- Complaints are often received from members of parliament, and processed either by the Deputy Minister or by the Director of Human Resources, with replies sent through the complaint focal points in the Ministry;
- The minister has opened a Facebook page for public complaints and he directly deals with complaints received through this channel;
- In some provinces there is a programme of inviting all the complainants at one place and listening to their problems;
- There is also a practice of sudden and undeclared visits to the provinces and districts to determine whether there are any complaints.

Complaints are predominantly in relation to: mechanisation of agriculture, agricultural subsidies, irrigation facilities, new breeds of animal and seeds, creation of market linkages for agricultural produce, warehousing facilities, food processing, and fruit storage facilities.

## **f. Ministry of Education (MoE)**

**Complaints Management at MoE.** MoE has a Complaint Management System (CMS), supported by UNDP and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). MoE informed the study team that CMS is a web based application, which deals with complaints regarding misconduct of MoE staff; school headmistresses, principals, and teachers; and general problems related to the services delivered MoE. Complaints are registered in an online web system by the complaints office, generally by uploading complaints received through various channels (in person, email, telephone, complaint box, civil society, and media). However, in practice, the system does not have standard guidelines or procedures. The majority of the complaints are reportedly from the staff and other departments regarding delays in service, misbehavior of staff, misuse of power, and a small number of cases of bribery.

Discussions with the study team suggested that the MoE complaints form (Annex 3) is more frightening to than supportive of the complainant. It asks for more details about the complainant than the complaint. It also asks documentary and other evidence. Complaints are managed by the Transparency and Accountability Department rather than being mainstreamed into the general administration, with specialized personnel and specific guidelines.

MoE has specialised complaint management teams with distinct and definite roles in the CMS. The identity of complainants is expected to be protected. If a complaint is established as valid, the possible actions may include sanctions, warnings, and admonitions. MoE focuses mainly on HoOAC's suggested areas of administrative behaviour and corrupt practices, rather than on service-related complaints specific to MoE. MoE is also aware of complaints regarding scoring patterns in examinations, teachers' behaviour, facilities in schools, poor condition of school buildings, admission processes, teaching capacity of teachers, and overall education service delivery. However, complaints on these issues are not consolidated at one place, nor are there procedures and guidelines on standardization of complaints management. MoE also engages with parents and civil society through School Management Councils (or Shuras) to deal with service-related issues for individual schools. These provide suggestions to MoE on various aspects of school management.

MoE conducts public information and awareness campaigns on civic behavior, educating people to be alert and responsive to misbehavior. These do not deal specifically with MoE's own CMS.

### **3. *Innovative Mechanisms***

For the purposes of this study, "innovation" was treated as referring to a practice that is new to Afghanistan and is now being tried in a limited number of settings, rather than something that has never been tried anywhere in the world. Based on this understanding, the study team identified a few innovative practices. Because it did not visit all 34 provinces, this should be taken only as an indicative listing, with the expectation that other innovative practices may have emerged in other parts of the country.

**a. The practices of the MRRD appear to reflect the most innovative formal methods of public grievance and complaints management currently in place.**

The Ministry has formulated its own complaints management system, identified a core team of focal points, developed their capacity through training courses, and provided institutional support. MRRD approached the problem in a systematic manner: first, developing a vision and mission for complaints management; next, defining duties and responsibilities within such a system, deciding on an organizational structure for this purpose, and developing work procedures and guidelines. Thereafter, it has identified and trained the required human resources. In addition, while putting its own systems in place, MRRD has integrated guidance from HoOAC and IARCSC on complaints management, including the use of complaint boxes alongside other methods of getting input from the public. MRRD's initiatives have been implemented both at headquarters and at the provincial level.

MRRD's new system places a heavy emphasis on the NSP and its specific institutional structures; stronger results might be obtainable by investing more in capacity development of officers engaged in its PGHS. The teams thus developed can become a resource groups for other Ministries and organizations to learn from and emulate.

**b. A second innovation is HoOAC's complaint box system.**

However, simply installing a box, as has been done in some public institutions, is not enough to achieve the intended results; these also require system-sustaining activities. To use the analogy of a post office, if complaint boxes are established at different locations like post boxes, there also need to be teams of persons deployed to collect the complaints, like postmen collecting the letters; mechanisms to sort the complaints (letters); and procedures, guidelines, and monitoring systems to ensure appropriate follow-up action (delivery). In collaboration with line Ministries and Departments, HoOAC could formulate a more complete policy, including installation of complaints boxes all over the country in conspicuous places accessible to everyone, even at village level; appointment of collection and sorting agents; and procedures, guidelines, and resources to manage the complaints and deliver timely responses.

**c. A third innovation is the MoI's Family Response Units (FRUs), dealing mainly with cases of domestic violence against women—a critical need in Afghanistan.**

FRUs are deployed in many parts of the country, mainly at district level, with support from UNDP's LOTFA project and other UN agencies. They are in need of capacity development to ensure appropriate and responsive human resources and back-up systems; in principle they could be replicated more widely across the country. There is potential for cross-fertilization in the lessons learned from experience with FRU's and with more general complaints management systems.

**d. A fourth innovation is the Citizen Service Centers (CSC) established in some PG offices with the support of ASGP.**

One relatively effective CSC operates in Mazar-e-Sharif, providing a combination of complaints handling, information, and referral services. While there is a need for further elaboration in terms of standard guidelines, data management systems, records keeping, review and analysis of complaints, and public awareness campaigns, the mechanism appears to have considerable potential. In a sense, the combination of CSCs with the features of MRRD's PGHS might be seen as creating the basis for a comprehensive complaints management system in Afghanistan. At some stage, it would be valuable for such innovations to extend to districts and villages. According UNDP/ASGP staff in Balkh:

*The Provincial Governor's Office (PGO) as the highest government office at provincial level has the mandate to manage provincial governance and ensure trouble-free services and flow of information to citizens. However, lack of proper systems, capacity, and institutional mechanisms to provide the desired services hampered the PGO. Customers were overcrowded (hundreds each day) and dissatisfied, and it was time-consuming to assist them—registering their petitions, answering their questions, and providing information on key governance and development issues as a tool for ensuring two-way communication was really a challenge to the PGO.*

*UNDP's ASGP during its first phase had developed guidelines and advised IDLG to formalize a Public Grievances Handling System at local level. So far not much has been done by IDLG on this front. As an alternative, the PGO and ASGP worked together to establish a stand-alone system to address the public grievances and requests. The model worked out for this purpose, called a Citizens' Service Center (CSC), focuses on service requests, petitions handling, delivery, and complaints handling through a single window. ASGP has developed forms, guidelines, and work procedures and provides logistical and technical support.*

*The CSC receives requests and complaints on daily basis. People are received with a smile, offered water or tea as required, and listened to carefully and patiently. Their petitions, requests, and complaints are properly recorded; either solutions are offered on the spot, or the person is given an approximate time frame for resolution. In some cases, the Governor directly entertains the case and takes an immediate decision.*

**Photographs of Citizen Service Center, Balkh Province**

Reception area for the public



Trained staff help people register complaints



Hearing by senior staff



Information sharing



#### ***4. Interaction of Formal and Traditional Institutions***

While GIRoA is attempting to put in place mechanisms for handling grievances and complaints, none of these has reached a high level of public acceptance or user satisfaction and there is little reach down to the provinces and districts. The lack of traction of central government initiatives outside of the major urban centers has been a recurring feature of national governance throughout the history of Afghanistan. Faced with a choice of turning to formal bodies (such as GIRoA Ministries and Departments, the courts, the police and national security forces, or PGs and DGs), members of parliament, international development partners and NGOs, international security forces, or traditional or informal institutions, there has been a consistent tendency to choose the latter alternative, especially in rural areas.

The choice to rely on traditional institutions reflects both the poor reputation and performance of most formal institutions, and the relatively high reputation and social standing of village elders who form the basis of traditional bodies such as *jirgas* and *shuras*. In general, GIRoA is fighting an uphill task in seeking recognition in rural areas, mainly due to: (i) the weak capacity, decision-making power, financial, and human resources available in sub-national public institutions, reinforced by absences of government representatives from their offices when needed; (ii) the long-established roles and relatively high reputation of traditional mechanisms, in contrast with popular perceptions of GIRoA as corrupt and ineffective; and (iii) security concerns. Despite the obvious shortcomings on grounds of fairness, access, and human rights considerations, even the Taliban are sometimes preferred over the formal justice system and other GIRoA bodies as a means of dispute resolution, because of their predictability, rapid action, and generally lower levels of corruption.

Compounding these problems, information gaps at local levels make it very difficult for citizens to complain effectively and seek redress, even where mechanisms for doing so exist. The majority of people at the local level do not have information on GIRoA's development programmes, projects, policies, and initiatives. The causes of and responsibility for inadequate delivery of public services can be difficult for individual citizens to pinpoint, and neither investment plans nor actual development expenditures in local areas are known to many potential beneficiaries, undercutting their ability to hold the state accountable.

Finally, on an *ad hoc* basis, individual Ministers, parliament members, and other powerful political figures frequently intercede in the workings of public institutions, sometimes to seek resolution of grievances or complaints. However, the use of such channels typically raises other issues which may conflict with improved governance.

In practice, there are interactions between the formal and informal system, mainly involving referral by the *Huqooqs*,<sup>15</sup> PG and DG offices, and other local officials to either informal or

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<sup>15</sup> *Huqooq* is a formal civil dispute resolution department under the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) which handles civil cases such as land and property rights, inheritance rights, debt collection, and family law. *Huqooq* offices are widely established across Afghanistan at sub-national levels. These offices attempt to resolve civil cases through mediation or conciliation. If resolution is not possible, cases are referred to courts. *Huqooqs* also serve an important function in recording decisions from the traditional justice system (such as those from a *jirga* or *shura*), to formally document the arbitration. The informal decisions recorded by the *huqooq* may be made based on *shari'a*, customary tribal law, or other community

formal justice mechanisms, depending on the nature of the case. These are discussed in greater detail in the separate study on dispute resolution mechanisms in Afghanistan. Some consideration has been given to the possibility of greater formalization of links between such traditional mechanisms and the formal systems dispute resolution, which could hold out lessons for grievance and complaint management.

***A resident of Kapisa, anonymous***

*Complaint? Why Complain? I do not know what is happening in this country. I only see many cars going and coming into my village. What is the money exactly given to us and who is spending it is not known. Some big leaders from outside come to the village and speak to the small leaders and go. I cannot complain because I do not know what is happening. If I know my eligibility and amount that I am being given, I can complain if it is not given to me on time or not at all given. I like government supported us directly instead of through leaders and intermediaries. We request the Government to inform us what it is going to do for us before spending money. So that we can be vigilant and see what is happening and then complain if it is not done as promised.*

Other information provided to the study team, some of it fragmentary, suggested a range of other practices at local levels related to complaints management.

- Some Provincial Governors reportedly hold weekly meetings where the public may present complaints.
- An earlier experiment with the formation of District *Shuras* under the Afghanistan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP) was abandoned (see Annex 5).
- There is often a village affairs officer who registers cases and information provided by community leaders such as *qaryadars* or *maliks*. Village affairs officers also listen to proposals and complaints from the villages, and are in charge of local responses to natural disasters. However, this system is working mainly in an informal way.
- The district chief of police usually holds weekly meetings with the district governor, *Huqooq*, *saranwal* (prosecutor), and village officials. The police have powers to arrest individuals suspected of criminal activity on the basis of information given by the *saranwal* or *huqooq*, and the right to detain and question suspects for up to 72 hours before they are released or referred to the *saranwal*.
- The duties of a Provincial Council as outlined in the 2010 Draft Law are to regularly consult with citizens, monitor service delivery, and hold the provincial administration to account. In addition, they are charged with ensuring that women and young people have access to the council, listening to complaints, and resolving certain civil disputes.

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customs. However, if the parties are not satisfied with this decision at a later date and proceed through the courts, state statutory law will be applied. When the *huqooq* resolves a dispute to the satisfaction of the parties, a 10% fee (referred as a “tithe” or “duty”) is collected and paid through the appropriate district or provincial finance office. Where there are no MOJ officials present, based on the consent of the disputants, the DG may also take up the role of providing dispute resolution for civil cases. To a large extent the *huqooq* is nonperforming and viewed as corrupt, largely because the 10% duty fee is considered to be too high.

- Provincial Councils at Baghlan, Balkh, Jawzjan, Kunduz, Samangan, and Sar-i-Pul, have regular visitors who seek redress of their grievances or complaints. However, PCs have no clearly defined powers other than that of recommendation, and no concrete obligations other than that of informal dispute resolution. They have neither the legal and constitutional framework nor the financial resources to respond to local needs. PCs nevertheless have an important role in increasing government visibility in the provinces, communicating public preferences and grievances to government institutions, and examining and provincial administrations in their delivery of services.
- PG and DG offices, and DDAs at Baghlan, Balkh, Jawzjan, Kunduz, Samangan, and Sar-i-Pul, are handling grievances and complaints in large numbers but in a more informal way without any systematic support. One might conclude that there is an informal complaint management system in these formal administrative units.
- In the absence of formal and standard systems, complaints are handled but with no record, no mechanism to look into the details, and no standard standards or procedures. Sometimes might is right and sometimes being nearer to power centers implies better access to redress of grievances.

In the above circumstances, question and doubts arise about having an ideal public grievance or complaints management system for Afghanistan. If so, what is an ideal system? Could an all-encompassing system recognize and formalize the co-existence of formal and informal mechanisms? If so, are the civil servants to be accountable to informal justice mechanisms? What is the value of conduct and discipline law or administrative law or civil service law? Might not the formalization of linkages to traditional systems be opening a Pandora's Box? Alternatively, can we codify and segregate complaints to be handled by formal mechanisms and newly recognised informal mechanisms? All these questions lead to considerable debate.

Nevertheless, the remainder of this study attempts to make some suggestions regarding better formal mechanisms (including the possible features of an "ideal" system), without disturbing constitutionally-valid informal systems and their decisions.

## F. The Way Forward

### 1. *Limitations of Current Methods of Complaints Management*

The discussion above suggested many limitations and unresolved issues regarding the management of public grievances and complaints in Afghanistan, which render current methods relatively ineffective in generating sustained improvements in service delivery or enhancing the overall accountability, responsiveness, and reputation of local government. When the question was put directly to respondents, their first reason for this state of affairs tended to be the **co-existence of informal mechanisms**, which serve as the first recourse for dissatisfied citizens. In addition, respondents indicated that there was a widespread perception that no solutions are possible from local officials because **they do not control the delivery of public services**. Taking up matters related to service delivery or misconduct by government officials at local level was thus seen as a waste of time, delaying approaches to those who can actually address citizens' complaints.

Other limitations and constraints noted for formal complaints handling mechanisms included:

- Lack of standard criteria, procedures, and remedies;
- Multiplicity of agencies and programmes performing similar functions;
- Absence of coordination and connection between the different available systems of different departments and agencies at the local level;
- Lack of conceptual clarity on goals for sub-national governance—including the scope for decentralization versus de-concentration. At present sub-national institutions are not empowered and lack resources;
- Low skills compounded by high staff turnover;
- Pervasive inadequacy of government-wide funding and other resources for social issues and social protection, particularly pensions to martyrs and disabled people;
- Disconnect between local perceptions of local needs and the national budget process;
- Particular absence of local government influence over matters such as poverty reduction, creating rural roads, electricity, and water supply;
- Lack of clarity about who is responsible for the development of standardized country-wide systems for managing grievances of complaints at local level, particularly the respective roles of IARCSC and IDLG;
- Complainants' behaviour—in many cases the complainant approaches different people for a single cause;
- Lack of public information and understanding on government responsibilities, methods, organization, and possible ways to approach public agencies with complaints;
- Interference by parliamentarians, Ministers, and other powerful figures that complicates issues and provides disincentives for proper staff initiative; and
- Operations of middle-men who profit from lack of information and standards.

Some provincial line departments were of the view that direct allocation of resources to their offices in the budget process, without need to wait for line Ministries to determine provincial allocations out of the Ministry-wide budget and authorize their transfer, would solve many of their problems. There is also a strong view that special attention in terms of budget allocation is being paid toward the provinces with security concerns, to the detriment of budgetary resources

for comparatively peaceful provinces and districts (an issue which, however, is not straightforward, since lack of security may exacerbate budgetary needs).

## ***2. Potential Focus Areas for GIRoA and UNDP***

It would be useful for GIRoA to consider adopting the following approaches, some of which are already in use in some ministries and in some locations, across the country.

- (i) Standards of public grievances and public information on rights***<sup>16</sup> for public grievance or complaints handling. This would enable citizens to base their complaints on their rights to ask the Government about services that are owed to them (MRRD currently has some standards);
- (ii) This could include a “Right to Information Act”*** requiring that the public be informed of activities and actions initiated for public welfare and governance, and be provided with information that it might require to assess the Government’s responsibilities and ability to provide services;
- (iii) A “Citizens’ Charter”*** explaining the Government's commitments and approaches to redress public grievances or complaints, the time required, the range of possible responses, submission procedures including any supporting information and documents, service standards, complainants’ rights, and expectations from the complainants, applicants, and the staff in the delivery of services;
- (iv) Provincial/ District/Municipal level complaints handling units*** and ***“Help”*** windows in all Government offices, along with Government **Publicity Officers** at District level to inform the public of Government programmes and services for public; explain the public on how to seek support and service from the Government; and educate people on filing of reports, applications, and requests;
- (v) Specialist grievances/complaints officers at the provincial level*** as the ultimate source of redressing grievances/complaints at district and provincial level;
- (vi) Appointment of an Ombudsman at the center*** to address grievances or complaints that are not resolved at sub-national levels;
- (vii) Institutional Mechanisms*** to engage citizens in dialogue on issues of relevance for local governance and decentralized service delivery; programmemeing for development at sub-national level; approaches to partner with informal systems and institutions;
- (viii) Public Meetings*** to solicit and respond to complaints on the spot (the Balkh and Helmand PG’s have such meetings periodically);
- (ix) Procedures for Alternative Dispute Resolution*** systems, engaging informal dispute resolution mechanisms that lessen the burden on formal mechanisms and the judiciary;

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<sup>16</sup> Article 50 of the Constitution provides for such right to information, however, this needs to be given a concrete legal shape with a specific law that provides right to information to the public so that they can seek information from the Government on the services being provided and how are they provided.

- (x) **Special “Consumer Courts” based on the enactment of a Consumer Protection Law**, to protect consumers from inadequate service/ sale of inferior goods that are bought by paying money or taxes by the consumer;
- (xi) **Institutionalization of capacity development for civil servants in respect of citizens grievances or complaints (along the lines of current IDLG and MRRD activities)**;
- (xii) **Processes and operational guidelines**, with focus on Gender and Disability rights, on processing the complaints received at all levels; and set up an apex monitoring and evaluation mechanism for complaints management;
- (xiii) **IT support for the complaints management system**, to improve efficiency and provide a database. The database can become accessible to every level of the administration, serving as an efficient way to record and track complaints and produce reports on complaint redress. This also enables measurement of customer satisfaction through analysis of questionnaires generated amongst users;
- (xiv) **Civic Education and Public Awareness Campaigns**. The former would educate citizens on their rights—legal, civic, fundamental, and human rights—and mechanisms to resolve grievances or complaints. This could also deal with the police and justice systems and penal provisions. The latter would inform the public of Government programmes for citizens’ welfare and of citizens’ rights, as well as the right to information and procedures for redress of grievances and complaints;
- (xv) **Review by complainants**. Complainants should have the opportunity to have the handling of their complaint reviewed if they are dissatisfied with the response. Each department should determine the best arrangement to suit that position. Government departments should make it easy for the public to lodge complaints; and
- (xvi) **Publication of complaints information**. Information on complaints should be published by each Ministry or agency at least once a year, and should include: numbers and types of complaints received; speed of response; and action taken. This is in line with the principles of accountability and transparency, and would demonstrate to the public that complaints are taken seriously and it is worthwhile to complain.

Among the important conditions for effective grievance and complaints management are clarity about the responsibilities of public institutions at all levels of government, and realistic mechanisms for providing them with the resources necessary to carry out those responsibilities. Without clarity about responsibilities, complaints remain diffuse, citizens have little idea who to turn to for redress, and informal intermediaries both inside and outside the public sector will have opportunities and incentives for rent-seeking, compounding existing problems of governance and service delivery. Similarly, without realism about matching service commitments to resource availability, even the most agile complaints mechanism will inevitably fail to produce the desired results, leading eventually to disenchantment with the whole process.

The Complaint Box system is not working as intended in the provinces and districts. It should be linked up with overall complaints management systems. Boxes should be placed in all the villages, districts, and municipalities only after developing linkages, integrating the complaint-box system with the overall PGHS, and designing and implementing a work procedure to receive and review complaints through boxes with supporting logistics.

Against this background, it would also be important for GIRoA and its development partners to review ongoing Public Administration Reform (PAR) efforts and changes introduced so far. This could start with developing a strong central government with functional clarities and properly defined linkages with the provinces (and, ultimately, to other levels of sub-national government). Ultimately, clarity about the government's responsibilities, channels of delivery of public services, time frames for planning and delivery, and resource costs and availability will enable citizens to gradually develop faith and trust in government, increasing their willingness to come forward to register their complaints.

In operationalizing assistance to GIRoA under its SNGDS, the UNDP seeks both to help strengthen the capacity of the public sector for responsive governance, and to enhance the ability of citizens to hold government accountable. Annex 2 provides a summary of UNDP projects that address these issues. While formulating a strategy of support to GIRoA, UNDP may wish to consider focusing on the following steps:

- i. Review of PAR in Afghanistan, identifying actions needed to complete the organizational restructuring and institutional strengthening;
- ii. Wide consultations across the country on comprehensive systems for PGHS;
- iii. Consensus-building among the line ministries and programmes;
- iv. Empowerment of elected councils at the provincial and district levels;
- v. At the national level, establishment of a parliamentary oversight committee;
- vi. Gaining increased functional independence and budgetary resources for local government institutions, to empower them, demonstrate their administrative and decision-making abilities, and build trust;
- vii. Engaging women and disabled persons, and related organisations; and
- viii. Comprehensive, consistent guidelines on complaint management processes, including the identification, codification, and classification of complaints.

The study team observed that UNDP is implementing a large number of programmes for institutional capacity enhancement of GIRoA. It would be useful for UNDP to review these programmes at national and sub-national levels, to ensure that there is proper focus and to take advantage of potential synergies. Possibilities include:

- i. Looking for harmonization and synergies between ASGP and NABDP, and use these programmes (or a combined successor) as a vehicle for supporting the development of complaints management systems at sub-national levels (seeking quick wins where possible);
- ii. Similarly, seeking harmonization and synergies in capacity-building between these SNG programmes and NIBP;
- iii. Opening of UNDP sub-offices at regional level to oversee programmes in the regions;
- iv. Consideration of joint SNG programming efforts with other development partners;
- v. Supporting efforts to strategically link SNG activities of IDLG and MRRD, including through coordinated efforts to strengthen the capacities of PC's and similar representative bodies at lower levels, and to develop standardized complaints management procedures; and
- vi. Support IDLG, MRRD, and IARCSC in clarifying the respective roles of PG's and provincial line departments in SNG policy implementation and service delivery.

### ***3. Thoughts on an “Ideal” Complaints Management System***

Based on international experience, there are five basic elements of an ideal public grievances and complaints management system, as summarized in Figure 1 below. First and foremost is developing an organisational culture based on **commitment to public service** at all levels. Public institutions should value complaints as a means of strengthening their performance and improving their reputation. The complainant should be treated as a valuable resource and complaints as an opportunity.

The second element is **fairness**. An effective complaint management system must be modelled on accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency, and integration. Being fair in the conduct of public business removes distance between the service provider and service receiver. Building partnerships gives the user an opportunity to understand the challenges in service delivery. If public institutions are fair enough, a major part of the work is done.

The third element is adequate **human resources**—positioning right people in the right place at the right time. Complaint handling staff must be skilled and professional.

The fourth element is **standardization of processes** and enhanced organizational capacity to manage complaints. These should lay out how public officials are expected to deal with all stages in the complaint management process, from receipt and acknowledgement of the complaint to the institutional response and reply, as well as the recording and subsequent analysis of experience with complaints.

The fifth and final element is a system of **information management**. This should both serve operational needs, and provide the basis for a continuous process of organizational review and improvement. A committee formed to review the complaints management should look at the number of complaints received, number of complaints addressed, the number of issues settled, the number of issues referred to higher decision making authority. At the same time, nature of the complaint, frequently asked questions, and repetition of mistakes by Government departments should also be recorded and reviewed.

All these five elements are interdependent. A well-organized system managed by skilled staff will nevertheless be less effective if the institutional culture is hostile towards complainants. A defective system can hamper the work of a committed department with skilled staff. And staff members who lack the skill and commitment to handle complaints properly can challenge a system that is otherwise ideal.

Figure 1. **Five Elements of an Ideal Complaints Management System**

ELEMENT	APPROACH
Organizational Culture and Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure commitment at all levels—attitudinal change</li> <li>• Value complaints and Complainants.</li> <li>• Highlight weaknesses in the Government/Ministry/Department's programmes, policies, and service delivery.</li> <li>• Stimulate an organization to improve its core services.</li> <li>• Reassure complainant that the Government is committed to resolving problems, improving of relations, and building commitment.</li> <li>• Put in place systems of accountability and transparency.</li> </ul>
Principles of Fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model the complaint handling system on principles of fairness,</li> <li>• Improve accessibility,</li> <li>• Develop responsiveness and efficiency.</li> <li>• Integrate with the core business of the institution and, where required, with that of other Ministries and Departments.</li> </ul>
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop skills of staff who handle complaints. Design and deliver training courses on complaints handling</li> <li>• Design and deliver attitudinal change programmes for staff</li> <li>• Select the staff members who are most suitable for public relations and competent to deal with complaints.</li> <li>• Supervise the staff regularly and seek feedback about their work.</li> <li>• Link performance evaluation with complaints handling</li> </ul>
Approaches and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge promptly.</li> <li>• Assess the complaint on priority.</li> <li>• Conduct the required investigation, which should resolve factual issues and consider options for complaint resolution.</li> <li>• The response to the complainant should be clear and informative.</li> <li>• If the complainant is not satisfied, review the decision internally.</li> <li>• Explore external review options.</li> <li>• Any systemic issues that arise because of the complaint should be considered and acted upon.</li> </ul>
Information Management and Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design templates for information collection and inform the staff on system of information sharing.</li> <li>• Collect periodic information on complainants (number- redressed-under process-requiring additional information etc.)</li> <li>• Highlight the service failings that need to be remedied.</li> <li>• Identify problems and trends that can be acted on by management.</li> <li>• Set up qualitative and quantitative standards and measures for complaints handling.</li> </ul>

**Figure 2** illustrates the fundamental importance of staff and institutional commitment, by illustrating how this would be reflected in the responsibilities and actions of staff under such a system.

Figure 2. **Staff and Institutional Commitment to Effective Complaints Management**

<b>Level of Staff Members</b>	<b>Their commitment</b>	<b>Commitment Approach</b>
Head/chief executive of a Government Institution	Make complaint handling a priority for the institution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include complaint handling standards in the Government's or institution's service charter, business plans, and service standards.</li> <li>• Report publicly on complaint handling in annual reports and other high-level corporate documents.</li> <li>• Receive regular internal reports on the quality and timeliness of complaint handling.</li> <li>• Use complaint information in programme review and service delivery.</li> </ul>
Managers responsible for complaint handling	Establish and manage an effective, professional complaint handling system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit suitable staff.</li> <li>• Provide comprehensive training to complaint handling staff.</li> <li>• Properly manage and support complaint handling staff.</li> <li>• Promote strong internal networks to enable complaint handling staff to work with and be supported by other staff.</li> <li>• Provide regular reports to other areas of the Government or institution on issues arising from complaint handling work.</li> </ul>
Complaint handling staff	Display exemplary practice in handling complaints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behave professionally when dealing with clients.</li> <li>• Know complaint-handling procedures well.</li> <li>• Comply with internal policies.</li> <li>• Keep informed about the Government or institution's work and developments in programmes and services.</li> <li>• Maintain interest in best practice in complaint handling.</li> </ul>
Other staff	Know about and be responsive to the institution's complaint system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of the complaint handling policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Help clients gain access to the complaints process.</li> <li>• Help complaint handling staff resolve problems.</li> <li>• Help complaint handling staff understand the institution's business.</li> <li>• Respond to systemic issues that arise as a result of individual complaints.</li> </ul>

In contrast with many other countries in the region, the citizens of Afghanistan have been guaranteed the right to information by the Article 50 of the Constitution. Among other things, this provides a strong basis for GIRoA to enact a Right to Information Act (and for UNDP to support it in doing so). This Act would help the citizens and business houses to seek information on a large number of Government activities using public funds, such as procurement, development activities, infrastructure creation, provision of public service, and so forth. In addition, based on Constitutional provisions, UNDP and other development partners can support GIRoA to consolidate the available systems and procedures on grievances and complaints management, and draft a comprehensive rights and rule book. The NSP's CDC model, HoOAC's complaints box model, MRRD's PGHS with its practice of serving complainants immediately through special units, Balkh's Citizen Service Center model, Helmand's public hearings, and traditional *jirga* or *shura* models can be drawn upon to help build a comprehensive, non-duplicating, and implementable public grievance system for handling local complaints.

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## Annex 1

### List of People Consulted

Abdul Jabar Haq Been	Governor, Sar-i-Pul
Abdul Rahman Wardak	Local Leader, Kapisa
Abdul Sami Jalalzai	Head Local Institutional Development, MRRD
Abdul Hai Farhad	PGO Admin/Finance Head, Samangan
Ahmad Masood Amer	Assistant Country Director, UNDP
Alhaj Mahbobullah Mahbob	Provincial Council member, Kunduz
Aminpoor	Director, Development and Expansion Educational Organization for Women
Arya Nijat	Director Capacity Development, IDLG
Atul Shekhar	ASGP, Herat
Dr. Bashir Noormal	Director General, Afghanistan National Public Health Institute
Dr. Doel Mukerjee	CTA, UNDP JHRA
Dr. Sabghat	Director Local Development Coordination, IDLG
Eng. Asad Rahimi	Capacity Development Advisor, NSP
Eng. Mohammad Jawed Jawed	Head of PRRD; Sar-i-Pul
Eng. Mukhtar Chamran	PGO chief of staff, Sar-i-Pul
Eng. Sayed Mohammad Mohammadi	PRRD head of programme , Samangan
Engineer Nazia Kharoti	Senior Advisor to the Minister, MRRD
Gopi Pradhan	Head of Governance, UNAMA, Kunduz
Haji Abdul Qadir	Shura's member, Sar-i-Pul
Haji Mohammad Hussain Baloch	DDA, Shura's Monshi, Sar-i-Pul
Hanifa	Deputy of Provincial Council, Samangan
Hashmat Hijran	ASGP
Hayatullah Fazel	Deputy Executive Director, MRRD
Khamosh	General Director, Local Councils Affairs
Masooma Ramazani	Shura's Monshi, Sar-i-Pul
Maulawi Abdul Hai Hayat	Head of Provincial Council, Jawzjan
Mir Agha	Disabled Community Coordinator, Jalalabad
Mohamad Esmail Masoul	PGO chief of staff, Kunduz

Mohammad Arif Sharifi	Head of Provincial Council, Sar-i-Pul
Mohammad Rafi	Director, Strategy, Planning, HoOAC
Mohammad Yaqoub Hotak	Director, Human Resources and Capacity Development, MAIL
Mohammad Yousuf Ayobi	Deputy of Provincial Council, Kunduz
Nadar Yama	General Director, Policy, IDLG
Nahakul KC	Community Empowerment Advisor, MRRD
Ramon Haggad	Advisor, RAMP-UP
Renaud Meyer	Senior Deputy Country Director, UNDP
Robin Dartel	UNDP, ASGP
Sakhi Rezae	Provincial Governance Officer, IDLG
Satish Chandra	Advisor, MoF, Making Budgets and Aid Work
Sawayz	IARCSC
Sayed Ahmad Shekib	Head, Grievances/Complaints Handling Unit, NSP
Tom Thorogood	Chief Technical Advisor, NABDP
Yugesh Pradanag	ASGP, Balkh
Zaved Hanifi	National Governance Officer, UNAMA, Kabul
Ziauddin Zia	Head of Provincial Council, Samangan

## **Annex 2**

### **UNDP Projects Supporting Complaints Management**

**ASGP:** Afghanistan Sub-National Governance Programme. Working with Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) and Independent Administrative Reforms and Civil Service Commission(IARCSC);

**NABDP:** National Area Based Development Programme. Working with Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development;

**ACT:** Anti-Corruption and Transparency Project. To put in place systems for transparency and accountability in the public sector;

**A2J:** Access to Justice Programme. Worked on improving the formal justice mechanism for dispute handling. This was followed by

**JHRA:** Justice and Human Rights Project in Afghanistan. Working on improving the rule of law systems that, among other things, reduce grievances and complaints; to make the justice system more user friendly; and to promote the observance of human rights;

**LOTFA:** Law and Order Trust Fund Afghanistan. To improve police systems in Afghanistan, including their complaints mechanisms.



## Annex 4

### What Are the Complaints About?

Indications to the Study Team

#### WHAT ARE THE COMPLAINTS ABOUT?

- Disputes over land
- Lack of water and electricity
- Security problems
- Robbery and burglary
- Reconstruction of roads and bridges
- Transport and mobility
- Municipal services
- Building schools and kindergartens
- Inadequacy in health facility
- Unemployment
- Improper housing
- Fertilizers and seeds subsidy
- Tribal disputes
- Family disputes
- Domestic violence
- Economic problems
- Legal disputes
- Corruption in Government offices
- Non availability of Government officers in the office
- Delay in service delivery
- No timely response from the Government
- Inaccessibility to Government
- Provincial councils, financial support
- Senior political leaders, sometimes elders
- Judicial delays and inaccessibility
- Old age pensions
- Public employment

## Annex 5

### District *Shuras* under the Afghanistan Social Outreach Programme

As part of GIRoA's diverse post-2001 efforts at PAR, IDLG experimented with the creation of District *Shuras* under its Afghanistan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP). These were meant to constitute somewhat representative bodies, modelled on traditional local consultative mechanisms, as a stopgap measure until long-awaited elections could be held for (more truly representative) District Councils. In practice, as is often the case with innovations in a complex and controversial field, this system attracted more complaints than acceptance. The programme was ended for reasons that were not made clear to the study team, although various interlocutors cited factors such as inter-programme and inter-ministerial rivalries; inadequate consultation by IDLG with other public agencies and stakeholders; close association with foreign military forces; lack of long-term funding support; and the multiplicity of bodies fulfilling similar or overlapping functions.

ASOP sought to establish the role of District Governors and District *Shuras* for deciding on the use of development funding, helping to buttress local security and stability, and resolving complaints at the local level. A decision to establish a District *Shura* was to be taken at a gathering with broad local participation; participants would identify a list of respected local persons as potential members, with actual membership decided by IDLG through the project. Members were initially paid a stipend (originally US\$ 120 per month). Each such body was to have its own security, development, and justice subcommittees.

District *Shuras* were to take responsibility for:

- Monitoring services and development projects entering the district, and communicating concerns to line ministries and donors;
- Serving as a vetting mechanism for Afghan local police recruits and encouraging reconciliation with insurgent groups;
- Fostering community solidarity to prevent support for anti-government elements and activities in the district;
- Ensuring liaison and communication with government officials and security services to improve security and enforce the rule of law;
- Providing a forum for conflict resolution at the district level when issues could not be settled in other ways at the local level;
- Providing a conduit for public grievances or complaints by informing the government on shortcomings, malpractices, and problems in the provision of public services and working jointly with government officials to identify and implement appropriate solutions.
- Providing quality assurance for sustainable development by ensuring the security of development projects and monitoring and reporting on project outputs; and
- Facilitating communications, coordination, and cooperation between the government and communities to increase the level of trust and confidence between the government and the people, and to establish a stronger base for democratic governance.

## **Illustrative Principles for Local Grievance and Complaints Management**

This annex outlines illustrative principles and procedures for local systems of grievance and complaints management at local levels—covering villages, districts, municipalities (including district municipalities), and provinces. As is the case for the rest of the study, this material is the sole responsibility of the study team, and should not be seen as reflecting the views of UNDP, GIRoA, or any other institutions or persons who provided input for the study.

### **1. Village level**

Village administrative systems are not yet fully strengthened in Afghanistan. It is a simultaneous process to develop village administrative systems that would include complaints/grievances redress systems. In general, CDCs, *Maliks*, and *Kalantras* are currently managing village level complaints.

- Comprehensive guidelines would be developed and provided by the center.
- Current heads of village administration will act as Village Grievance Managers (VGM) with a manually operated system of receiving and disposing the public complaints.
- VGM will periodically conduct an awareness campaign on government programmes.
- VGMs open a register of complaints and record all the details of the complaints in the register.
- The register will guide the managers on how to enter the details of the grievances/complaints. VGMs will give a code number to every complaint.
- VGMs give audience to the public on an appointed day or every day.
- Settle the grievance on the spot or give a reasonable date for final redress
- If the grievance cannot be settled at the village level, they send the details of the grievances/complaints to the district under intimation to the complainant on the same day or after verification of details, the next day.
- Once a month, the VGMs will conduct a meeting of all the complainants and listen to their complaints and address the issues.
- They will send a monthly report to the District Headquarters on the number and nature of grievances/complaints received and redressed.
- Wherever the village heads have offices, they will write on a white/black board every day the list of grievances/complaints received/ redressed/ pending etc.

### **2. District level**

The methodology of dealing with complaints/ grievances at the District level is more or less similar to that of Provinces. The District will deal with:

- Issues relating to services provided by the District Headquarters level;
- Issues related to services provided at the village with the support of the district administration, and complaints not redressed at village level will be handled at district level.
- Issues related to villages forwarded by village heads or received directly.

The district office will immediately open a “Help” window at the entrance of the office to guide the people who visit district office every day. A complaint box will also be installed conspicuously at the entrance. This will be a proactive action to avoid complaints later. In addition:

- Comprehensive guidelines would be developed and provided by the center.
- The District Governors first take up an awareness campaign on all the services provided by the governor, procedures to apply for services, details of contact persons, facilities for hearing to complaints etc.
- A single window system with two (2) cabins recommended. One is for District level issues, and the other is where important public grievances (IPG) are dealt with at village level and other departments in the district.
- It is suggested that every day between 1 and 4 pm or on alternate days as possible, the District Governor will meet the public to hear the complaints/ grievances.
- Visitors come with written complaints about their problems while meeting the District Governor or contact person for complaints/grievances redress.
- All important petitions are sent to the second counter where they are entered into a computer with the help of user-friendly software.
- Alternatively, a manually written register is maintained until the computers are procured and software is written and put into use.
- Automatically, a covering letter is generated by the computer and two copies are printed. One is attached with the petition and is sent to the officer concerned in the office dealing with the service with time limit and the other is given to the applicant as a receipt.
- Once the problem is solved, the officer informs the district office.
- The officer in charge of the section can decide that whether the problem can be disposed off at his level or if necessary, he/she will send it to the Governor.
- As soon as the case is settled, the matter is deleted from the computer's unsettled complaint database. However, it will generate a monthly report on the status of every complaint/ grievance received.
- Officer wise, department wise daily status is monitored.
- Whenever there is a meeting of district and village level officials, the status is reviewed and remainders are sent.
- They are entered in the IPG system and the progress is reviewed periodically.
- Complaints of serious nature and recurring complaints are sent to the vigilance wing for further investigation.
- District governors will conduct monthly district coordination committee meetings with the representatives of all the ministries working in the district and the complaints/grievances are discussed.
- The district governor will encourage formation of a citizens' welfare committee with opinion leaders, elders, and retired public servants as members for periodically reviewing the complaints/grievances status in the district.
- Every district office will exhibit in front of the office on a white/black board, the status of complaints on daily basis.
- District governors will send periodic reports to the Provincial Governor on all the complaints received and redressed. They will also include the complaints received and redressed from the district level.

- The District governor send another report on the list of complaints/ grievances referred from the district and village level to the province for clarification/ settlement etc, which could not be resolved at the district level.
- Complainants can go to the provincial governor, in case the complaints/grievances are not settled at the district level without any sufficient reason. Therefore, it is the duty of the district governor to settle the grievance at the district level itself and give a reasonable time to address the issue.
- In all the cases where it was not possible for the district administration to settle the grievance at the district level, it should inform the complainant in detail about his limitations and the status of reference to the provincial authorities.
- The district authorities will also pursue the matter with provincial heads every fortnight under intimation to the original complainant.

### **3. Municipality level**

Municipalities are the faces of the Government. The service delivery and non-delivery is visible every day in municipalities. Non-functioning of municipalities has immediate impact on the urban population. Accordingly, the size and nature of demands, grievances, and complaints are different from district and provincial administrations. Therefore, municipalities should establish complaints/grievances redress mechanisms, or “Municipality Grievances Systems” (MUGS), immediately along the lines of provincial and district administration.

In a large number of cases, the complaints are only about the services delivered by the municipality alone, with no other body involved. Therefore, the MUGS can be proactive and liaise directly and immediately with all the departments dealing with public services like electricity, water supply etc. It can issue guidelines on dealing with the work. If any work is not done for any reason, MUGS can directly write or inform the person about the probable date of providing service or additional information required.

The grievances/complaints handling system in the municipalities will begin from the Municipal Districts, which are the places of origin of complaints or services. Municipal mayors will contact the provincial governors in case the grievance requires interference by the provincial governor. The public as well contact the provincial head if the grievance is not settled in the scheduled time by the municipality or municipal district head.

Municipalities also can conduct public awareness campaigns on services provided by the municipality, time taken for each case of service provision, fee required, and documents to be produced, and contact persons.

#### **a. Municipal District level procedures**

Municipalities first take up an awareness campaign on all the services provided by the municipalities at headquarters and in municipal districts, procedures to applying for services, details of contact persons, facilities for hearing to complaints etc. The complainants will be guided properly to go the place of origin of service instead of going directly to higher forum for redress. In case of municipalities, the municipal district head is first responsible for service provision. The district office will immediately open a “Help” counter at the entrance of the office to guide the people who visit district office. This will be a proactive action to avoid complaints later. In addition:

- A single window system with two desks is recommended, one for district-level issues and the other for IPGs.
- This will receive complaints from the public, record as per procedure, and give an acknowledgement and time for redress.
- A complaint can be entertained only when the original time given has elapsed and the request is not settled/processed or is still in the pipeline.
- On receipt of a complaint, it will first be treated as an inquiry and addressed immediately. If the case cannot be settled there, it should be registered as a grievance and processed.
- It is suggested that every day between 3 and 5 pm or on alternate days as possible, the District Head will meet the public to hear the complaints/grievances.
- Visitors come with written complaints about their problems while meeting the District Head or contact person for complaints/grievances redress.
- All important petitions are sent to the second counter where they are entered into a computer with the help of user-friendly software.
- Alternatively, a manually written register is maintained until the computers are procured and software is written and put into use.
- Automatically, a covering letter is generated by the computer and two copies are printed. One is attached with the petition and is sent to the officer concerned with time limit and the other is given to the applicant as a receipt.
- Once the problem is solved, the officer informs the district office.
- The officer in charge of the section can decide that whether the problem can be disposed off at his level or if necessary, he/she will send it to the head/headquarters of the municipality/other line departments/provincial governor.
- As soon as the grievance is redressed, the matter is deleted from the computer's unsettled complaint database. However, it will generate a monthly report on the status of each complaint/grievance received.
- Officer wise, department wise daily status is monitored.
- Whenever there is a meeting of district officials, the status is reviewed and reminders are sent.
- They are entered in the MUGS and the progress is reviewed periodically.
- Complaints of serious nature and recurring complaints are sent to the vigilance wing for further probe.
- The district head will encourage formation of a citizen's welfare committee with opinion leaders, elders, and retired public servants as members to review periodically the grievances/complaints status in the district.
- Every district office will exhibit in front of the office on a white/black board, the status of complaints on daily basis.
- District heads will send periodical reports to the municipal headquarters on all the complaints received and redressed. They will also include the complaints received and redressed from the district level.
- The District heads send another report on the list of complaints/grievances referred from the district to the municipality for clarification/settlement etc, which could not be resolved at the district level.
- Complainants can go to the municipal headquarters, in case the grievances/complaints are not settled at the district level without sufficient reason. Therefore, it is the duty of the district head to settle the grievance at the district level itself and give a reasonable time to address the issue.

- In all the cases where it was not possible for the district municipal administration to settle the grievance at the district level, it should inform the complainant in detail about his limitations and the status of reference to the municipal authorities.
- The district authorities will also pursue the matter with municipality heads every fortnight under intimation to the original complainant.

**a. Municipality level procedures**

Municipality Administration will deal with both original and appeal sides of grievances/complaints. The municipalities will deal with:

- i. Complaints on district municipal administration or cases pending at the municipal district level.
- ii. Complaints/grievances that are not settled to the satisfaction at district level—a kind of appeal.
- iii. Complaints/grievances that are not settled at municipality level.
- iv. Referrals from municipal districts and provincial governors.

Each municipality will open a “Help” counter at the entrance of its offices to guide the people who visit the mayor’s office. This will be a proactive action to avoid complaints later. The mayor will have a grievances/complaints officer in his/her secretariat, to deal with referrals received from the municipal districts and provincial governors. He/She liaises with all the sections and departments, prepares replies, generates data, and submits reports. In addition:

- A single window system with four cabins set up is recommended. Three cabins/counters deal with specific areas of service (all the services delivered by provincial offices grouped into three different groups). The fourth cabin/counter is where IPGs are dealt with, particularly that are not settled at district or municipality level, or on the issues where people have an appeal to make.
- It is suggested that every day between 3 and 5 pm or on alternate days as possible, the Provincial Governor will meet the public to hear the complaints/grievances.
- Visitors come with written complaints about their problems while meeting the mayor or contact person for complaints/grievances redress.
- All important petitions are sent to the fourth counter where they are entered into a computer with the help of user-friendly software.
- Alternatively, a manually written register is maintained until the computers are procured and software is written and put into use.
- Automatically, a covering letter is generated by the computer and two copies are printed. One is attached with the petition and is sent to the officer concerned with time limit and the other is given to the applicant as a receipt.
- Once the problem is solved, the officer informs the provincial office. The officer in charge of the section can decide that whether the problem can be disposed off at his level or if necessary, he/she will send it to the Governor.
- The municipality will maintain a register (manual or IT enabled) of referrals received from the districts and provincial governor. They are dealt with in the municipal office and data are maintained. Once the data are input, an immediate acknowledgement is sent to the district/provincial office as the case may be.

- As soon as the case is settled, the matter is deleted from the computer's unsettled complaint database. However, it will generate a monthly report on the status of every complaint/grievance received.
- A report of municipal district wise references received and settled
- Officer wise, department wise daily status is monitored. Whenever there is a meeting of municipal officials, the status is reviewed and reminders are sent. They are entered in the IPG system and the progress is reviewed periodically.
- Complaints of serious nature and recurring complaints are sent to the vigilance wing for further investigation.

#### **4. Provincial level:**

The provincial administration will address both original and appeal sides of grievances. The provinces will deal with:

- i. Complaints on provincial administration of cases pending at provincial level.
- ii. Complaints/grievances that are not settled at district level (appeals).
- iii. Complaints/grievances that are not settled at municipality level (appeals).
- iv. Referrals from districts and municipalities.

The provincial office will immediately open a "Help" counter at the entrance of the office to guide the people who visit governor's office. This will be a proactive action to avoid complaints later.

The provincial governor will have a complaints/grievances officer in his secretariat, to deal with referrals received from the municipalities and districts. He/She will liaise with all the sections and departments, prepare replies, generate data, and submit reports. In addition:

- A single window system with four cabins set up is recommended. Three cabins/counters deal with specific areas of service (all the services delivered by provincial offices grouped into three different groups). The fourth cabin/counter is where IPGs are dealt with, particularly that are not settled at district or municipality level, or on the issues where people have an appeal to make.
- It is suggested that every day between 3 and 5 pm or on alternate days as possible, the provincial governor will meet the public to hear the complaints/grievances.
- Visitors come with written complaints about their problems while meeting the provincial governor or contact person for complaints/grievances redress.
- All important petitions are sent to the fourth counter where they are entered into a computer with the help of user-friendly software.
- Alternatively, a manually written register is maintained until the computers are procured and software is written and put into use.
- Automatically, a covering letter is generated by the computer and two copies are printed. One is attached with the petition and is sent to the officer concerned with time limit and the other is given to the applicant as a receipt.
- Once the problem is solved, the officer informs the provincial office. The officer in charge of the section can decide that whether the problem can be disposed off at his level or if necessary, he/she will send it to the Governor.
- The provincial office will maintain a register (manual or IT enabled) of referrals received from the districts and municipalities. They are dealt within the provincial office and data

are maintained. Once the data are input, an immediate acknowledgement is sent to the district/municipality as the case may be.

- As soon as the case is settled, the matter is deleted from the computer's unsettled complaint database. However, it will generate a monthly report on the status of every complaint/grievance received.
- A report of district wise references received and settled
- A report of municipality wise references received and settled will also be generated.
- Officer wise, department wise daily status is monitored. Whenever there is a meeting of provincial officials, the status is reviewed and reminders are sent.
- They are entered in the IPG system and the progress is reviewed periodically.
- Complaints of serious nature and recurring complaints are sent to the vigilance wing for further investigation.
- District governors will conduct monthly district coordination committee meetings with the representatives of all the ministries working in the district and the complaints/grievances are discussed

## **5. Monitoring systems for PGHS**

Grievances handling systems will need to have monitoring systems in place, or there will not be scope for adequate oversight and accountability. It is therefore suggested, that at every level of grievances handling, a reporting system be put in place. This reporting system will generate periodic reports and submit them to the senior officers who will take any necessary corrective measures. It is suggested that:

- i. Daily reports of grievances/complaints received and disposed are to be generated and submitted to the section officer.
- ii. Weekly report of grievances received and disposed are to be generated and submitted to the Director of Public Grievances or Complaints.
- iii. Monthly reports/status reports are generated and submitted to the provincial and district governors
- iv. Monthly reports are also generated and sent to IDLG at the center.
- v. In addition, there will be a monthly narrative on the nature and type of grievances/complaints analyzing grievances/complaints situation in the province, district, and the municipality.
- vi. The officers at IDLG central office will receive the reports, review, and give feedback to the field offices. Wherever necessary, capacity-building programmes are designed and delivered by the IDLG central office.

## **6. Information Technology for Grievances/complaints Redress**

Using Information technology for grievances/complaints handling is ideal. However, the current level of computerization of administration in Afghanistan is very slow and takes time to reach an environment of e-governance. At the same time, we need not sit looking for the day to come. Migration from one system to another system is possible later. Therefore, it is suggested that PGHS may be started with manual handling of grievances/complaints and wherever possible using computers as stand-alone systems. Once initiatives are underway to establish e-governance systems for sub-national governance, the manual or stand-alone computer systems can be transferred to the e-governance network.

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