Do No Harm in Afghanistan: A Study in Cycles

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This document was developed as part of a collaborative learning project directed by CDA. It is part of a collection of documents that should be considered initial and partial findings of the project. These documents are written to allow for the identification of cross-cutting issues and themes across a range of situations. Each case represents the views and perspectives of a variety of people at the time when it was written.

**These documents do not represent a final product of the project.** While these documents may be cited, they remain working documents of a collaborative learning effort. Broad generalizations about the project’s findings cannot be made from a single case.

CDA would like to acknowledge the generosity of the individuals and agencies involved in donating their time, experience and insights for these reports, and for their willingness to share their experiences.

Not all the documents written for any project have been made public. When people in the area where a report has been done have asked us to protect their anonymity and security, in deference to them and communities involved, we keep those documents private.
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### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACBAR</td>
<td>Agency Coordination Body for Afghan Relief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanaid</td>
<td>A British organisation involved in long-term development</td>
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<td>AIHRC</td>
<td>Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (formerly Collaborative for Development Action)</td>
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<td>CDC</td>
<td>Community Development Council</td>
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<td>CoAR</td>
<td>Coordination of Afghan Relief</td>
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<td>CPAU</td>
<td>Cooperation for Peace And Unity</td>
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<td>DED</td>
<td>German Development Cooperation</td>
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<td>DNH</td>
<td>Do No Harm</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRSP</td>
<td>Ghazni Rural Support Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helvetas</td>
<td>Swiss Association for International Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoF</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance</td>
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<tr>
<td>MRRD</td>
<td>Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediothek</td>
<td>German Afghan Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCA</td>
<td>Norwegian Church Aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSP</td>
<td>National Solidarity Program (of MRRD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRT</td>
<td>The military Provincial Reconstruction Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDF</td>
<td>Sanayia Development Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shura</td>
<td>A community-level committee for development &amp; decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWOT</td>
<td>Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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In 2006, the Do No Harm Project of CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA) set out to determine how Do No Harm (DNH) was being used in the world and whether that use was leading to more effective programming decisions. A series of Reflective Case Studies was written in multiple countries to determine how practitioners in those places are learning, thinking about, using and spreading DNH. Some organizations are experienced and effective in applying Do No Harm principles and framework to their work, while others are struggling. This range of experience provides valuable lessons. Whether implementing Do No Harm in their daily work, in their program design and monitoring, or in shaping policies and organizational procedures, the cases look at where in their work people find it easy to use Do No Harm, where they find roadblocks, and how (or if) they overcame them.

INTRODUCTION

This case study began with questions about how Afghanistan turned out to be such fertile territory for a self-driven approach to DNH use. The hope was to identify some key factors, in order to share the approach more successfully elsewhere. Did the ideas catch hold in Afghanistan because of something about Afghanistan, or the particular individuals who were exposed and passed on the ideas there, or the particular organisations who participated in training events? Perhaps the key was the timing or the situation, where Afghanistan stood in terms of development and conflict. If these are key factors, it may not be possible to replicate them, but it may be possible to select other promising sites. Or did Do No Harm spread because of characteristics of the trainers who worked in Afghanistan, or the way they did seminars, selected participants, or followed up with them? In that case, CDA could learn a great deal about how to do its dissemination work better.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The authors of this case study, Sue Williams and Hamidullah Natiq, have considerable experience working with Do No Harm and with organisations working in Afghanistan, though neither is formally a staff member of CDA or any of the organisations which use Do No Harm in Afghanistan. They set out with a commitment to look, with open minds, at what they saw and heard. They interviewed individuals and organisations who use Do No Harm regularly, some enthusiastically, some dutifully, some rather critically. They made particular efforts to interview people who seem to be in a position to use Do No Harm, but DO NOT use it, to find out why not.

They did not have a formal list of questions, nor attempt to structure the interviews the same way all the time. They did have a set of starting questions (see Appendix.) As the interviews proceeded, new questions arose, and these were incorporated as well.

Interviews involved varying numbers of people, from one to seven. Some concentrated on individuals who had particular experience of Do No Harm. Others sought an organisational view, so the organisation generally decided who would participate.

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1. The Do No Harm Project was originally called Local Capacities for Peace, and is still referred to by this name in some areas. The name changed after a publication on the project’s initial findings entitled *Do No Harm: How aid can support peace – or war* (Mary B. Anderson, CDA, 1999).
2. See Appendix for a list of those interviewed and their organisational affiliation, if any.
At the outset, the intention was to visit at least one area outside Kabul and interview agencies there. However, among those identified as crucial to interview, all were either based in Kabul or happened to be there at the time of the interviews. Therefore, all interviews were conducted in Kabul. It is likely that interviews in other areas would have turned up interesting issues as well, and perhaps different ones than were found in Kabul.

It was clear from the outset that Do No Harm had spread widely among Afghan development and humanitarian NGOs. This led to an early decision to show this spread in the form of a map, in a somewhat epidemiological way: Who caught the idea from whom, and to whom did they pass it on? This was a fascinating set of questions, though time limited the depth of the results.

THIS REPORT

In the report which follows, the authors pull together results from interviews with a wide variety of people. It begins with a description of the changing environment for aid agencies, during Afghanistan’s recent political upheavals, followed by a brief history of the development and spread of Do No Harm. There are sections focusing on particular aspects of the issue, including sections on what is particularly useful about Do No Harm, and what obstacles there are to its use. Finally, there are conclusions and a few recommendations.

ASSISTANCE AND AID ORGANISATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN, 1996-2001

Following the mujahideen victory over Soviet forces in 1992, Afghanistan had been subject to competition between political and ethnic factions, and in 1994 the Taliban became the acknowledged major challenger. In 1996, the Taliban won Kabul and most of the rest of the country, and imposed a severe form of Islam.

During this time, due to the severity of the Taliban regime, aid organisations had little room to manoeuvre inside Afghanistan, and most moved their headquarters to nearby Pakistan (mostly Peshawar or Islamabad.) The Taliban were very suspicious of the aid organisations, and the aid agencies were reluctant to give the Taliban regime any legitimacy. It was not permitted to employ women, nor to support girls’ or women’s health or education programmes, but many aid agencies continued to test the limits of what they could do.

Even working from a base in Pakistan, it was not easy to continue aid or development projects, and there were dilemmas. For instance, many of those organisations that were involved in education established home-based schools. But they felt they needed to protect the project and the beneficiaries by seeking the approval of the Taliban, and this ended up giving more power and legitimacy to the regime.

Some organisations stopped their activities in the areas that were controlled by the Taliban, for example, the UN banned aid assistance in those areas. Rather, the international agencies focused their aid assistance projects more in the northern regions, which were generally under the control of the northern alliance, and where the Taliban had less power. Afghan organisations continued to try to assist in all areas, but, since the Taliban were more
strict in some areas than in others, there were variations in levels of aid. As the result, the resources did not reach some of those people in need, and the resource distribution and humanitarian assistance were not equal, which exacerbated animosity between the northern and southern parts of the country.

**AID ASSISTANCE AND THE ORGANISATIONS 2001-2006**

After the Bonn conference, it was agreed that an interim government be established by the political parties (Dec. 2001.) NGOs and aid agencies participated in the conference, and had a significant role as part of civil society during the process of establishing the interim government.

Meanwhile, inside Afghanistan, Kabul was under attack from US troops (beginning in October, 2001) in order to push the Taliban regime from power. This resulted in people being left more vulnerable, unable to meet their basic needs. Due to the unstable situation and military operations, most aid agencies worked from offices in Pakistan or other neighbouring countries.

Very soon after the release of Afghanistan from the power of the Taliban, agencies returned to Kabul (early 2002.) In addition, new international agencies flocked into Afghanistan, bringing large budgets, and more than 2000 local NGOs grew up like mushrooms and registered in the newly-established Ministry of Planning. These new NGOs received emergency / relief aid from donors, but many lacked accounting and management systems, and there was no overall co-ordination, which resulted in competition among agencies and suspicion about the role of NGOs. Again, quality of and access to assistance varied greatly. New agencies, both local and international, lacked a long-term analysis and understanding of the conflict, the actors, the ethnic relations, and the work of other NGOs. Some such aid assistance programmes reinforced dependency and destroyed the long-term Do No Harm vision of self-reliance and careful assistance.

Since it came to power, the interim government has been preoccupied with establishing its own control and credibility, and has tended to view civil society as being in competition, rather than a partner in meeting people’s needs. One minister, in particular, was an outspoken critic of NGOs, did not distinguish between the new and the experienced, and left many ordinary people feeling that civil society sought to exploit them. The consequence has been rivalry between government and civil society, at local as well as national levels, which has been an additional irritant in an already difficult aid situation.

**HISTORY OF DNH IN AFGHANISTAN**

Do No Harm was introduced by CDA through Norwegian Church Aid - Afghanistan (NCA) in 1995, while most NGOs were based in Pakistan. A case study was carried out at that time, under the auspices of CDA’s programme, Local Capacities for Peace. Later, based on the case study, Afghanistan was also included in CDA’s consultations in developing the concept of Do No Harm (the name by which the programme is now known). NCA was the pioneer in the Local Capacities for Peace project, then involving their partners, including CoAR, CPAU and ACBAR. The early case studies and consultations were very important. Afghans felt a
sense of involvement and ownership from the beginning. Those involved trace the
development of their own ideas in the project, and their own programmes in the case
studies and training regimen.

For some years, NCA was the lead agency for Do No Harm in Afghanistan. It started from its
local partners to build the capacities of other organisations, in order to mainstream the
approach. Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU,) a network and one of NCA’s partners,
disseminated the concepts more broadly among organisations working inside Afghanistan.
NCA was supporting CPAU technically and financially to continue DNH capacity-building
during the years 1998-2000. NCA also facilitated another partner, CoAR, to mainstream
DNH in Sayed Ababad district of Wardak. Over time, CPAU incorporated DNH with
peacebuilding training courses, conducted both in Peshawar and inside Afghanistan, even
during the Taliban time. Now, CPAU is offering DNH training to Peace Councils (CDCs) in its
project areas.

Over time, the role of both NCA and CPAU has changed, and their promotion of Do No Harm
has declined. Now, DED has taken the lead in dissemination of DNH. Through CDA,
international consultants and national experts, DED has sponsored a series of DNH
workshops in Kabul as well as at provincial levels during 2004-2005. DED also sponsored a
DNH and peacebuilding assessment research to explore how many organisations are
involved in these two subjects.

MOTIVATION: WHOSE NEED?

To a remarkable extent, interest in Do No Harm has grown and been spread among Afghans
themselves. It is not seen as something devised elsewhere and then brought to
Afghanistan, rather as something that Afghans themselves were involved in elaborating.
There is still some dependence on CDA or international organisations like NCA and DED to
organise and fund training. Local NGO staff disseminate the ideas among their own
colleagues, and donors and partners as well.

At the time (mid-90s) when Local Capacities for Peace began, most agencies had to base
themselves in Pakistan, and Peshawar in particular was a hot-bed of Afghan NGO activity.
Reflecting on this, several respondents said that it was a time when everyone was desperate
for new ideas, new possibilities, and organisations were willing for their staff to take the
time for study and exploration. Do No Harm emerged as a way of dealing with problems
people had already begun to identify. As several people said, the need existed, the concepts
were beginning to emerge, and Do No Harm offered a framework, a vocabulary, and an
analytical tool.

Do No Harm in Afghanistan has perhaps more of a peace orientation among its proponents
than would be the case in many countries. This appears to be due in part to the country’s
long history of invasion, war, and conflict. It may also result from timing, since Do No Harm
was developing at the same time that training in conflict resolution / transformation was
becoming more widely available, and the same people became fired up about both sets of
ideas and found them compatible.
KEY PEOPLE

As is evident in the map of Do No Harm in Afghanistan, there is a web of contacts, and certain individuals and organisations are named again and again. Surely the ‘spider in the web’ is Ehsan Zia, the one person most often mentioned as the “father of Do No Harm in Afghanistan.” Ehsan was working with NCA in the 1990s, and was a key catalyst in bringing Local Capacities for Peace to Afghanistan, and getting agreement to do a case study on NCA’s work. Fahim Hakim is also mentioned as a key person in this early time. In 1994, the network CPAU was started by a group which included both Ehsan and Fahim, as well as Mohammad Suleiman, Raz Dalili, Jawed Ludin and others. Having formed a network, they had a shared identity which was known as a base for Do No Harm, and they supported each other in using the approach and training others. Many of their personal and organisational contacts became involved with Do No Harm at this time.

In 2001, as it became possible for organisations to return to Kabul, some of these key people took on new roles. Ehsan Zia, Hanif Atmar (of NCA), and Jawed Ludin went into government. Fahim Hakim, who had been coordinator of CPAU, became deputy director of the Independent Human Rights Commission. Mohammad Suleiman, who had been deputy director of ADA, became coordinator of CPAU, and more recently joined government service. By 2006, Hanif Atmar had become Minister of Education, and Ehsan Zia Minister of Rehabilitation and Rural Development, in charge of the huge National Solidarity Program (NSP.) Raz Dalili remained with SDF, which became a major implementer of NSP, using a Do No Harm approach.

KEY ORGANISATIONS

In the early stages, NCA was the central organisation, offering both training and materials, and (crucially) translating the Do No Harm book and materials for local use. For a few years, both NCA and CPAU were both key disseminators of DNH. Then, as NCA lost interest, CPAU increased its commitment, and CPAU and SDF became more active in training others. CPAU has continued in the role of providing advice and materials, although it no longer seems to see Do No Harm as a central role. Then, in 2004, DED and CDA jointly offered a training in Afghanistan, and DED committed itself to training its partners and others. Some of those organisations, such as Mediothek and Afghanaid, are now beginning to do trainings as well. GRSP, ACBAR, and CoAR have continued as major implementers of DNH, and got much bigger as implementers of NSP. There are literally hundreds of new NGOs, both Afghan and international. And, to bring everything full circle, NCA is now arranging for its staff to be trained in Do No Harm by a member of the CPAU network.

For organisations, particularly international agencies, the cycle seems to be significant. NCA, which began DNH in Afghanistan, now needs to have others build its capacity to use DNH. DED and Helvetas have recently become interested, and are in the early stages of using DNH. Some Afghan organisations have used DNH consistently over the years, while others have found it, lost it, and caught it again. For some, Do No Harm has been supplanted by another approach (which their own organisation may prefer, or which may be preferred by a donor or lead agency). There are fashions in this, as in many areas of endeavour, and Do No Harm has weathered several cycles.
HOW DO PEOPLE FIND OUT ABOUT DO NO HARM?

As is shown on the map which follows, Do No Harm spread in Afghanistan through cycles of dissemination, with a small number of key catalysts. Interestingly, however, the story is not confined to Afghanistan itself. CDA, of course, has had a role, in returning to offer training, and in inviting people to its international consultations. CDA’s has been an intermittent role: certainly, if Do No Harm were only used by people directly trained by CDA, it would not have had the impact it has. And often people do not actually remember CDA by name: several people said that they had been trained by ‘a tall man’ or ‘a Canadian academic,’ remembering neither the name nor the organisation. Most reported being exposed or trained by one of the key Afghan disseminators listed above, or by someone trained by them (sometimes identified by name, sometimes by organisation.) This seems to indicate that DNH has taken root, and is being spread by people far removed from the originators.

Some of the key catalysts were involved in the early development of DNH. Others came across it in a variety of ways. The new program director of Helvetas participated in a DNH training by SwissPeace. The current program coordinator of NCA learned about Do No Harm through a Danish church bishop. One NGO worker who now does trainings in DNH learned of it only indirectly, because of what he heard about one of Raz Dalili’s workshops which he himself did not attend. GRSP’s story (see box below) involved various international influences, and the role of chance, timing and determination.

The DNH involvement of Ghazni Rural Support Program (GRSP) was more of a self-help model. M.E. Zeerak, executive director, got a copy of NCA’s Dari version of Do No Harm soon after it was published; he was given it by Mennonites. He saw that it addressed problems he and his colleagues had observed, got more copies from NCA, and took them home to Ghazni. He and other members of his staff worked their way through the book, inventing ways to train themselves and others and to implement this new approach. To this day, it is a basic part of all their programmes.

Individuals have become key catalysts of Do No Harm in various ways. Some have undergone formal training and capacity-building (including Training for Trainers) by CDA, others have learnt about it through their work, still others have come to it by chance. Whether people caught the idea and wanted to spread it did not seem to depend on how they found out about it.

CONCLUSION
The pattern is cyclical. At each of three stages, a lead agency (NCA, then CPAU, then DED) has disseminated and promoted DNH. As awareness and capacity to use DNH increase, its use spreads. In each new cycle, many agencies accept Do No Harm as a tool or approach, but are in the early stages of applying it in their own programme cycle. So, for some time, many organisations remained limited to training and capacity-building, sometimes with little follow-up and limited implementation. Meanwhile, some organisations have used Do No Harm for many years, and enshrine it systematically in their policies and practices. And, even as the interest and capacity of organisations varies, individuals become quite expert in
the use of DNH, and carry it with them as they move to new posts and new organisations, even into government.

The result has been that, in Afghanistan, the interest and commitment of organisations has ebbed and flowed, but that of individual Afghans has remained a steady current. Whether by chance or design, CDA has facilitated from a distance (see the section on Requests for CDA Support), with intermittent interest from international organisations, and this has left space for Afghan DNH experts to take the major role as catalysts and disseminators.

**MAP OF HOW DO NO HARM SPREAD**

Results of interviews have been incorporated in the map / timeline which follows, showing the spread of Do No Harm in Afghanistan.
THE SPREAD OF DO NO HARM IN AFGHANISTAN: EPIDEMIOLOGICAL MAP

Timeline
1994
In Peshawar

In Afghanistan
2001
2004
2006

CDA

NCA

Ehsan Zia

Mary Anderson

Arne Strand

Book

CoAR

M. Suleman

GRSP

CPAU

ADADA

APDA

SDF

Raz Dalili

Habitat

Fahim Hakim

Concern

ACBAR

DED

Helvetas

Afghanaid

H. Natiq

Mediothek

Many agencies

Many agencies

KEY

→ In contact about Do No Harm

→ Training in Do No Harm

→ Implementing Do No Harm

*In italics, names of individuals key to dissemination*
FINDINGS

I. WHAT IS USEFUL / IMPORTANT ABOUT DNH?

No one said Do No Harm does not work.

That statement, which is quite bald, is basically true of those we interviewed. When pressed, they might manage to name one organisation which did not seem to find DNH useful, or a specific type of situation when Do No Harm might be less useful (less useful when there is less overt conflict, less useful in huge programs than in small ones.) But, overall, there was agreement that Do No Harm is useful. Many had stories to offer as evidence, stories of programmes done without this approach, and of the contrast when DNH was used.

As to what, specifically, is useful or important, the following were mentioned, in decreasing order of frequency:
- inclusive: not exacerbate conflict because including all important actors, checking whether aid is balanced between groups
- cross-cutting issue
- conceptual approach
- preventive --- realistic assessment of likely consequences before doing the program --- ask whether before asking how
- conflict resolution: shows the need for it, can be a tool for it
- focuses attention on causes, not symptoms

The following specific comments and examples give a broader sense of what was meant.

INCLUSIVE

Everyone interviewed mentioned the inclusiveness of Do No Harm, which they saw as becoming part of their fundamental way of looking at their own work and its possible consequences. Do No Harm helped them to notice actors and imbalances that might otherwise have been ignored, and later caused the project to come to grief. This aspect dovetailed closely with the preventive aspect, in that it helped people to have a realistic estimate in advance of the possible consequences of a project or activity.

One organisation gave an example of being asked to assist another NGO which was two years into a large project, and nothing was turning out well. The first agency had tried to implement an NSP project by focusing on technical issues, skipping conflict analysis and community consultation, and the project was mired in conflict. Using Do No Harm for analysis, and structured dialogue for consultation, revealed why certain groups were undermining the project, and what they really needed. Once they were included, and with Do No Harm used to re-design, the project turned around in just a few months, with broad community support and smooth implementation of what had been agreed.
Once inclusiveness had become automatic, most agencies found that they could find constructive ways to work with almost any actors. For example, NSP had thrown up a number of situations where existing shuras were about to be replaced by new CDCs. These CDCs were seen as a kind of shura, but often included new people, such as women, young people, the educated, and businessmen. When elders, religious leaders, and commanders were included in the process of establishing new shuras, it was often (though not always) possible to have a smooth transition. Often, the traditional shuras continued, with new or slightly modified roles (see below.)

AS A CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE

Several agencies reported that Do No Harm is used by their staff as an approach across all issues (water, health, education, etc.) For some, this meant a conceptual understanding of Do No Harm, as a lens through which to view all issues. For others, it also included an analytical approach, and specifically the use of the matrix to analyse, re-design, and/or evaluate their own programme elements.

Sometimes, Do No Harm was effective precisely because it was taken for granted as a fundamental approach, and integrated into everything. This meant that potential problems could be seen in a less confrontational way, without polarising people around the issue.

Another NGO was working with a remote community to establish a CDC. When the issue of elections arose, most people said that elections were not necessary, since it was clear that the commander would be selected as leader. The NGO workers agreed that this would be a fine result, but then explained in Do No Harm terms the importance of a secret ballot, so that everyone could express a view. The people agreed, and proceeded to elect a very different committee, with a woman as leader, and this result was supported.

AS A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH:

Those who have been working here for a long time (mostly nationals, but a few international organisations and individuals) have seen Do No Harm develop over many years. From its earliest days, they have found it useful conceptually, to help them, their colleagues, their communities, and government begin to share an understanding of the challenges of development and humanitarian aid in the midst of conflict.

Two Afghan NGOs, which were active in the ‘80s and ‘90s, reported that aid was coming through commanders and warlords at that time. They had a sense that this was not good, but were not successful in explaining to communities why this was a problem. Once Do No Harm came on the scene, they said, they had a framework for describing the dilemma, and people immediately understood and supported channelling aid through independent NGOs.

NGOs reported that they need DNH as a tool because nearly all of them work with communities which are conflicted. A particular current issue is the return of people who

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3 A shura is a group of people authorised to make decisions. Originally an Islamic structure, it has been adopted and adapted in Afghanistan for many purposes.
fled, and now feel unsafe to return, so they remain abroad or in Kabul. There is a government now in place, but old forms of governance continue, as does some of the chaos, and considerable international intervention / interference. Transitions of this kind are times of low levels of trust, times when the rules are not agreed, and times with a high level of resource transfer. The future is unknown, so no one will risk too much by committing entirely to one possibility. Afghan organisations, in particular, use Do No Harm to raise the awareness within divided communities of the likely worsening of conflict with the interjection of aid, particularly if displaced people do not feel safe to return.

We expect NGOs or government to understand what communities themselves do not understand: How people have reacted to their changing situation, and how to change it. Do No Harm helps us to explore this with the community.

Many of those interviewed mentioned particularly the impact of connector-divider analysis in raising awareness and shifting paradigms within communities. Specific comments:

- It was striking for people to see connectors and dividers at the same time, and the possibility that individuals or groups could play a different role, once they understood the dynamic.
- It is important for people to understand that they might (even unintentionally) function as dividers, but also to affirm that people at grass-roots level are often connectors.

Finally, there was some mention of the underlying values of Do No Harm, and the usefulness of reinforcing community values. A specific example of this was the connection to the equivalent expression in the Koran: Do no harm, and accept no harm. This was suggested as a way of embedding Do No Harm in Islamic culture, and at the same time an empowering extension. There is a responsibility to ensure that agencies do not cause harm, and a responsibility even on bystanders to ensure that others are not harmed.

TO PREVENT INADVERTENT DAMAGE

There was virtually universal acceptance that a key function of Do No Harm is to prevent preventable conflicts in the implementation of aid projects. Many of those interviewed told stories of how this had operated. Some underlined the impact on their own projects and those of other agencies, with some effect on higher level donors and decision-makers, as projects were able to show greater sustainability with less conflict and sabotage. An interesting dimension was that a number of the stories involved reflecting on the past, to a time before Do No Harm had been articulated.

In 1992-3, emergency relief programmes had problems. For example, we distributed food without any information about the communities, which caused conflict. Then Do No Harm came, and we learned about the communities. This made us aware of the different ethnic groups, and the importance of checking whether aid was equal. We involved the leaders and the communities, and there was no such conflict.
NGOs which had long been active on the ground (whether national or international) were particularly likely to focus on the preventive impact on the community itself, and the use of Do No Harm to build the capacity of the community to assess what is offered.

One agency pointed out that their staff had used Do No Harm and the Tajik case study to show communities that aid itself was not the problem, rather the way that aid projects were done. Instead of being suspicious or negative toward aid, the community has begun to judge aid projects according to their transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness. This is a kind of empowerment, and also reduces their manipulability.

There was also a keen awareness that the real prevention became possible when communities themselves, and not just government or NGO workers, took on board the concepts of Do No Harm and used them to examine their own situation.

In 2001, the government introduced programmes of substitution for poppy-growing. What actually happened is that the money went to influential people, there was more corruption than ever, more people grew poppies, and local authorities lost legitimacy. A contrasting approach was taken by a particular government minister involved in an FAO project, which was not even intended to stop poppy-growing. He planted fruit trees and gardens to show that this was a sustainable livelihood, and people switched voluntarily. Having communities analyse this kind of example, which is already known to them, and which reinforces their own value system, makes a real change in their behaviour as well as their attitude.

FOCUS ON CAUSES

Several people pointed out that Do No Harm had enabled them, and the communities they work with, to focus on the deeper causes of conflict, and not just the symptoms. This involved analysing systems and structures, as well as seeing the historical development of conflict and competing forces.

One way of understanding the importance of focusing on causes was that this made development projects into peacebuilding. Good development is good peacebuilding, said some, because it has the conflict-sensitivity, the long-term focus, the ability to take into account connectors and dividers at the same time.

One organisation told a story of a road-building project. As it happened, the two major groups in the area had a long-standing conflict, which kept erupting in any discussion of the proposed road. Do No Harm helped them to focus on the deep conflict issues, and eventually to manage these well enough so that they seem to be resolved. And, also, the road was built.

A particular aspect of this was that communities developed a sensitivity to who had an interest in continued conflict. The NGO which mentioned this was strong enough even to feel proud when the community mentioned not only warlords but NGOs as benefiting from continuing conflict.
FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Many NGO and development workers saw new roles for themselves as conflict-resolvers because of Do No Harm. Government programmes as well as national and international NGOs built on Do No Harm as an approach in order to develop new ways to resolve conflicts. Several examples were offered of long-standing inter-group conflicts resolved as part of the Do No Harm process of consultation around new projects (e.g., water, road-building, bridges, CDCs.)

The Shuras themselves now say that they used to resolve conflicts according to tradition, by acting as a judge or arbitrator. Now they use a Do No Harm approach, getting people more involved in resolving their own conflicts, and not just declaring that one side is right and the other wrong. They find that this works better, and they (elders and shuras) have even more credibility than before.

At the same time, one example was offered of a situation in which Do No Harm raised latent conflicts, which then halted the project.

MRRD had one project where the conflict analysis and broad consultation among stakeholders brought to the surface conflicts which had long been hidden. Consequently, staff were unable to resolve the conflicts, and the project was stopped.

This was seen as a warning that, if staff use Do No Harm, they must have conflict resolution skills to cope with latent conflicts which become explicit.

OTHER EFFECTS OF DNH

Some agencies were also conscious that Do No Harm changes how communities see themselves, leading them to notice differences and to include everyone in their description of the community. As one development worker commented, people began to see themselves as connectors, and to take a role in resolving local conflicts.

Vivid comments included these:
- “Do No Harm helps people see what war has brought them, so they are not so quick to fight again.”
- “It is important that the people see themselves as connectors.”
- “When we showed connections between Do No Harm and religious ideas, the mullah said he was surprised to learn that NGOs had such attitudes.”
- “Including everyone prevents many conflicts, but it is also a dilemma, because it gives legitimacy even to those who have caused problems before.”

Other specific comments about the usefulness of Do No Harm referred to it as: a code of conduct; a way of ensuring that one does not repeat mistakes; a strategy tool; and a useful complement to other approaches, such as SPHERE and PRA.
ISSUES WHICH WERE LESS CLEAR

Some organisations reported that all staff have adopted the DNH perspective, while others acknowledge that refresher courses are needed. As staff move to new posts or new organisations, they need training for new ways to use DNH. Most saw both the need for further training and the movement of staff as a drain on their resources.

One NGO valued Do No Harm because it did not take too much time to collect useful data, so it was useful even in emergencies. Another had just the opposite view, that Do No Harm took too long, and therefore was useful more as a concept than as an analytical tool.

Donors and large, international implementing partners were a key concern of all other groups --- government, national NGOs, and smaller international NGOs. They reported that large donors and contractors lacked awareness of the situation and of other actors in the field, often insisted on pre-designed projects, did not see consultation or relationship-building as necessary, and valued quick implementation more than thorough or sustainable projects. There were also positive examples, including one donor cited specifically for being flexible, and for offering NGOs the opportunity to select areas to work in, and to change as circumstances changed.

II. CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES

This section will present challenges, obstacles and dilemmas that appeared in the course of the study. Some of these are inherent in Do No Harm, others inherent in the situation in Afghanistan, and some result from the intersection between the two. In this section, we will look first at the situation of Afghanistan, and then at challenges in the use and implementation of Do No Harm itself.

CHANGES OVER TIME

During the Taliban time, most agencies were based in Pakistan. The staff and their families lived far from the area of work, so they were often separated. Still, the agencies were located near each other, and this gave them many opportunities to meet together, learn new methodologies (such as Do No Harm,) and reflect together on problems and future possibilities. In this respect, the immediate context was favourable to co-ordination and thoughtful reflection.

NGO staff knew that the Taliban were suspicious of them, particularly if they used foreign / Western ideas, words, and approaches. There was considerable pressure on NGO staff, both Afghan and international, to accept the Taliban as the legitimate government, and to work by their rules. Most agencies worked quite close to the limits, constantly testing, trying to do more with women and girls, to include local voices in consultations about aid, to involve populations in long-term development, and in many ways to empower a population which the Taliban were determined to repress.

In these early days of the development of Do No Harm, many individuals and organisations were excited about the idea. Most felt that this offered ways to think about and respond to
the difficult circumstances. There was a language for describing ethical dilemmas, and a perception of shared values and ideals. Not many knew the methodology well enough to implement it completely, but they found it helpful conceptually and analytically.

HOW NGOs AND GOVERNMENT ARE SEEN NOW

This is an acute issue at the moment, not only in terms of Do No Harm, but in all aspects of NGO work. One interviewee commented that the distance between local people and NGOs has increased. This has been exacerbated by verbal attacks against NGOs from one specific government minister.

This has been a pattern in many countries experiencing political transition. If earlier governments failed, lacked legitimacy, or did not provide services, NGOs often became the key providers of services, and circumvented government in order to do so. Now, as government tries to establish its legitimacy, it is particularly sensitive toward any implication that it is not fulfilling its responsibilities, and keen that aid and services should come through government channels.

Local people see competition: different levels of government, NGOs, local warlords and commanders, all wish to be seen as legitimate and effective. In some communities, accusations that NGOs are spies for foreign governments or are disseminating Christianity and Western ideas seem plausible. Like many countries, Afghanistan does not have a long tradition of civil society, nor a clear understanding of the roles of different actors. Many new organisations have been set up and call themselves NGOs, and communities see that they are acting for the benefit of a family or an ethnic group.

This presents dilemmas in general, and also with regard to Do No Harm.

Inclusivity presents one dilemma cited by several sources. In earlier years, people went to local commanders to seek services. The current government believes it is legitimate, and is struggling to establish itself instead of local commanders as the legitimate authority. Yet a Do No Harm understanding drives NGOs to consult commanders, as well as government and other stakeholders. This causes government to feel de-legitimised, and may reinforce local beliefs that the warlords continue in authority.

NGOs see themselves as having long years of hard-won experience working in Afghan communities, sometimes from a base in nearby Pakistan, but always hard at work and facing risks. Now, they are out-numbered by “new money” and new agencies, whom they see as uninformed about the situation and seeking easier ways to get aid through quickly --- the very agencies who most need to use Do No Harm, but who often do not.

DONOR / POLICY-MAKER CONSTRAINTS

Several national NGOs report having introduced DNH concepts to donors. The national NGOs shared a clear sense that communities need this tool, which would give them a framework to analyse assistance, and limit or constrain or refuse it. In setting up CDCs, they felt that both NGOs and communities should know DNH and use it to plan and monitor.
Some wanted donors or ministries to require that all implementing agencies use Do No Harm. Yet these same NGOs would resent being required to use other tools they themselves did not find useful.

Many donors do support the use of Do No Harm. Among others, there were different degrees of donor resistance to Do No Harm: some did not require it, others were not interested in it, some required another approach, and a few were reported to be actively opposed to or disdainful of it. We followed up reports of active resistance to Do No Harm, trying to ascertain what were the objections or problems. In the event, however, even UNICEF, the agency most often cited as actively opposed to Do No Harm, did not accept this characterisation. Staff we spoke to were generally less aware of Do No Harm, and did not get the impression that UNICEF wanted them to use it or even learn about it. One UNICEF staff member was quite enthusiastic about DNH (having moved over from another agency that used it,) and it may be that he will change this attitude from within. Clearly, it is more of a problem for an Afghan NGO if government or their main donor actively does not want them to use DNH.

Another key obstacle is time. Are the agencies allowed / encouraged to take time (staff and project time) to analyse, consult, plan carefully, and maybe build capacity, before being expected to produce results? Some take this time anyway, and just accept being regarded as slow or ineffective, at least in the short term. SDF, for example, reported that it is working with partners, donors (UNHCR), and a government program (NSP) which do not support DNH. SDF has been trying to use it in small ways, and just accept that it will put in extra time. Others dispute with donors, trying to educate them and change the way they work.

NSP produces a kind of league table of implementing partners (for example, one NGO informed us that they were 2nd in one category, 3rd in another, 1st overall among 30 or so implementing partners of NSP.) This really upset some Afghan NGOs, who said that it showed who spent money fastest, who got a CDC set up in the shortest time, but used a very short-term perspective. Those who use Do No Harm say that the expenditure of time is more than repaid in the long term, because it prevents conflicts and ensures real development.

Many of those interviewed said that large donors (and especially the UN system) were unwilling to use Do No Harm because they did not want to focus attention on the consequences of their projects. “The UN doesn’t want to admit their own implicit ethical messages: armed guards, high salaries, privileges.”

DONOR / GOVERNMENT PRACTICE

One specific set of practices by governments as donors was cited as a source of problems by several interviewees. It has been the practice of the current Afghan government to “assign” provinces to particular donors. Thus, we were told, the German government takes particular responsibility for Kunduz, for example. Aid is achieved partly through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), which are actually military units of the foreign government involved. So, in this example, much of the aid for Kunduz is distributed through German military teams. This is seen as quick aid, and presumably also has the effect of giving
military units a constructive responsibility, and thereby perhaps gaining greater confidence on the part of the people.

There are quite a lot of issues that could be raised about this practice. The Do No Harm issues raised by several organisations included the following:

- This reinforces old habits of looking to military commanders for assistance, rather than civil society or a legitimate government.
- PRTs are not aware of the nuances of the conflict, nor of actors already at work on the ground. They do not collaborate with other actors.
- PRTs do not engage in Do No Harm-type analysis or consultation. The aid they provide is very likely to exacerbate existing conflicts and create new ones. Aid channelled through either NGOs or the Afghan government is more likely to be done in a conflict-sensitive way.
- This aid is not sustainable, and undercuts the structures needed for long-term development.

NEW GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES

At all levels of society, there are new structures: Community Development Committees, Provincial Development Committees, newly-elected shuras with a variety of responsibilities, etc. Many of the people involved in these structures are new to their roles, and the roles themselves are new as well. Agencies reported that these structures have considerable resources and decision-making at their disposal, yet they are not generally aware of the various actors involved, their respective roles, the nuances of inter-group relations, or the options available to them in implementing their role. In some cases, community members have had more training and experience in development and Do No Harm, yet the people in the new structures do not seem to see what they do not know or need from others. Some NGOs involved in establishing these structures provide extensive training, back-up, and advice, yet higher levels of government are often defensive about this.

MANIPULATION

One ongoing concern is that it continues to be possible to manipulate people, so that they react quickly and destructively. There was a sense that neither Do No Harm or any other development or peace approach could keep up with the spiral of distrust. Any training or capacity-building of communities needed to include an element which would enable people to resist being manipulated to act against their own interests. This is particularly acute when the population is already suspicious of NGOs.

Some time ago, a radio announcement promised NSP would bring $20,000 to each community. Immediately, our office was surrounded by a huge crowd demanding their share, which they had worked out as $200 per family. Of course, the $20,000 was an average of what NSP would spend on community projects over a period of time, but the people were not told this, and they believed that we were stealing ‘their’ money. We dealt with it by getting an elder to come so that we could explain it to him, and he could explain it to the people. This defused the immediate threat, but it has left suspicion.
While we were conducting interviews in Kabul, for example, a US Army convoy crashed into a number of civilian cars, with several casualties. Immediately, rumours were flying. Soon there were crowds in the streets, demonstrating in front of a variety of Afghan government ministries, whose security staff often made the situation worse by using weapons. In the end, a number of NGO offices were destroyed, local businesses looted or burned, and people killed. When the initial incident occurred, no one actually knew what had happened, or where to get information. The rapid escalation led many interlocutors to the belief that nefarious forces had prepared in advance for just such an event, and pushed the crowds to attack NGOs and certain ministries or businesses.

Some of those interviewed pointed to Do No Harm as a way to help people understand the forces at work in their situation. They believe that this approach can ‘inoculate’ communities against this kind of manipulation. However, the manipulators resist approaches of this kind, and Do No Harm has not yet been able to spread rapidly enough or on this scale.

DO NO HARM: FINDING OTHERS WHO USE IT

Most people who use Do No Harm are positive about it, but feel isolated and know of few others using DNH. When pressed, they name a few others, but don’t seem to be in contact with them. Many said that they were not sure where to go if they had questions about Do No Harm, or needed to find updated materials or translations into local languages.

Several reported that they tend to go to the organisation which introduced them to Do No Harm: CPAU, DED, ACBAR, etc. CPAU has long been a source of materials and advice, though the current director felt that this took a great deal of time away from other work.

PEACEBUILDING

Many do not really distinguish between DNH and peacebuilding. They do not necessarily use the term Do No Harm or the formal tool, but see themselves as using it. This can be seen as integrated peacebuilding, or it can be a way to use the vocabulary of peacebuilding, without actually doing it rigorously.

III. TRAINING

There is a lot of training going on, and quite a bit of training of trainers. This is gratifying as an expression of acceptance and confidence in DNH, but it also raises questions about training as a kind of ‘pyramid scheme,’ in which lots of people train others in an endless cycle, but there is no pay-off. This section will concentrate on the what, how, and who of training.

WHO IS PROVIDING TRAINING?

In the early years of Do No Harm, the main source of training was the international agency Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), often with CDA visiting trainers. NCA staff had been involved in the development of Do No Harm and were experienced in using the tool. NCA translated
the Do No Harm book into Dari, and made materials available to others. Over time, the Afghan network Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU) took on a major role as a provider of training. CPAU staff say that this suited their network role, since they preferred to work through organisations rather than become implementers competing with their own members. They provided training, coaching, and considerable follow-up, which also increased their respect and credibility. They were seen as a resource, and still are contacted for materials, questions, and other assistance with Do No Harm. ACBAR and CoAR, early NCA partners, have also done a great deal of training in DNH, both of their own and other NGO staff, and of communities.

More recently, DED with CDA offered a training series to staff of many organisations, which seems to have prompted a new cycle of interest. Mediothek and Afghanaid are embarking on training in DNH. CPAU, SDF, and ACBAR have continued, and by now have trained a whole network of people from government as well as NGOs.

This pattern seemed so interesting that it led us to map and graph Do No Harm, how it has spread in Afghanistan, and the cycle of interest and key providers of training. (See graphic in section, The History of Do No Harm in Afghanistan.)

TARGETS OF TRAINING

Most of those trained are staff of NGOs, both national and international. The organisations represent a broad spectrum of sectors and kinds of work, from education, water projects, development, human rights, empowerment of women, and peace. The enormous National Solidarity Project (NSP) has led to a huge increase in training of community leaders, *shuras*, and CDC members, some of which includes many DNH components. Among groups who were mentioned as needing or potentially benefiting from this training:

- Government, at all levels
- Donors
- International partners and implementing agencies (both head offices and those working in Afghanistan)
- UN and all its agencies and departments, IOM
- teachers
- journalists
- warlords and commanders
- people in charge of elections
- provincial administrators
- civil servants
- diplomats
- armies (including armies of invasion)
- members of parliament
- communities, at the grass-roots

One speaker said: CDA should just train lots and lots of people to train others; automatically, key people will be there, too, and they will do something with the training.
TRAINING: HOW AND WHAT?

There are many possible ways to train people using Do No Harm. Yet in Afghanistan, there was a great deal of commonality in training techniques, and a common vocabulary and conceptual framework. Most trainers use common materials, either in English (as provided by CDA) or in Dari or Pashtu (provided by NCA or CPAU, or sometimes translated by individual agencies for their own use.) Most found the DNH materials to be good, useful, and appropriate, though some wanted more nuanced tools for analysis and monitoring.

A debating-point was the question of how to ‘localise’ materials, and particularly examples. There were many requests that CDA contextualise or localise Do No Harm: find and publish local examples, make Do No Harm and its tools into something that feels as though it came out of the Afghan situation. Those who said it see the paradox: Local people clearly are the only ones who can do this, using their own experience. In principle, every discussion of Do No Harm could be based on local examples elicited from those present. But the groups they work with are both unwilling to have their examples used, and critical of the use of outside examples. Though they point out this paradox, it does not go away, and they come back to asking CDA to contextualise the material.

The most common length of training was 2-3 days, sometimes DNH on its own, often in combination with other approaches (see below). Several people mentioned that this seemed too long for some of the groups they wanted to work with. From DED came a concrete suggestion to develop modules of Do No Harm which take one day or less: DNH in project design, monitoring, establishment of CDCs, elections, needs assessment, etc.

COMBINATIONS

Nearly half of those interviewed mentioned that they included several approaches in their training and also in their work. This varied, in part, according to the sector they worked in. SPHERE, for example, was often combined with Do No Harm in training by and for humanitarian agencies. CPAU members often combine DNH with Working with Conflict approaches. Development agencies used it together with PRA or other development tools. Many of the peace-oriented organisations saw Do No Harm as a special case of peace-building, and combined it with other such approaches in their work and training. Those who focused on evaluation spoke of using Do No Harm in combination with, or alternately with, Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment. They reported that Do No Harm combined easily with other approaches, and was compatible with them. This helped them to continue using the components they knew and found useful.

FOLLOWING UP TRAINING

Many speakers coupled their comments about training with the observation that follow-up was not adequate. Most said this about the training they had experienced as participants, and the training their organisations were offering. Many thought that training would be much more effective if it built in reinforcement: advanced training, mentoring or coaching, problem-solving. A few organisations did this systematically, but most said that their resources did not permit it, and donors would not fund it.
After our Training of Trainers, we observe the new trainer throughout his or her first workshop. We offer feedback, comments, and suggestions.

A particular concern was the follow-up for people who were not trainers, but intended to use DNH in other aspects of their own work. Several people commented that, alongside the Training Manual, there were no detailed materials available for using DNH in project design or monitoring, for example. It was clear that more needed to be done in this area.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION: WRITING IT ON ICE, PUTTING IT IN THE SUN

There was broad agreement that there are two key components to the effectiveness of Do No Harm. The first is the conceptual framework, which is useful, understandable, and easily conveyed. The second is implementation.

It quickly became evident that people use the term ‘implementation’ to describe a variety of meanings. This section will unpack and consider those elements.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY IMPLEMENTATION?

Interviewees often referred to the importance of implementing Do No Harm. The following list outlines different meanings of implementation, and some of the organisations which use them. The appendix to this document contains a summary of organisations’ responses to our request for copies of their specific policies and procedures which stipulate that Do No Harm perspectives are formally part of the organisation’s way of working (see p.44.)

1. KEEPING THE LENS
The individuals and/or organisation retain the conceptual framework of Do No Harm, seeing their work and their situation in the terms described by Do No Harm. In this meaning, implementation is the ‘how’ rather than the ‘what.’ Thus, many organisations such as NCA or Helvetas speak of implementing Do No Harm when they continue to use it as a way of looking at or understanding the interplay between their program and the conflict.

2. DISSEMINATION
To implement Do No Harm could mean to replicate or multiply the training or awareness-raising. Following an initial training (and perhaps Training of Trainers) in Do No Harm, Mediothek and DED, for example, conduct their own trainings and disseminate the concepts widely.

3. ANALYSIS
Some organisations speak of implementation when they engage in a formal analysis of the context and their own program, often involving consultation with broader communities. This moves beyond awareness to analytical use. CPAU, CoAR, and SDF do this, and there are some who think NSP does as well.

4. PROJECT DESIGN / PROPOSALS
Implementation may mean the fairly formal use of Do No Harm tools (based on the context analysis) in designing programs and projects. This can also be described as putting Do No Harm into practice. For example, the organisation or individual uses the matrix to assess probable consequences and to design or alter a program to support capacities for peace and minimise inadvertent negative effects. Several organisations said that they were doing this, including GRSP, CoAR, and SDF.

5. USE IN MONITORING / EVALUATION
In this sense, implementation means assessing programs in part on their conflict-sensitivity and their impact on local capacities for peace. Many organisations said that this was necessary, but acknowledged that not all were doing it. Several pointed out that it is difficult to do this properly unless it is included from the beginning, since it depends on baseline surveys and indicators which can be used for formal assessment. GRSP says it does this. NCA says it would be prepared to reject a project proposal if it lacked a Do No Harm type of monitoring and evaluation.

Using DNH for evaluation was seen as a risky undertaking. Many organisations said that “most organisations” did not actually want their programmes assessed for impact. They preferred to stay at the level of evaluating whether the project met its own objectives (wells dug, the election of a village committee, etc.) Do No Harm was seen to oblige organisations to go beyond this, and look at real-world effects and unintended impacts.

6. INSTITUTIONALISATION
Beyond awareness-raising and putting into practice, the organisation enshrines a Do No Harm approach in its overarching policy and procedures, so that it is used at all steps and by all parts of the organisation. There may be a person or office designated to foster Do No Harm. It may be included in the organisation’s strategy, policy statements, or code of conduct.

ACBAR has institutionalised Do No Harm in its policy statements. DED has included it in its 5-year strategy, and is bringing ‘experts’ from Germany to carry this out.

SIMILARLY, WHAT DO ORGANISATIONS MEAN BY ‘MAINSTREAMING’?

Nearly all of those interviewed appeared to believe or assume that Do No Harm should be mainstreamed because it is useful and necessary. Again, they seemed to mean various things.
1. implement, use in practice
2. institutionalise, include in planning or monitoring tools, have specific staff assigned
3. make policy to use it always
4. integrate with other tools and concepts
5. integrate as part of all activities
6. require it of partners or implementers

4 Of course, this applies more to organisations which are operational. Those whose mandate is training, for example, are less likely to be in a position to implement practical projects.
5 Only one organisation included itself in the group that was anxious about impact assessment, but many included others, especially donors.
Many spoke of mainstreaming as an aspiration for their organisation. A few commented on some of the dilemmas inherent in this. Given meaning 2, for example, mainstreaming Do No Harm would likely raise the same problem as mainstreaming gender, disability, or environmental impact: putting one person or department in charge can leave everyone else feeling free not to learn about it or use it themselves. Meanings 3 and 6 were identified as ways in which mainstreaming could conflict with the basic principles of Do No Harm itself, since this would require people to use this tool whether or not they felt it was suitable.

HOW Do No Harm IS BEING IMPLEMENTED

Among all respondents, there was agreement that implementation of Do No Harm is the key. This requires all that staff understand DNH so training and dissemination are necessary. But no one thought that training alone would change the way people work. To stop at training would amount, as one said, to “writing it on ice, and putting it in the sun” to melt away.

Though many spoke of their own organisations as implementing DNH, pointed questions revealed that this was often a statement of intention, rather than a description of reality. Many, when pressed, acknowledged that they really thought of Do No Harm as a lens, a way of looking at things, and therefore expected it to remain at the conceptual level.

SDF commented that it was implementing the “soft” components of Do No Harm, meaning: connecting people, bringing communities and constituencies together across lines of difference or conflict.

Some agencies have incorporated Do No Harm formally in their policy statements, tool kits, or regular procedures for project design, monitoring or evaluation. There were other indicators of implementation, including physical evidence: posters, documents, visible results of Do No Harm analysis or project design.

The CoAR office is graced by an enormous Do No Harm matrix, which is used as a basic tool in project planning and monitoring (see photo). The matrix travels to distant project sites, and is familiar to all staff and partners of CoAR.

In the cycle of heightened interest in Do No Harm, many organisations are still fairly recent users of this approach, and have not yet been through a full project cycle in using it. Some of the ‘old hands,’ however, tell of using it at all stages and all levels, including their negotiations with funders.

GRSP: We put Do No Harm in all donor contracts, at our own initiative. It serves as a platform to modify or refuse contracts. Our main donors (NCA) are very flexible and accept

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6 Samples of these documents will be found in the Appendix.
that we use this approach. But many other donors emphasise only the obligations under their contract: Get the work done, we don’t care how.

When national NGOs use Do No Harm, whether their donors and partners insist on it or not, many say that the main reason is to ensure that their analysis and program design are sufficiently inclusive.

CoAR has used Do No Harm for many years and in many aspects of programming. They see its impact especially in the inclusion of all stakeholders in their analysis and design. This causes them to try to work with a great variety of actors, including ‘legitimate government’ at all levels. They report achieving 80-90% of their program goals because of this.

An interesting question was whether the National Solidarity Program, run by the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development, implements Do No Harm or not. Several of those interviewed said that it did, others said that it was opposed to DNH, and many said that was neither for nor against it. Perhaps because both the current and former minister were known to be key figures in NCA and associated with Do No Harm, it seems that some people assumed that they used it, and other people looked for explicit statements and found none. In our interviews, it appeared that the ministry believed it was implementing Do No Harm, at least as an approach. Indeed, while we were in Kabul, the ministry happened to issue a directive about drought relief which explicitly required Do No Harm in project proposals.

Some big donors and implementing partners were interested when we said we were using Do No Harm, even though MRRD does not require it. At their request, we trained their international and local staff in DNH.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the various meaning of implementation, it is clear that Do No Harm is being implemented by aid agencies in Afghanistan. For many, this means using it as a lens, a conceptual tool, and training people to use it. Quite a few organisations use it for conflict analysis, many base consultations and project design on Do No Harm, and a few enshrine it in their formal policies.

V. IMPACT

Since its focus is development and emergency programs, Do No Harm could conceivably have an impact (positive or negative) at many levels of organizational programming.

IMPACT ON STAFF AND ORGANISATIONS WHO USE DO NO HARM

Many interviewees referred to the effect of DNH on their organisation and on themselves as individuals. They described impact on many levels, taking many forms. One type of impact was the disintegration of a few NGOs attributed to the fact that they did not use a Do No Harm approach. Another impact was the continued willingness of communities to work with other NGOs, which they interpreted as a consequence of their use of DNH. Others
spoke of the relationships within the team, and with the community, which had improved because everyone felt sure that they would be included.

We train our staff in how to behave in their roles. This is very much influenced by Do No Harm, not task-oriented but based on relationship-building.

Some groups had been using this approach for years, so that it seemed ingrained in them. Many said that they had begun by offering training in Do No Harm, out of which came a relationship with the community, “and then the real work began.”

CoAR: Our project had done extensive advance work, consulting about where to build a clinic. We came with a fully-developed plan, but, during further consultations with the shura and district offices, realised that this was wrong. The community surprised us. Since we are used to working with Do No Harm, we discarded our plan, and re-designed the project.

Other agencies have come to DNH more recently, and are still monitoring its impact. A few had formal monitoring systems; many were more informal, simply noting whether their members used Do No Harm spontaneously.

One year after we trained all our staff in DNH, we see that they still use it in their work and their lives.

Other interviews emphasised that Do No Harm affects how they understand all aspects of their lives, not only their work roles.

We brought a Peace Caravan from the South to the North, 50 stakeholders travelling together. The co-ordinator used DNH in assessing the impact of the caravan on the members and those they met. He had very detailed assessment sheets, with quantifiable indicators linked to specific behaviours. At first, people were shocked that their own behaviour was being assessed. Later, they realised that this was a good way to learn how they affect others in their normal life. If they are disrespectful or patronising to someone, that person will think that is normal for that individual, that organisation, even for a whole group.

IMPACT ON PROJECTS

Probably the main explicit focus of DNH is at the project level. As one respondent said: “I’ve seen development programmes it would have been better not to have happen. Do No Harm changes this, it improves programmes.” This impact was cited many times, in many ways.

We had provided water tanks for many communities, and expected to recommend where to install them. One proposal was to put the water tank next to the mosque, which is actually a
very common location for water supplies. Using Do No Harm, our women staff pointed out that women would not be allowed to come near the mosque for water, yet women have the primary responsibility to provide water for their families. The community insisted for some time on this location as the ‘traditional’ and proper one, but we worked it through, and the water tanks were put in a place accessible to everyone.

This is a lens which ultimately forces us to look at the inadvertent negative impact of our own work. This can feel discouraging, if we are stuck at evaluation and do not persevere to the point of learning from our mistakes.

Do No Harm links emergency aid to long-term consequences, real development. At one training workshop, everyone was proud of his own project. When they analysed it using Do No Harm, they saw the project as the beginning of a longer process, with far-reaching impacts that they had not thought of, and they began to assess their projects more realistically. One person later went back to the community he works with, to apologise to them for the unintentional damage his project had caused.

Some would rather avoid looking at consequences, so that they don’t have to acknowledge their own. Others respond in a more humble yet human way by admitting that all of us make mistakes. Do No Harm at least offers us the possibility of seeing mistakes in advance, so that we might prevent them, and avoid making the same mistake twice.

REAL-WORLD IMPACT

Many of those interviewed saw the larger impact of Do No Harm as a shift in how people understood their own situation, and a consequent change in behaviour.

After training CDCs, we go to their meetings and see whether they use DNH. Afterward, we meet with them, encourage them, give them feedback, and point out moments when they might have used DNH. Over time, they notice these things themselves.

There are many kinds of possible impacts, from small modifications of behaviour or changes in attitude to complete conversion to a new way of seeing the world. Although a few interviews included dramatic examples of communities reconciled through Do No Harm, most had more modest expectations, and their examples tended to be pragmatic.

Since we trained CDCs using Do No Harm, most leaders co-operate during elections. When they are elected in this way, many change their style of leadership, because they want to keep getting elected. We included all kinds of potential leaders in our training, because they will make trouble if they think they will lose power.

Having an impact on a situation can be a two-edged experience. Working inclusively and preventively may cause latent conflicts to be more open and visible, which offers an opportunity to deal with them. But, if the people involved feel they do not have the skills or
the ‘mandate’ to deal with conflicts, they may be left with discord. This is one of two examples offered of Do No Harm having an inadvertent, negative impact.

In a village with latent conflict, NSP brought the conflict to the surface. The community still could not reach agreement to elect a committee. The Do No Harm kind of methodology is empowering, but the conflicts that come up are beyond the capacity of small implementing agencies to solve. As government, we can solve these conflicts, but NGOs cannot.

The second example of negative impact was less clear. One NGO did not mention the tragedy they had experienced, perhaps because it was such a painful event: several of their staff had been attacked and killed near the project site. Contradictory interpretations were offered. Some said that, since the organisation was known to use Do No Harm, it was attacked by forces who thought their interests were threatened by consultation and community empowerment. Others suggest that this might have been either an inadvertent negative impact or an indicator that they were not using DNH effectively. In such a violent and conflicted situation, this is a sad reality, but it certainly poses questions, and did not pass unobserved.

IMPACT ON HIGHER LEVELS OF PROGRAMMING AND POLICY-MAKING

A number of organisations cited the impact of Do No Harm on their contacts at higher levels: donors, government, implementing co-ordinators, policy-makers, and decision-makers of various sorts. There were many stories of training or influencing international organisations, and a more subtle pattern of reinforcing possibilities for using Do No Harm in interaction with all levels of government.

The donors wanted us to use a SWOT analysis, but we have found connectors and dividers more useful. We showed it to them, and they let us use it. Now, they recommend it for all their projects.

Many organisations seemed to employ a particular strategy for incorporating DNH into project design. They reported that they would use Do No Harm to analyse a situation and propose a project design, whether the donor or lead agency suggested it or not. This had been successful on some occasions in showing where conflict might be exacerbated, and giving them the possibility to re-design the project. However, if they met resistance, they would usually use whatever was required. Overall, agencies continued to feel dependent on those at higher levels, with little power to control, and only limited influence.

A development consultant came to us about a manual she was writing. We suggested adding Do No Harm, and she did so.

For their part, international agencies reported that local NGOs often do not know Do No Harm, or do not know how to use it effectively.
ANALYSIS

Both national and international agencies claim to be enthusiastic users of Do No Harm, but that their counterparts are unwilling or unable to use it. This disconnect illustrates the usefulness of strategies such as mixed trainings / consultations and specific attention to implementation.

It is perhaps an affirmation of the need for Do No Harm that most comments about its impact focused on events and activities, and very few on policy. Those who did look to the policy level generally did so in commenting on other people’s policies, particularly government, UN, or major donors and actors. It is clear that policies at that level have an impact on NGOs’ work. The NGOs seemed less aware, however, of the impact of their own policies and procedures, and applied their analysis primarily to specific projects and to policy at higher levels.

VI. REQUESTS FOR CDA SUPPORT

We are still here, Do No Harm is still here, CDA is still supporting.

Over the years, CDA, as the parent organisation of Do No Harm, has intervened from time to train, consult, or otherwise interact with staff and agencies working in Afghanistan, but has never had a permanent presence on the ground. Its trainings and consultations have been intermittent, and have contributed to the cycle cited in the section on Development of Do No Harm in Afghanistan. CDA’s role has been consistent, yet somewhat distant, and the majority of support on the ground has come from both local and international agencies working in Afghanistan.

Occasionally there are requests for CDA to do more to promote Do No Harm, and CDA is open to consider possibilities. For this reason, interviews included questions about what sort of additional support or assistance from CDA would be useful. These suggestions appear below as a list, more or less as they were offered.

A number of organisations, both national and international, would value CDA in some kind of accompanying role. Most did not feel it was necessary for CDA staff to come and train people, but they felt the need for intermittent support and an identified person or organisation to take questions and dilemmas. These were their suggestions:

- Help us to use Do No Harm as a tool for reflection among our staff.
- The Afghan conflict is too important and visible in my own [European] country. I need help from CDA to back me up with frameworks and examples from elsewhere.
- It would help to have some expatriate accompaniment from time to time. It takes the pressure off us as local people, and shows that these are larger, more universal standards.
- CDA could help us to exchange cases with colleagues elsewhere. We are developing case studies from our work, but we only occasionally have the opportunity to share them or see what others have learned.
If we and CDA staff knew each other, we could alert each other to new questions and ideas.

CDA is in the position to pull together what is happening in many places. This could include checking whether what they notice in one place is common elsewhere. Just send us an email asking: What are you doing about this? How is it going?

It would help if CDA could bring together NGOs, MRRD, NSP, and all the partners to discuss whether Do No Harm is necessary for the Afghan situation now.

There were also a number of suggestions of ways in which CDA could continue to support the dissemination of DNH in Afghanistan:

- We need DNH materials in local languages, in the most recent updated versions in English, and in soft as well as hard copies.
- Can CDA keep us informed of their progress with high-level donors and governments, so that we can be sure that our work builds on this? We cannot do it all from the bottom up.
- CDA could help with technical support, specifically in implementing and mainstreaming DNH.

Another strain of opinion suggested that Afghanistan was well able to meet its own Do No Harm needs by now. “CDA has been helpful, but now we want to organise this process ourselves.” This was not said in an unwelcoming or ungrateful way, but as an assessment of needs and resources.

- Expatriates don’t have the necessary languages, and most people are not comfortable enough in English to participate as they should.
- It’s expensive to bring trainers from far away. It would be better to use that funding to provide training for more people.
- CDA should support us in seeking funding to do DNH training, rather than getting funding to train us.

VII. DILEMMAS / QUESTIONS REMAINING

LESSONS LEARNED

Nearly all of the examples offered of implementation of Do No Harm were positive, seen as successful, or at least mixed. Only one implementation lesson was negative, because Do No Harm brought to the surface conflicts which staff were not then able to resolve. In principle, using such an approach should lead to learning and noticing mistakes or problems which could be anticipated next time. It was not clear to us that a critical eye was being applied to documenting lessons that needed to be learned. Still less did it appear that people were looking critically at Do No Harm itself, looking for its limitations and shortcomings. It would be disingenuous to fault DNH users for being so enthusiastic about it, but it does seem that CDA may have a responsibility to intervene to ensure that lessons are learned and that problems are not overlooked.
CAPACITY-BUILDING

Several of the international agencies interviewed were rather sceptical about capacity-building as a way to change projects or disseminate ideas. The pattern they described was of an international agency providing time and resources for local staff and partners to learn something new, such as Do No Harm, only to have those individuals leave to take up a post with a different organisation (often an international one). This was said with a sense of grievance, as though the individuals have been disloyal or have ‘wasted’ resources or opportunities. This kind of story is fairly common among development and humanitarian NGOs, and not specific to Do No Harm.

We have lost many of our key staff to government, including many we trained in Do No Harm. Now, we are few, and our staff are very busy, but not very reflective, not thinking in a long-term perspective.

Yet, in Afghanistan, from the standpoint of Do No Harm, the situation looks rather different. Many of those we interviewed had been using Do No Harm for years, and taking it with them as they moved to new organisations. It did not appear that this kind of capacity-building was wasted. Rather, it spread Do No Harm through different regions, organisations, and sectors, with the result that there is a large, informal network of Afghans with a common outlook and conceptual framework. In this respect, the interests of individual organisations—to in retain experienced staff—may not coincide with CDA’s—to make Do No Harm more widely known and used.

In reality, concern about staff turn-over was expressed by Afghan organisations about donors and international staff. The experience most often cited was of Do No Harm being dropped because the country director or programme officer was replaced by someone new, who did not value Do No Harm, and did not encourage Afghan staff to continue to use it. There were stories of staff moving to new organisations precisely because they were not allowed to continue to use methods and approaches they had found useful.

One speaker was even more sceptical, citing his experience that all NGOs adopt or drop approaches based on the individuals occupying the offices.

My experience with NGOs, both Afghan and international, is that they are driven not by mission or mandate, but by personality. If a key figure (perhaps the director or programme director) is interested in Do No Harm, they will use it. If not, it will be scrapped, even if they have used it for a long time in many projects.

If this picture is accurate, then it will be very difficult to ensure that good ideas continue to be implemented. The best strategy would seem to be to concentrate on international staff, perhaps through European and US networks, or by targeting graduate training courses in development studies and disaster relief.

If, on the other hand, the objective is to ensure that national staff know the tools and keep re-introducing them to new international office-holders, then a kind of perpetual training-
for-trainers might be a useful strategy. There could then be a follow-up with international agencies, both at headquarters and in the field, to reinforce DNH.

TRANSITIONS

Is Do No Harm necessary for the Afghan situation now? This question was posed by several speakers, usually as an open question, though perhaps as a bit of a rhetorical question. Most felt that it was more important now than ever, given the particular characteristics of the current situation. And many were particularly disappointed that, when aid has finally come, big and fast, it seems to be implemented without Do No Harm.

Afghanistan is experiencing another very difficult transition. Does Do No Harm have anything special to offer to people at the hard edge? It has accompanied them from Afghanistan to Pakistan and back, across different forms of government, through war and not-quite-war. There would be considerable interest in a consultation focused on how DNH is being used, or could be used, to particular advantage during such times of transition. Afghan experience with it is rich, but perhaps not yet sufficiently pulled together and reflected upon.

CONCLUSIONS

The starting question was, “Why is Afghanistan such fertile ground for Do No Harm?”

There may not be a single answer, but there seem to be some contributing factors.

First is a cyclical pattern. Do No Harm has been introduced and re-introduced, each time provoking a renewed cycle of heightened interest among those involved.

Second is the combination of international and national actors who have acted as trainers, disseminators, and catalysts. This has ensured that the ‘reach’ of the methodology has been broad and deep. If it is the result of intentional, multi-level strategy, it has worked well.

Third is the character of the particular individuals who became catalysts for Do No Harm in Afghanistan. Since they were taken seriously, seen as particularly experienced and thoughtful practitioners, DNH spread through their enthusiasm and their use of it.

Fourth is the movement of the idea between individuals, organisations, and countries. People have taken DNH with them to new posts and new organisations. They have learned about it from friends, colleagues, employers, networks, and training courses.

Fifth are the endurance of the approach, and the perseverance of those who believe in it. For these reasons, people have encountered DNH by chance and by design, at home and abroad, during calm times and emergencies. Afghans see that it has stood the test of time, and has been applicable during all the changing circumstances.

So, there are factors that have to do with Afghanistan, with the individuals and organisations who have championed it, and with Do No Harm itself.
For the most part, recommendations, like conclusions, will have to wait for the comparison implied in the original question. Why has Afghanistan been particularly fertile ground for Do No Harm? Well, what is different from times and places which were stony ground, where it did not seem to take hold?

Still, there are some recommendations to be taken from this case study standing alone. These findings suggest the following:

• That CDA should broadly continue with the kind and level of support it has offered in the past. The cycle of intermittent intervention has worked well. There are various specific suggestions, but, broadly, what has worked should continue.
• That CDA should convene consultations or other exchanges around specific aspects of DNH. Perhaps most prominently, Afghans would like to share with others using it during times of difficult transition, meaning, both war and unstable peace, and both feast and famine in terms of aid available.
• That national and international agencies, including donors and project implementers, depend on each other in using DNH to its best advantage, and should work together on how best to do this. CDA could convene such interactions, both internationally and at field level.
APPENDIX

DETAILED METHODOLOGY

It was agreed to interview at least one person, and more if possible, from all the key agencies which are known to use Do No Harm. This includes both Afghan and international NGOs, as well as government and donors. If possible, look for agencies which do not use DNH, or have found it not useful (UNHCR is mentioned) and interview them.

As it turned out, the organisations we wanted to interview had bases in Kabul, and many of the people we wanted to see in Kunduz were actually in Kabul. We decided not to formulate actual questions, but to have in mind areas to explore with people. We then prioritised these as follows.

• The original question from CDA: What works, what doesn’t, and why?
• The organisation and its relationship with Do No Harm / CDA: Where did the original DNH contact happen, with whom, how; kind and level of organisation; What caused DNH to start, stop, continue, spread (e.g., changes in staff or donor) What are the challenges, limitations, advantages, risks associated with DNH?
• Motivation: Whose need? Is there a sense of ownership from the early case study / consultations / feedback workshops?
• DNH training: Who, why, to do what? Does the organisation use its own trainers? How were they trained? Methodology, recruitment of participants, target groups, follow-up.
• Implementation and follow-up: Is there any; Is DNH implemented, and how or why not? At what stage (e.g., planning, evaluation, when problems arise). Is the use of DNH rewarded (by the organisation, community, donor)?
• Network: Is there a formal or informal DNH network? Who else do they know who is using it? Where do they take their questions? Do they share materials or problems with anyone? CDA support: Are they aware of any? Do they get other support (e.g., DED)? What could it be? (perhaps 'mentors' or periodic visits)
• Impact: Ask of heads of organisations. For those with a long history: Do they see inadvertent negative impact from DNH? Support for local capacities for peace? In their own work, or more broadly?

WRITING UP

Sue Williams will do the majority of the writing, based on the following agreed outline:

DRAFT REPORT OUTLINE, DO NO HARM – AFGHANISTAN, MAY 2006

Introduction: CDA’s question
Summary / Abstract
Methodology

1. History / circumstances of assistance programs (Peshawar, Kabul, changes of government)
2. Where and when: CDA timeline, organisational map, network
3. Findings
   • Do No Harm: What’s useful / important
   • Obstacles / challenges
   • Training
- Implementation
- Impact
- CDA support

4. Dilemmas / questions remaining
5. Recommendations
6. Conclusion
7. Appendix
  - Detailed methodology (if needed)
  - Abbreviations
  - Those interviewed
  - Examples of policies / procedures for implementation / evaluation / strategy
  - Timeline (BBC web)
  - Text of CDA’s Afghanistan timeline, Natiq’s

*Items in italics will be provided primarily by Hamidullah Natiq, others primarily by Sue Williams, all agreed by both before presentation.*
### List of the Organisations and Individuals Interviewed for CDA / DNH Research, May, 2006

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates/Days</th>
<th>Organisations/Interviewees</th>
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<tr>
<td>21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; May/Sunday Morning</td>
<td>CPAU, Mr. Mohammad Zabih</td>
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<tr>
<td>21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; May/Sunday Morning</td>
<td>Mediothek, Mr. Majeed</td>
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<tr>
<td>21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; May/Sunday Afternoon</td>
<td>SDF, Mr. Raz Dalili</td>
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<td>Mr. Amanullah Lodin</td>
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<td>Mr. Sarwar Mamound</td>
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<tr>
<td>22&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; May, Monday</td>
<td>MRRD, Minister Ehsan Zia</td>
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<tr>
<td>23&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; May/Tuesday Morning</td>
<td>Afghanaid, Dr. Humayun</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ms. Nasrin</td>
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<td>Mr. Sayed Mahmood</td>
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<tr>
<td>23&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; May/Tuesday Afternoon</td>
<td>DED, Mr. Ghulam Habib Qayum</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Miss Hadia Natiq</td>
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<tr>
<td>24&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; May/Wednesday Morning</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance, Mr. Hamid Jalil</td>
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<tr>
<td>24&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; May/Wednesday Afternoon</td>
<td>GRSP, Mr. Mohammad Esehaq Zeerak</td>
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<tr>
<td>25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; May, Wednesday Morning</td>
<td>CoAR, Engineer Naeem and 3 others</td>
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<tr>
<td>25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; May, Thursday Morning</td>
<td>NCA, Ms. Beate Fasting</td>
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<tr>
<td>25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; May, Thursday Morning</td>
<td>AIHRC, Mr. Fahim Hakim</td>
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<tr>
<td>25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; May, Thursday Evening</td>
<td>President’s Office &amp; CPAU, Mr. Mohammad Suleman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; May Monday</td>
<td>UNHCR, Mr. Malang Ibrahimi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ms Marina Hamid Zada</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mr. Joerg Stahlhut</td>
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ORGANISATIONS’ RESPONSES TO REQUEST FOR EXAMPLES OF POLICIES INCORPORATING DO NO HARM

Although a number of organisations said that they implemented Do No Harm at the level of policy and procedure, none was able to give us examples of written policy or procedure which incorporate it.

1. GRSP said that it makes all staff aware of conflict sensitivity approaches from the early start of any project, though there is no policy paper in this regard. Rather GRSP keeps in mind the concept through implementation of the projects.
2. CoAR also keeps DNH in all stages of projects and even puts the concept as part of the organisation’s reporting system to the donors.
3. Afghanaid is fairly new to DNH training. The organisation sent one of its key staff to the training and then allocated some budget in order to disseminate the concept to the field level during 2005. But it had no budget for further activities related to DNH during 2006, so the training is stopped at the moment.
4. ACBAR says, as it is a co-ordinating body and is not involved in project implementation, so DNH is not part of any ACBAR policy paper.
CDA trips

1995  Case Study
1996  Feedback Workshop
1998-2000  Implementation Phase
2004  Training and Training of Trainers

1995

January  Case Study
“Norwegian Church Aid and Norwegian Refugee Council Afghanistan/Pakistan Project: A Case Study”

1996

Feedback Workshop (by Mary Anderson); date uncertain

1998

June  First Implementation Visit (by Kenny Gluck and Mary Anderson)
It was decided to focus on Norwegian Project Office-Rural Rehabilitation Association of Afghanistan (NPO-NRAA) in Gardez

November  Second Implementation Visit (by Kenny Gluck and Andrew Hurst)

1999

May  NCA organized a training with Coordination of Afghan Relief (CoAR)
Third Implementation Visit (by Andrew Hurst)

August  Fourth Implementation Visit (by Andrew Hurst)
Included a visit to CoAR’s Rural Development Centre in Sayed Abad (Two trainings took place with CoAR between May and August)

2000

June  Fifth Implementation Visit (by Andrew Hurst)

2004

January  DNH and RPP training sponsored by DED
April  DNH ToT sponsored by DED

DNH Training (by Mohammed Ehsan) was ongoing from 1996 to at least 2000. Ehsan trained in NCA, NPO-NRAA, and CoAR.
Timeline: Afghanistan
A chronology of key events

1919 - Afghanistan regains independence after third war against British forces trying to bring country under their sphere of influence.

1926 - Amanullah proclaims himself king and attempts to introduce social reforms leading to opposition from conservative forces.

1929 - Amanullah flees after civil unrest over his reforms.

1933 - Zahir Shah becomes king and Afghanistan remains a monarchy for next four decades.

1953 - General Mohammed Daud becomes prime minister. Turns to Soviet Union for economic and military assistance. Introduces a number of social reforms, such as abolition of purdah (practice of excluding women from public view).

1963 - Mohammed Daud forced to resign as prime minister.

1964 - Constitutional monarchy introduced - but leads to political polarisation and power struggles.

1973 - Mohammed Daud is overthrown and killed in a coup and declares a republic. Tries to play off USSR against Western powers. His style alienates left-wing factions who join forces against him.

1978 - General Daud is overthrown and killed in a coup by leftist People’s Democratic Party. But party’s Khalq and Parcham factions fall out, leading to purging or exile of most Parcham leaders. At the same time, conservative Islamic and ethnic leaders who objected to social changes begin armed revolt in countryside.

1979 - Power struggle between leftist leaders Hafizullah Amin and Nur Mohammed Taraki in Kabul won by Amin. Revolts in countryside continue and Afghan army faces collapse. Soviet Union finally sends in troops to help remove Amin, who is executed.

Soviet intervention

1980 - Babrak Karmal, leader of the People’s Democratic Party Parcham faction, is installed as ruler, backed by Soviet troops. But anti-regime resistance intensifies with various mujahedin groups fighting Soviet forces. US, Pakistan, China, Iran and Saudi Arabia supply money and arms.

1985 - Mujahedin come together in Pakistan to form alliance against Soviet forces. Half of Afghan population now estimated to be displaced by war, with many fleeing to neighbouring Iran or Pakistan. New Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev says he will withdraw troops from Afghanistan.


1988 - Afghanistan, USSR, the US and Pakistan sign peace accords and Soviet Union begins pulling out troops.

1989 - Last Soviet troops leave, but civil war continues as mujahedin push to overthrow Najibullah.

1991 - US and USSR agree to end military aid to both sides.

Mujahedin triumph


1993 - Mujahideen factions agree on formation of a government with ethnic Tajik, Burhanuddin Rabbani, proclaimed president.

1994 - Factional contests continue and the Pashtun-dominated Taleban emerge as major challenge to the Rabbani government.

1996 - Taleban seize control of Kabul and introduce hardline version of Islam, banning women from work, and introducing Islamic punishments, which include stoning to death and amputations. Rabbani flees to join anti-Taleban northern alliance.

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7 From BBC NEWS:  http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/country_profiles/1162108.stm
Published: 2006/06/24 11:44:04 GMT © BBC MMVI
Taleban under pressure

1997 - Taleban recognised as legitimate rulers by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Most other countries continue to regard Rabbani as head of state. Taleban now control about two-thirds of country.


1999 - UN imposes an air embargo and financial sanctions to force Afghanistan to hand over Osama bin Laden for trial.

2001 January - UN imposes further sanctions on Taleban to force them to hand over Osama bin Laden.

2001 March - Taleban blow up giant Buddha statues in defiance of international efforts to save them.

2001 April - Mullah Mohammad Rabbani, the second most powerful Taleban leader after the supreme commander Mullah Mohammad Omar, dies of liver cancer.

2001 May - Taleban order religious minorities to wear tags identifying themselves as non-Muslims, and Hindu women to veil themselves like other Afghan women.

2001 September - Eight foreign aid workers on trial in the Supreme Court for promoting Christianity. This follows months of tension between Taleban and aid agencies.

2001 - Ahmad Shah Masood, legendary guerrilla and leader of the main opposition to the Taleban, is killed, apparently by assassins posing as journalists.

2001 October - US, Britain launch air strikes against Afghanistan after Taleban refuse to hand over Osama bin Laden, held responsible for the September 11 attacks on America.

2001 November - Opposition forces seize Mazar-e Sharif and within days march into Kabul and other key cities.

Taleban falls

2001 5 December - Afghan groups agree deal in Bonn for interim government.

2001 7 December - Taleban finally give up last stronghold of Kandahar, but Mullah Omar remains at large.

2001 22 December - Pashtun royalist Hamid Karzai is sworn in as head of a 30-member interim power-sharing government.

2002 January - First contingent of foreign peacekeepers in place.

2002 April - Former king Zahir Shah returns, but says he makes no claim to the throne.


2002 November - Opposition forces seize Mazar-e Sharif and within days march into Kabul and other key cities.

2002 December - US air raid in Uruzgan province kills 48 civilians, many of them members of a wedding party.

2002 September - President Karzai and Pakistanis, Turkmen leaders sign deal to build gas pipeline through Afghanistan, carrying Turkmen gas to Pakistan.

2003 June - 49 killed in clashes between Taleban and government forces in Kandahar province.

2003 August - NATO takes control of security in Kabul, its first-ever operational commitment outside Europe.

New constitution

2004 January - Grand assembly - or Loya Jirga - adopts new constitution which provides for strong presidency.

2004 March - Afghanistan secures $8.2bn (£4.5bn) in aid over three years.
2004 September - Rocket fired at helicopter carrying President Karzai misses its target; it is the most serious attempt on his life since September 2002.
2004 October-November - Presidential elections: Hamid Karzai is declared the winner, with 55% of the vote. He is sworn in, amid tight security, in December.
2005 February - Several hundred people are killed in the harshest winter weather in a decade.
2005 May - Details emerge of alleged prisoner abuse by US forces at detention centres.

New parliament
2005 September - First parliamentary and provincial elections in more than 30 years.
2005 December - New parliament holds its inaugural session.
2006 January - More than 30 people are killed in a series of suicide attacks in southern Kandahar province.
2006 February - International donors meeting in London pledge more than $10bn (£5.7bn) in reconstruction aid over five years.
2006 May - Violent anti-US protests in Kabul, the worst since the fall of the Taleban in 2001, erupt after a US military vehicle crashes and kills several people.
2006 May-June - Scores of people are killed in battles between Taleban fighters and Afghan and coalition forces in the south during an offensive known as Operation Mountain Thrust.

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