LOCAL CAPACITIES FOR PEACE PROJECT
(Do No Harm)

Case Study

Norwegian Church Aid
And Norwegian Refugee Council
Afghanistan / Pakistan Project

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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.

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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.
NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL/NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID:
AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN PROJECT: CASE STUDY

I. Introduction

In April 1994, the Norwegian Refugee Council and Norwegian Church Aid (NRC/NCA) operating in Peshawar, Pakistan, with programmes directed toward repatriation of refugees to Afghanistan, convened a five day workshop for NGOs and other operational agencies entitled "Peace Building in Afghanistan." This initiative, undertaken at a time and in a context where "peace work" was seen as suspect by most Afghans, represented an important step in promoting a self-consciousness among aid agencies regarding the impacts of their activities on the conflict in Afghanistan.

II. Context: The Conflicts in Afghanistan

Afghanistan played an important role in the Cold War. Wooed for military and strategic reasons by both the U.S. and U.S.S.R., Afghanistan received massive amounts of foreign aid, including weapons, from both powers starting in the 1950's. After the establishment of political parties in Kabul in the early 1960's, Afghanistan experienced a series of governmental changes which often occurred violently. In 1973, Mohammad Daoud, a former Prime Minister and cousin of King Zahir was able to pull together support from the army, the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA, a Kabul-based, intellectual Marxist-Leninist group) and the U.S.S.R to overthrow the ruling Constitutional Monarchy. He immediately declared the "Republic of Afghanistan" with himself as President.
Again, internal conflicts arose. Two major factions split the PDPA and ethnic/tribal differences caused divisions within the army. Economically, the country also suffered severe problems and Afghanistan became both economically and politically dependent on the Soviet Union. Under strong Soviet pressure, the PDPA factions joined forces, albeit briefly, to succeed in overthrowing Daoud's government in a violent coup d'état in July 1978. This coup, which occurred in the Islamic month of "Saur" (which coincides with April), is known as the "Saur Revolution" and represents the starting date of what Afghans refer to as their "fourteen years of suffering."

Representing a coalition of military men and intellectuals, the Saur revolution initiated a number of changes in Afghan society. Included were extensive land reform, compulsory secular education for both males and females, and increasing involvement of women in non-traditional social, economic and political spheres. These "reforms" represented a deep challenge to Afghan traditions. They were imposed, unexplained, from the top and originated in the urban areas, long held in suspicion by the countryside. These facts contributed to the emergence of strong resistance to the Saur Revolution across Afghanistan. As this resistance grew, Soviet intervention became more direct, culminating finally in a full Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on December 24, 1979.¹

¹ Information for all of this section is derived largely from Jawad, Massim, Afghanistan: A Nation of Minorities, Minority Rights Group International Manchester Free Press, Manchester, February 1992. For fuller information on all the events mentioned here, this is an excellent source.
The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan lasted a decade during which extremely violent fighting occurred throughout Afghanistan. Under the aegis of powerful mullahs, the war against the "oppression" was declared a "jihad" (holy—hence, just and justified, war) and thousands of young Afghan men joined the resistance as "mujahideen" (holy warriors). After a decade of intense warfare, during which the U.S. and other Western powers provided huge military support to the anti-Soviet cause, the freedom fighters were victorious and in February 1988, Gorbachev announced his intention to withdraw all Soviet troops from Afghanistan beginning in May of that year.

The ten years of fighting had, however, caused widespread devastation and destruction, killed over one million people, caused five million Afghans to become refugees in neighboring Pakistan and Iran, and left an estimated 300,000 individuals permanently disabled.

With the announcement of the upcoming Soviet withdrawal, the U.S. immediately set up a process through which to establish a government of its own choosing. The result was the exclusion of the parties operating from Iran as well as a number of commanders who had been responsible for the success of military operations in various parts of Afghanistan.\(^2\) The focus of the U.S.-supported

\(^2\) The war against the Soviet Union was fought on the ground by numerous local commanders and their troops of mujahideen who assumed responsibility for protection of specific, local areas. As fighting moved from area to area, different local commanders and their local troops would engage the Soviet forces. This style of localized conflict reflected Afghan history where villages and regions were often under the command of local warlords. It also
alliance was the overthrow of the Kabul government left in place by the withdrawing Soviets and led by Najibullah. However, though many bloody battles were fought, dislodging this regime proved more difficult than first imagined in part because of continuing weapons support from the U.S.S.R.

In late 1990-early 1991, the U.S. and U.S.S.R. agreed to end their weapons supplies to the factions in Afghanistan. For this and other reasons, Najibullah’s power began to disintegrate with many of his followers deserting him in favor of other alliances. Since Najibullah’s withdrawal from power, two successive interim governments have been established each of which was intended to provide the transition to elections. However, a power struggle continues (December 1994), mostly concentrated in Kabul, between various commanders of the Mujahideen.

In late 1994, many Afghans judge the current war in Kabul to be "only a war for power, not a war for peace." They disown it as neither justified nor Islamic and they express growing disdain for their so-called "leaders" who continue destruction and killing.

Various peace initiatives have been tried sponsored both by parties outside Afghanistan (eg. the United Nations, Pakistan) and by parties inside Afghanistan (eg. the governor of Herat, the governor of Jalalabad) but none of these attempts has been able to achieve involvement of all contending parties and/or an agreement which lasts more than a few weeks. As of late 1994, fighting again resulted in the rise to prominence and power of many locally-based commanders who needed to be included in some way in any future national system of governance.
intensified in and around Kabul causing a new wave of flight to other parts of Afghanistan and the establishment of camps for approximately 300,000 "internally displaced persons."

III. Additional Political/Economic Context

Several additional political and economic facts shape both the context of Afghanistan's continuing problems and prospects for assistance in Afghanistan.

1. Both Pakistan and Iran, as countries which share extensive borders with Afghanistan and which, therefore, received large waves of refugees in the 1980's, have special interests in the political outcomes inside Afghanistan. Even as they received refugees, Pakistan authorities insisted that these refugees register as members of one of six parties. Up until that time, most Afghan's were more identified with their local villages and or Districts (of which there are over 300 in Afghanistan representing, to a large degree, extended family/tribal ties. The intent of this ruling was that Pakistan would gain significant control over refugee organization and management; the legacy of the ruling was the strengthening of six (now seven, with subsequent splits) parties which are those currently involved in the fighting in Kabul.

Many Afghans now accuse both Iran and Pakistan (as well as Saudi Arabia) of continuing to supply weapons to the factions which are fighting. They claim that without this continued outside interference, the war would long since have ended.

2. Afghans repeatedly note that they "won the Cold War for the West" by defeating the Soviet Union. They see their success as the
first step in total Soviet disintegration and they believe that they "deserve" as much support for the post-war reconstruction of their country as they received for the battle against the Soviets. They feel abandoned and betrayed by the U.S. and the rest of the Western alliance which "used them" to fight their battle but then ceased to provide continuing economic and moral support. (It should be noted that many make the point that moral support is as important now as material support in order to achieve a peace.)

3. Humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan during the ten years of the "resistance" was sizable and, according to many observers, was motivated as much by the Cold War political agenda as by concern for refugee suffering. The result was that refugee camps in Pakistan were well supplied with shelter, food, education and health programmes, tools, training, etc. They also became recruiting grounds for the forces fighting the war of liberation. According to staff who were present at that time, the donor community who ordinarily would have been harshly critical of UNHCR for "allowing" military influence inside refugee camps, actively encouraged all operational agencies to look the other way as this recruiting went on. In general, the donor community was content to supply goods to the vast populations displaced by the war of liberation, using this aid as one aspect of their political and financial support for the war against the Soviets.

4. Even though tribal, ethnic and regional identity has traditionally been extremely important in Afghanistan, most Afghans and outside observers agree that the current fighting has little or
no basis in ethnicity, language, tribe or religion. They cite the fact that each of the currently warring factions contains within its ranks representatives of all ethnic groups, tribes and regions of the country. Still, there appears to be some concern, though currently limited, that if the fighting continues for many more months, ethnic/religious identities could become increasingly important as definers of the lines of conflict.

5. All Afghans are Muslim and religion is of utmost importance to most. There are two branches of Islam in Afghanistan, with Sunni representing the large majority (estimates range from 75% to 85%) and Shia representing the minority. Historically, there has been no tension between the two groups. During the Soviet occupation, Shia troops under Shia commanders received most of their support from Iran while Sunni received support through Pakistan. Because most Shia are concentrated in the central mountain range of Afghanistan, they tended to be less active in Soviet resistance, because the Soviets were unable to penetrate this area due to resistance by Pushtans (Sunni) whose villages and districts surround the mountainous region.

6. In October 1994, a new movement appeared claiming to be intent on bringing peace to all of Afghanistan. Sunni religious students called Talib’s fought their way from the Pakistan border to Kandahar City, eliciting the support of the people along the way as they drove out the petty bandits who had set up checkpoints along all the roads. These bandits and their checkpoints (at which people were frequently threatened and robbed) were extremely
unpopular because they limited both travel and trade. In November 1994, the Talib's reached Chanzi and there were rumors that they intended to take over the entire country and end the ongoing factional fighting in Kabul and elsewhere. Opinion was split about the merit of this effort. Some people felt hopeful that this group could, in fact, farther peace, noting their self-definition of Islamic warriors for peace and their method of operating which gathered support from local people. Others worried that the Talib's only represented yet another warring force in an already war-weary country, noting that they were fighting with new weapons from which it could be inferred that they were receiving direct support from Pakistan. Furthermore, the Talib's were entirely Sunni and people worried what would happen when they reached Shia areas of Afghanistan.

7. With the general lawlessness that has accompanied the wars in Afghanistan, poppy production and weapons trade have both increased. A recent survey by the U.N. found poppy production to be much higher than previously estimated (though whether this is because production was actually up or because previous estimates were too low is not known). In some areas, income from drugs far exceeds any current option that farmers (or anyone else) have. Absentee landlords (often living outside Afghanistan) encourage share croppers to produce for the drug traffic and make enormous profits from this enterprise. While weapons are not produced inside Afghanistan, the positioning of the country and its history of banditry make it an active market for trade in weapons. The
presence of these two large and active illegal markets shape the context for future peace and development in that it is not in the interests of these producers for real stability and peace to come.

IV. Norwegian Refugee Council/Norwegian Church Aid and Other NGOs in Pakistan/Afghanistan

**Norwegian Refugee Council/Norwegian Church Aid:** The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) began work with Afghan refugees in 1979. With offices located in Peshawar, Pakistan, they pursued a policy of working with and through Afghan NGOs rather than becoming directly operational in the field. With a budget of approximately US $4 million in 1994, NRC/NCA funds programmes in reconstruction of infrastructure (schools, clinics, road culverts, etc.), in education (creation of kindergartens, training of teachers), in income generation (for both men and women including agricultural inputs and technical knowledge, skills development such as carpet weaving, tailoring, poultry). In addition, receiving funds from the Norwegian government, NRC/NCA takes a direct role in providing humanitarian relief assistance to refugees and, now, to internally displaced persons inside Afghanistan (due to the fighting in Kabul) in the form of tents, food, blankets, etc.

Over the years, NRC/NCA have been instrumental in shifting work back inside Afghanistan rather than concentrating on the remaining refugee populations in Pakistan. The 1994 "Policy, Strategy, Activities" Document specifically noted that the "...mandate and main goal...for 1994 is to initiate and support
repatriation of external refugees from Pakistan and Iran and help internally displaced to return to their home areas in Afghanistan. It is important that the refugees and internally displaced are able to return in safety and dignity, and sustain their lives at home once they have returned."³

The strategy for work included the development of "pull" factors--i.e. programmes to facilitate resettlement and rehabilitation inside Afghanistan--and lessening of services, except in most dire circumstances, for refugees in Pakistan. In addition, offices were to be opened in Kabul for development of closer communication with government and access to better information and in the western province of Herat in order to provide assistance, through implementing partners, to returning refugees from Iran. The former intention was postponed in light of the fighting in Kabul; the latter resulted in a field office in Herat of Norwegian Project Office/Rural Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan (NPO/RRAA), the primary Afghan "cooperating partner" of NRC/NCA which was created as a result of their early work to promote Afghan NGOs. This office, staffed by over 40 people, responded to the reconstruction and retraining needs of some of the approximately one million refugees who in 1994 were "pushed out" of Iran by Iranian authorities who decided that they represented too great a drain on Iran’s resources.

³ Norwegian Church Aid and Norwegian Refugee Council Afghanistan Program Policy, Strategy, Activities and Budget, 1994, p. 4.
NRC/NCA's strategy was very explicit about involvement of returnees in their own rehabilitation programmes as a means to avoid creating dependency of these people on foreign assistance. Budget allocations were made with 85% of funds for "rehabilitation as a pull factor for repatriation,"\(^4\) 2.5% for human development and 12.5% for emergency work.

**Other NGOs:** As noted above, a great deal of Western-supported humanitarian aid poured into Pakistan to serve the Afghan refugees who fled the fighting against the Soviet Union. NGOs from the U.S. and Western European countries established large programmes, many of them based in Peshawar and some around Quetta, Pakistan. One estimate put the number of people directly employed by these NGOs in Peshawar at the height of the assistance at 22,000.\(^5\) While the majority of these were Afghans, many were expatriates from the U.S. and Western Europe.

As the security situation allowed after the withdrawal of Soviet forces, the Peshawar and Quetta-based NGO programmes carried out "cross-border" operations inside Afghanistan to promote reconstruction and rehabilitation. During this period, international NGOs emphasized rapid "Afghanization" of their staffs.

UNDP operating out of Peshawar during this period took a particularly active role in promoting Afghan NGOs. Following what they now describe as an "opportunistic" strategy, staff of UNDP accepted proposals from any and all Afghan's who had an idea about

\(^4\) 1994 Report, p. 5.

\(^5\) Barakat, et. al., p.3.
activities to be carried out inside Afghanistan and, if the proposal made any sense at all, provided funding to support it. During this period (1991-1993), there was a proliferation of over 200 Afghan "NGOs" operating with UNDP funding.

As the security situation inside Afghanistan stabilized, however, monitoring and evaluation missions to check up on these programmes found that, in very many cases, no real work had been done by these "NGOs." Very often, funds had been pocketed by the individuals who claimed to have a programme idea or had been diverted to support one or another Mujahideen commander. Thus many of the "legitimate" NGOs are critical of the UNDP approach, noting that it undermined confidence in NGOs in general inside Afghanistan and raised suspicion regarding their loyalties to specific parties or commanders. In late 1994, both NGOs and UNDP are involved in efforts to reverse the mistakes of the earlier period which produced what are now referred to as "briefcase" or "vest pocket" Afghan NGOs.

Following NGO moves to rely increasingly on Afghan staff and to move their operations inside Afghanistan, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the continued internecine fighting in Afghanistan have prompted Western governments and NGOs to reduce severely their involvements in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Available funds for expatriate and Afghan NGO activities have dropped markedly from a high of approximately $250 million in 1992 to an estimated ---- in 1994.
V. The NGO Peace Initiative: NRC/NCA Workshop on Peace-Building in Afghanistan

In April 1994, NRC/NCA sponsored a five day workshop entitled "NGOs and Peace-Building in Afghanistan." Thirty-three staff people representing twenty-nine different agencies attended the workshop and engaged in intense discussions about the relationships between their aid for Afghanistan and the conflict in that country. According to the very thorough report published after the workshop, the participants concluded that their programmes were not doing enough to promote peace, and that in some instances they could even be guilty of exacerbating conflicts. They agreed upon a set of eighteen principles for NGO work in conflict areas and produced a set of recommendations both for NGOs and for donors to ensure that their work reduced tensions and helped provide a "foundation for peace" in Afghanistan. Finally, the participants set out ten criteria for NGOs working in Afghanistan and set up a sub-committee to plan follow-up activities to the workshop.

Background to the Seminar:

One individual essentially initiated and developed the idea of the Workshop for NGOs on Peace-Building in Afghanistan. This individual, Mohammed Ehsan, had worked for several international NGOs operating from Pakistan.

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Several years previously, Ehsan had been sponsored by the NGO with which he was then employed to undertake Development Studies in England. While there, he had become aware of the Responding to Conflict programme in Birmingham, England, and decided he would very much like to attend its international "Working with Conflict" course. Some months after his return to Pakistan, he received full scholarship support for the course, the international NGO for which he then worked agreed to give him a paid leave of absence while he attended it, and an individual who worked for another NGO privately paid for his travel costs to England. From ---- to ----, Ehsan was enrolled in the -------- course at Birmingham.

Upon his return to Pakistan, however, he found that the NGO for which he had worked had not paid his salary while he was away and, furthermore, had decided to phase out his position. He was inspired and eager to work on the issues of peace as a result of his studies, but found himself facing the lack of a job and a dearth of resources. At this point, he approached an old friend, Arne Strand, with whom he had worked previously and who now was the NRC/NCA Deputy Representative in Peshawar. Ehsan discussed his eagerness to pursue the peace issues within the Afghanistan context with Arne, and suggested the possibility of planning a workshop for NGOs on their role in peace-building. To his and their real credit, Arne and NRC/NCA agreed to provide the "home" and some direct financial support for this initiative. Later, Oxfam/UK also provided additional funding to support Ehsan's effort.
When Ehsan first pursued peace studies and proposed the peace-building seminar, there were people who warned him of the dangers his efforts might involve. Having served as a mujahideen during the war with the Soviet Union, Ehsan knew very well the suspicion attached to the notion of "peace" in that context. During the period of the "Jihad" or "holy war" with the Soviets, any advocacy for "peace" had been interpreted as a break from the holy cause of the battle. However, Ehsan also believed that the nature of the war had changed completely after the Soviets left and Muslim commanders began to fight among themselves for power. It was in this latter context that he felt Afghans needed to confront the importance of ending the conflict and building a peaceful society.

When the Seminar was first announced, those who had either not recognized this shift in the war or who, though they saw the truth of this themselves, still feared the general suspicion of the society toward peace-makers, were reluctant to become involved. Thus, many invitations to the seminar were refused. (Some of those who did not attend now express their regret at not coming and are eager to become involved in any future steps taken by the Seminar group.) Nonetheless, a good group of thirty-three active NGO, UN and other agency people did gather for the intense sessions of five days in April.

NRC/NCA invited Simon Fisher, Director of Responding to Conflict, and Dr. Sultan Barakat, Coordinator of the Post-War Reconstruction and Development Unit at the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies at York to act as facilitators for the
Workshop. The decision to "import" two people who were themselves quite experienced in conflict resolution as well as knowledgeable about a broad spectrum of conflict contexts was an extremely wise one. Not surprisingly, the discussions in the workshop sometimes became quite emotional and heated. These two facilitators were able to keep the group focused and energized toward their immediate task which was defined each day based on the stage and development of the discussions of the day before.

All participants felt challenged and enriched by the workshop. They left eager to pursue programmes to reduce conflict and support peace-building. However, in the fall of 1994 six months after the workshop, both organizers and participants were feeling a bit of frustration that they had not been able to identify clear, practical next steps to follow up on their discussions. The war in Kabul raged, though relative "peace" prevailed in several of the Districts of Afghanistan. In meetings with the writer of this case study, seminar organizers and participants expressed their desire to undertake specific actions either to alter their NGO programmes or to develop new ones which could be seen as directly addressing and having a positive impact on the residual tensions and conflictual potential in Afghanistan. But, they said, they did not know what to do.

VI. Analysis:

What conclusions or lessons can be learned from the study of this particular peace initiative?
1. The first lesson can be learned from NRC/NCA's response to the initiative of Mohammed Ehsan. Whereas other NGOs were reluctant to be seen to promote "peace" in the context of suspicion surrounding this concept in Afghanistan, NRC/NCA was willing to provide both material and moral support to Mohammed Ehsan when he approached them with his ideas and, furthermore, to "go public" on its willingness to push the exploration of peace-building.

It is likely that, in every conflict context, there are individuals such as Mohammed Ehsan who are ready to take initiatives—and the risks associated with such initiatives—to explore alternatives to the conflictual environment in which they live. International NGOs may provide a logical and relatively safe "home" for such individuals and a base for their work. Questions would always exist about when, how, who to support but the idea of being open to such a request and putting an agency's financial and moral resources and public identity behind such an individual is one which should be explored on a much broader basis and in a variety of contexts.

2. Second, by directly raising the issue of the relationship of NGO/international aid activities and peace or conflict, the workshop in some ways legitimated the idea of peace-building in the Afghan context. Thirty-three individuals and the agencies they represented made a clear decision to become explicitly involved in exploring the relationship between their work and peace-building. Even those who turned down the invitation to the workshop were confronted with the idea of such an event and had to make a
decision regarding their own participation. Though this was negative in some cases, the fact that they gave it thought may prove over time to have been one step in their seriously confronting their roles in relation to conflict/peace-building. Furthermore, the fact that the seminar happened without negative incidents and that no one was threatened who participated signalled that it was "okay" to discuss and promote peace under the circumstances at that time in Afghanistan. (While this could change or isolated incidents of threat will undoubtedly occur again, on balance this change seems to be acknowledged rather broadly.)

3. Third, the content of the discussions in the workshop was important in focusing and shaping the thinking of those who attended and of many others who have read the workshop report. Specifically, the discussions pushed toward identification of practical, do-able activities for NGOs in relation to peace-building and outlined basic issues that NGOs have to confront if they are to lessen their complicity with violence in Afghanistan and increase their impact in positive peace-promotion. As such, they represent important initiatives in thinking among NGO staff (not only in Pakistan/Afghanistan but in many other conflict zones as well) because they suggest specific, practical ideas for things that actually can be done.

Examples of these practical ideas are found in the Guiding Principles for NGOs Working in Areas of Conflict and the Recommendations for Practical Peace-Making by NGOs (see Exhibits A and B).
EXHIBIT A: GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR NGOs WORKING IN AREAS OF CONFLICT

1. Is there thorough ongoing consultation and involvement with all affected groups and factions in the area, using indigenous structures wherever possible?

2. Does the programme meet the needs of a range of interests, not just one powerful group?

3. Are you monitoring the programme at first hand and to avoid the possibility of resources going to support a political faction?

4. Do you take every opportunity to demonstrate your neutrality in the conflict, and your commitment to peace and reconciliation?

5. In any involvement with local commanders do you consider the possibility of offering them, and members of their group, some appropriate education, particularly in communication and tolerance?

6. In any relief work are you building in longer term sustainability and development?

7. Are you coordinating your work with other agencies in the area?

8. Have you got an effective policy for the security both of your staff and of others involved in the programme?

9. Does your programme offer opportunities for dialogue between different groups in the area, and the identification of common needs, including security?

10. Does the programme encourage an accountable style of leadership?

11. Do you encourage and make use of processes for handling disagreements peacefully, both within organisations and in the wider community?

12. Does your programme foster hope and the vision of a better future, for example through active involvement in the reconstruction process?

13. Are you assisting people, as necessary, in coping with the trauma of violent injury and the psychological damage caused by experiences such as loss of relatives, witnessing atrocities and intimidation?

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Barakat, et. al., pp.35-36.
EXHIBIT A/CONT'D.

14. Are you doing anything practical to assist the victims of war, in particular widows, children and the disabled?

15. Are you prepared for the possibility that, by the nature of your work and the credibility and opportunities this gives you, you may be asked to convey messages from one faction or grouping to another, and assist them in communicating with one another?

16. Are you keeping donor agencies fully informed of the progress of the work as well as the continuing needs?

17. Have you assessed the need for specialised skills and resources for working in conflict situations, and have you made provision for these, including, if necessary, extra training?

18. Have you made a serious enough long-term commitment to work in such areas to justify the outlay, and the hopes you raise?
EXHIBIT B: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICAL PEACEMAKING BY NGOs

NGOs should:

1. Use their influence for peace in Afghanistan.

2. Initiate, with donors, peace efforts at village and national levels.

3. Make every effort to maintain and demonstrate their neutrality in the conflict.

4. Mobilise available resources to promote social reorientation towards peace and reconciliation and encourage people to realise the importance of social cohesion.

5. Use religious and traditional values as a motivator for peace-building.

6. Reassess their field priorities in the light of the changing needs in many areas.

7. Look for opportunities to encourage refugees to return, eg. by working to restore peace and essential services in their home areas.

8. Consider equal rights and needs of the local population when working with displaced people.

9. Provide secure employment for staff, and give priority to employment of the local people in the community.

10. Strengthen local institutions and provide resource materials training for them, as required.

11. Encourage and provide opportunities for educated and prominent Afghans to use their influence to build trust and peace in their communities.

12. Promote exchanges between groups of people of differing ethnic and religious backgrounds.

13. Train NGO field staff in conflict resolution skills.

14. Discourage others from carrying guns and set an example themselves.

15. Motivate community leaders to campaign for peace.

16. Produce suitable leaflets and posters and make use of the mass media, to raise awareness of the necessity for peace.
One example might suffice to illustrate this point. The question, "Do you take every opportunity to demonstrate your neutrality in the conflict and your commitment to peace and reconciliation?" suggests that the activities of NGOs working in conflict settings (no matter what they are—viz. education programmes, water projects, road reconstruction, etc.) could (and might have an additional impact if they were) be "advertised" as explicitly linked to and promoting peace. If the importance of "taking every opportunity to demonstrate...your commitment to peace and reconciliation" were taken seriously, this, in turn, might prompt agencies to analyze exactly how what they are doing really does (or does not) serve the processes of peace-building. Agencies that make claims which are patently unfounded (eg. claims to neutrality among warring parties that are clearly not true), would immediately have their credibility questioned by their beneficiaries and their work would thus be undermined. This possibility might serve to force greater clarity of analysis of programme impacts and greater honesty in identifying priorities for work (and for groups with whom to work) that support peace-building rather than the opposite.

4. Fourth, by spending time in the workshop on Peace-Building (which was publicly recorded in the Workshop Report that has been widely circulated among UN, NGO and government circles), participants became, at least to some degree, publicly committed both within their own agencies and in the eyes of the broader community to peace-building. Thus, a relatively "safe" first step such as a workshop may have the potential for solidifying participants'
commitments to subsequent activities. Though most participants in the seminar now express some frustration that they do not have a meaningful and clear sense of a peace-building NGO agenda, this frustration, itself, may turn out to be productive because, having gone "on record" as involved, they now feel they have to "do something." This provides a rich ground for actions if and when anyone comes up with useful ideas.

5. Fifth, Mohammed Ehsan and NRC/NCA have been clearly identified as taking a lead in work on peace-building strategies and activities. While they had hoped that one of several NGO consortia would take up the peace initiative after the end of the workshop, this has not occurred and seems unlikely to do so. In fact, virtually everyone is now looking to Ehsan and NRC/NCA to provide leadership and ideas on next steps, and they expect (and want?) to be "pushed" to work on these issues by Ehsan/NRC/NCA. Though this reflects a bit of passivity on others' parts, it also provides a receptive field in which Ehsan/NRC/NCA can take additional actions. It also makes it almost impossible for them to drop the initiative with which they are now so fully identified.

6. Sixth, publication of a full workshop report had several positive outcomes. First, it put on public record the fact that the workshop occurred and named those who were involved. This had the impact, noted above, of putting these participants on record as committed to these issues. Second, open publication of workshop proceedings clearly limited the possibility that negative rumors could circulate about what happened there. Complete transparency
about peace actions seems to be extremely important in keeping people involved and in reducing negative backlash. Third, the pamphlet of the report can itself be used as an organizing tool for future work. Ehsan and NRC/NCA hand the booklet out widely and use it to prompt others to consider the issues raised in the workshop.

Thus, the five day workshop generated significant expectation and momentum and seems to have elicited potential commitment among a number of people. Even without clarity on how to build peace, this workshop was a good first step in activities that should continue to unfold in interesting ways.

VII. Additional Ideas/Issues:

A number of other ideas and issues emerged in the course of researching this case study which deserve to be recorded and considered in relation to findings from other areas. These include:

1. Potential Use of Studies or Other Outside Activities to Raise/Focus Attention. For example, following the workshop, Ehsan and NRC/NCA used their invitation to the Local Capacities for Peace project to visit and write this case study as another step in promoting the issues of peace-building. They developed a strategy for preparing for the visit of the case writer which involved consultations with leading U.N. personnel and members of the workshop’s follow-up committee. These consultations to plan the approach of the case research and the broad range of meetings which
were arranged for the case writer’s visit all served to raise and focus attention again on the issues of international assistance and conflict/peace-building. Meetings were arranged with the Governor’s of two Districts (Jalalabad and Herat, though in the latter the actual meeting was with the Deputy Governor), again raising the visibility both of NRC/NCA as a lead agency in the field and of the issues of peace-promotion, themselves. Full television coverage of the visit in Herat also provided a good platform for bringing attention to peace-building. Meetings with university professors, U.N. agencies, NGOs, women’s groups, Afghan NGO partners, project staff and participants—all focused people’s thoughts, again, on conflict and peace. Finally, Ehsan used the occasion of the case writer’s visit to think through and outline a proposal for programmatic initiatives which can be undertaken in the next few months by NRC/NCA and others, and NRC/NCA agreed to free up to fifty percent of Ehsan’s time to pursue these initiatives.

2. When to Rely on/Work with Existing Structures/When to Create New Ones: In Afghanistan, as elsewhere, a constant theme for discussion among aid workers is the issue of when, whether and how to work with existing local governmental/governance structures and when working with these would be to reinforce existing conflicts. Nonetheless, virtually everyone involved in assistance notes that agencies should be reinforcing and helping re-develop traditional local structures.

In the Afghan context, the traditional local forum for decision-making and conflict-resolution was the "shura"—a body of
elders established on a local or somewhat broader basis to resolve issues of joint interest/concern. During the years of warfare, some of these shura’s disappeared; in some cases, they have been revived by local commanders, governors, elders, etc. Where these exist and are not too definitively aligned with one or another of the contending commanders, most aid agencies would agree that they should work with them.

One experiment in developing new shura’s where they do not exist has been undertaken by UNDP. Building on its somewhat negative experience with development of Afghan NGOs (reported above), UNDP has initiated a new programme approach (tried and proven effective in the North of Afghanistan while the above-described approach was pursued from Peshawar). This involves hiring teams of Afghan "Liaison Officers" whose task it is to set up a District "Shura" to set priorities for assistance in each District. The liaison officers visit each village in a district, explaining the availability of UNDP aid and describing their procedure for allocating it. They invite villages to send representatives to a Shura meeting (imminently scheduled), where, again, this body is advised of UNDP’s programme resources. The Shura is asked to name five priority activities (for infrastructure reconstruction which is the focus of UNDP funding) for that entire District which UNDP will then fund.

When a District Shura has agreed, UNDP sends engineers, employed on its own staff, into the field to survey the proposed projects. Once surveys are complete and funding is allocated, then
local "NGOs" are hired to carry out the work. When a Shura cannot agree on priorities, UNDP simply moves on to another District telling the people that they must first agree before UNDP will undertake any support.

The NGOs which UNDP hires for what is essentially contract work are, more often than not, Afghan construction companies formed by Afghan engineers and established on a profit making basis. One expatriate-funded NGO, DACAAR (The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees, with funding from DANIDA, Danish Refugee Council and others), also works on this basis with UNDP but takes the dollar payments awarded for work and recycles the "profits" into its other programme activities.

Some NGOs are critical of the UNDP approach, noting that they are "creating" Shura's where none traditionally existed and that UNDP cannot possibly monitor sufficiently whether or not these Shura's are controlled by particular commanders or truly democratic as they hope.

Others believe that this approach is a good idea because, while the specific District level Shura's which UNDP forms are not traditional, the idea is nonetheless a traditional idea and people in Afghanistan are familiar with it as a forum for taking important decisions. They also note that UNDP's approach to inviting villages to join its Shura is inclusive--all villages can be represented. This, they believe, has the potential for lowering conflict among villages which would, under other systems of aid allocation, likely be in competition and conflict with each other.
3. How Processes of Allocating Aid May or May Not Exacerbate Conflict: Some of the NGOs working in Afghanistan have found themselves threatened by villagers and commanders in areas where they are not working. This typically happens when agency personnel are moving from one village to another where they have programmes and must pass through areas where they are not working.

To address this problem, UNDP (again in the programme described above) has decided to work from a center outward, skipping over none of the villages/areas along the way. UNDP of course has enormous resources relative to small NGO programmes so it can actually afford to cover whole regions with its assistance.

The question arises, however, about how the physical allotment of aid may, or may not, be designed to address potential conflict. While answers are not in, this is an area for consideration in different contexts.

4. What Circumstances/Events Cause Local Responses of Different Kinds: In general, when asked, most local Afghans (and even NGO workers too!) express their sense that there is "nothing we can do" to end conflict/promote peace. They feel as if the war is being fought by others for reasons with which they do not identify and they feel, therefore, as if they are powerless to stop the fighting.

However, I also was told a number of stories of incidents where individuals or local groups had done something brave and remarkable to stop immediate conflicts in their areas.
In one instance, two commanders and their mujahideen were preparing to battle over some incident that had caused a rift and men were actually taking up positions in a village area to begin the battle. A mullah from the local mosque took out of loud speaker and ran up and down the streets proclaiming that "no one will come to the funerals of anyone who dies in this conflict." This signalled his judgment that the up-coming battle had no religious justification and that people who died would not, therefore, be considered martyrs (eligible for heaven). The battle did not occur.

In another incident, two groups were taking up positions in a market area as a result of a crisis that emerged when a man from one side, riding on his bicycle, ran into a child from the other side. The fighters were assuming positions on roof tops and readying their weapons. Merchants in the area knew this "would be bad for business" so they simply inter-positioned themselves between the two sides meaning that any shots would kill them first. Soon, shoppers and common people joined the merchants. The battle did not take place. A Shura was called and the problem was settled in the traditional way. (The inter-positioning could probably not have prevented the conflict over the long run; however, it caused a delay in fighting which was used by others to summon elders into a Shura so the problem was resolved.)

In a third case, the Shura in Jalalabad was debating their involvement in the new outbreak of fighting in Kabul. Members of the Jalalabad Shura have definite loyalties to those fighting in Kabul and, thus, some obligation to join their battle. One medical
doctor member of the Shura, however, convinced his fellows that they should not let the Kabul battle come to Jalalabad, pointing out that it would result in destruction of their (by now) relatively peaceful area and a renewal of hardship among the citizens living there. He noted that anyone who wanted to fight could travel up to Kabul, thus containing the actual battlefield there and away from their own locale. (This story was told me by the Governor of Jalalabad who was commenting on how clever it was to keep the actual destruction of the war away from his/their area.)

The issue here is how and under what circumstances do people take the steps they can take to stop fighting from breaking out. And, is there any way in which the aid community can encourage or support such actions appropriately? When would direct training in conflict resolution be helpful toward this end?

5. Changing the Attitudes and Expectations of War When These Have Persisted for a Very Long Time: One issue that arises in the Afghan context (and many others) is the "habit" of mind and commonly held expectations that many years of warfare create among a population. In particular, in Afghanistan for example, all textbooks have, over the years of the holy war, adopted illustrations that depict people at war. Even arithmetic is taught with addition problems showing one kalashnikov plus one kalashnikov equals two kalashnikovs.

The prevalence of such expectations probably means that attempts to move away from violent conflict must be focused both on immediate conflict-resolution (as in examples above) and on long-
term fundamental attitudinal change. Opportunities exist, therefore, in education programmes, context of women's projects, etc. where people can be encouraged/inspired to re-think behaviors. Ehsan and NRC/NCA will be concentrating a major portion of their upcoming work in developing training for pre-school and elementary teachers to help them use "peace games" or other kinds of exercises and assignments to address attitudinal change among children. More exploration of such approaches, and their impacts, in different contexts will be useful.

6. Issues of Scale of Assistance: In Afghanistan, several issues associated with the scale of assistance arose. One of these, referred to above, has to do with how one can allocate small amounts of aid which simply are not adequate to cover everyone without, at the same time, increasing competition and conflict among contenders for that aid. One possibility that people raised in Afghanistan was the idea of linking NGO assistance in the areas where UNDP was providing aid so that, overall, there would be enough aid to go around for everyone. Another possibility, raised by UNHCR experience, was to concentrate limited resources in one specific area so that they could be significant rather than spread thin over many areas.

Again, these discussions raise issues which need further attention and reflection, based on experience in different settings.

7. Potential Aid Packages for By-Passing Control of Conflict- ing Parties: A conversation with an agricultural expert working in
Afghanistan raised in a specific way the issue of the content of programming as it relates to conflict. In his example, this individual stressed the usefulness of seed programmes for inclusive aid that cannot be controlled by the powerful for their own ends (as opposed to other commodities or goods). He noted that even though a first shipment of seeds may be taken by a powerful warlord for his own use, because seeds themselves proliferate, they soon become plentiful and tend to be distributed farmer to farmer, "below the political superstructure." His idea raises for further consideration in other contexts the issues of aid that is, by its nature, inclusive and democratic, tending toward broad rather than narrow benefit patterns.

The Case Study of the initiative taken by NRC/NCA in the Afghanistan context provides a fruitful base for learning lessons about first steps in peace-building efforts and for identifying issues/ideas which can be usefully pursued in other case contexts. While ultimate outcomes and precise results of NRC/NCA’s effort are impossible to know at this time, they have clearly made an important step in opening the issues of peace-building in their own setting and have contributed to the broader exploration of these themes among aid agencies working in conflict in other areas. Thus, this case study is also an early step in the comparison of aid programmes in conflict situations and the extraction of lessons that can be applied more generally. Comments and reflections on these lessons and issues are welcomed from readers of this case.