From the ground up: Where does the population of rural Helmand stand after over a decade of 'state building'?*

Within the lines on a map that denote the administrative boundaries of the province of Helmand lives a diverse population with quite different resource endowments; distinct social structures and state-societal relations; different histories of conflict, land settlement, migration, wealth and opium poppy cultivation; as well as varied experiences of over a decade of the international community's 'state building' project. As Afghanistan looks to 2014 and transition, there is a lot of pressure to take stock of what has worked in Helmand, an area where significant resources have been invested, and to draw implications for the future. Some say that policy has failed in Helmand, some say that it has succeeded, but clearly it is not so simple, and ultimately it is not what western pundits and policy makers believe, but rather the experiences of the Afghan rural population that will ultimately determine what happens in this restive southern province in the years to come.

Drawing on fieldwork in rural Helmand in December 2013, as well as a body of research[1] conducted in the same locations each year since May 2008, this paper sets out the contrasting experiences and livelihood trajectories of some of the different population groups that live in central Helmand: of those who have benefitted from the international intervention over the last few years, those who have suffered as a consequence of it, and those who have just simply left, driven out by the military and civilian intervention and the social-economic processes that it created. In doing so, this paper points to the impact of the statebuilding venture in central Helmand and how the costs and benefits have been distributed so unevenly amongst the rural population. It documents the wider economic and social processes that have contributed to the profound changes that have occurred in the province during the last decade, and examines the unintended consequences of policy, in particular, the dislocation of large sections of the rural population and their settlement in the desert lands on Afghanistan's frontiers. Ultimately the paper shows just how fragile the improvements in security and economic growth remain and how dependent they are on the continued funding of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and investments in the rural economy.

The well-watered people of the canal

Amidst all the stories of protracted violence, insurgency and the failure of the international effort[2] the lives of the rural population of the canal command area of central Helmand has changed over the last few years, and for many it has been for the better. In part this is a consequence of just how much the security situation in the province deteriorated after September 2006 when UK military forces first established the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Helmand and began to push into the rural areas and contest the Taliban's influence over the population. Indeed, such was the intensity of the conflict that throughout 2010, and even as late as the autumn of 2011, farmers in most of the twenty nine research sites that this study has covered for six consecutive years consistently complained of exposure to protracted firefights between International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) and Taliban fighters, as well as the threat of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and other acts of violence.

However, this appears to have changed in the central part of the province between 2012 and 2013, particularly in the more restive districts of Marjah and Nad e Ali, following the significant increase in ISAF and Afghan military forces, as well as the uplift in development monies known as 'the surge'. So much so, that by the end of 2013 farmers were not reporting the kind of incidents that they had become so used to - the requests for assistance and intimidation by Taliban fighters, firefights between the opposing military forces in the conflict and the raids on household compounds by Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and ISAF troops. Rather, farmers talked of government security forces that were very much in

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control of much of the canal irrigated area of central Helmand, stretching from Kopak and Malgir straddling the Nad e Ali - Nahre Seraj district boundary lines to just before Safar,[3] beyond the district centre in Garmsir in the south.

Perhaps ironically a major contributing factor to improvements in the security situation during 2013 was the departure of the foreign military forces that had helped the ANSF secure the terrain in the first place. The rural population seemed especially pleased that ISAF had gone; as in many areas of Afghanistan farmers blamed the 'foreigners' for blocking the roads, searching household compounds and acting as a magnet for Taliban fire. With the departure of the bulk of the foreign military forces and the closure (or handing over) of many of the ISAF led Forward Operating Bases in the summer of 2013, there was in simple terms, 'less to fight about'. In fact, at the end of 2013, those in the canal command area - even in areas like Aqajan Kalay that straddles the Boghra canal - reported that the ANSF were providing security and that their freedom of movement had improved; they expressed gratitude to the government because, in the words of one farmer, 'In the past there was always fighting and bombing in the area. Now there is peace and the government has brought security here.'[4]

There were even claims that many in the Afghan Local Police (ALP) - the vanguard of the security effort in the rural areas - had cleaned up their act and were less prone to acts of predation on their own communities than they had been twelve months ago.[5] Perhaps of even greater importance in terms of building local support was the income that establishing the ALP had injected directly into the rural population, providing salaries of the equivalent of USD 120 to 155[6] each month for those recruited. This kind of income could be transformative; as a land owner in Chanjir, with two sons in the ALP earning a total of USD 310 per month - money that was paying for their brother to attend a private school in Lashkar Gah - claimed: 'I am always thinking of the government and pray for them. I think back to ten years ago and think about how much my life has improved, and not just mine but all the people. All of this is due to the government we have'.[7]

It was not just the security situation that had improved. In many parts of the canal command area of central Helmand farmers acknowledged a more fundamental change with regard to how they interacted with both economic and state institutions, and thereby how they perceived the world. They no longer simply looked to their land for an income, as one farmer in Nad e Ali put it: 'Before people where not familiar with the bazaar. In the past I had a donkey; I had this donkey for ten years. I used to say if the donkey wants to go to the bazaar I will follow. Now everyone goes to the bazaar everyday'.[8] They also looked to the services that were on offer - in particular the schools and healthcare - and where public sector provision was deemed substandard, those with money turned to the private schools and doctors that have flourished in the last few years.

The Zarang: Changing the face of rural Afghanistan

Some of this change in the mindset was attributed to the affordability of mechanized transport. For example, a new Chinese-made motorbike - branded for sale in Afghanistan under names such as 'Helmand', and 'Pamir' - cost only USD 460 to USD 560 in Helmand in late 2013, compared to around USD 2,000 when only Japanese manufactured bikes had been available in the late 1990s.[9] A 'Zarang'[10] - an Afghan constructed three wheel vehicle and trailer that has become such a common feature in Afghanistan since 2009, would set a family back USD 1,340, while a second hand version could be purchased for as little as USD 522. More expensive forms of transport such as a Corrolla, or perhaps a larger vehicle , a station wagon, known as a 'saracha' - all of which could be used to

transport passengers as well as goods - could be purchased second hand in Helmand for between USD 5,000 and USD 8,000.[11] In contrast a tractor - which in the past before the roads had improved was one of the only reliable ways of transporting goods and people to market - was more expensive in 2013 than it had been ten years earlier.[12]

The number of households owning motorbikes, a Zarang or a car increased significantly over the last few years. Sales have been aided by the degree of competition amongst sellers in Helmand, falling prices and improved roads. The result is a more mobile population than it was a decade ago with better access to food items in the bazaar, including meat and fruit, and the public services, such as education and health, that became available. Vehicle ownership also contributed to family income - providing the equivalent of USD 4.50 per day[13] to a son or brother that might load up a Zarang and transport agricultural produce from the village to the district centre, or perhaps as much as USD 11.00[14] per day to a household that owned a saracha and had one of its family members ply the roads taking passengers between the village and Lashkar Gah, Gereshk or other destinations.[15] Those leasing out their tractors often earned between USD 730 and USD 910[16] a season transporting agricultural goods to the provincial centre, as well as taking agricultural inputs, such as fertilizer, diesel, water pumps and generators, as well as building materials, from the bazaar to the village.

However, it is not just an issue of better access to affordable transport, and the increased availability of public and private goods in the district centers and village shops, that has changed the way of thinking of farmers in this part of central Helmand. Of particular interest is the way that some farmers - particularly those residing in the environs of Lashkar Gah - see their lives having changed since giving up opium poppy over the last four years.

Academics, such as Jonathan Goodhand,[17] rightly point to the role that widescale opium production played in transforming rural areas like that of Helmand in the 1980s and 1990s, by supporting the development of a cash-based economy, the commercialization of agricultural production and the closer integration of rural, and often peripheral parts of the country, into the national and international economy. In late 2013, many farmers pointed to a further stage of agrarian change; one where the rural population was increasingly looking to the market for agricultural goods, wage labor and services as the way to earn a living rather than a rely on opium production. As one farmer described the change: 'when opium poppy was banned we looked to the market'.[18]

Ironically, in many cases this transition to a less opium dependent livelihood was supported by the money earned from illicit opium production itself. For example, for those who were in the fortunate position to have generated inventories of opium during the 'good years' - aided by land ownership, sizeable plots and only a small number of household members who were unable to work - sold their opium at the inflated prices that followed the harvest of 2010, when prices rose to almost USD 300 per kilogramme.[19] This provided the start-up costs to buy a shop, a car or a Zarang, and begin trading legal goods and services and replace some of the income they had previously earned from opium.

Reducing opium poppy cultivation - a particularly labor intensive crop requiring as much as three hundred and sixty person days per hectare - also freed up family labor to staff the family shop, drive the vehicle or go to the bazaar or city and find employment. And there is certainly greater evidence of non-farm income amongst rural households in the canal command area than there was when opium poppy was grown more extensively. For example, while only one quarter of the households interviewed for this study in late 2010[20] had one family member or more who earned a salary or daily wage income, almost half of those interviewed in late 2013 had a family member who earned an income from something other than from the family farm.[21] It is this off-farm and non-farm income that played a critical role in improving the overall welfare of households in the absence of opium. For example, owning a shop;[22] having a family member in the ALP; a son with a car, a Zarang, or even working in the construction industry[23] in Lashkar Gah all provided valuable injections of cash into the household economy.

Moreover, to a family the benefits of non-farm income were not simply monetary; the totality of the income that a specific family member earned from their job. Those with a family member working in the bazaar - no matter what kind of job they did - referred to their increased consumption of food items such as meat and fruit; items that had once been luxuries, eaten only when a family member needed to travel to the

market, incurring transport costs, possibly having to pay bribes and risking physical harm, particularly in the peak of the conflict. In 2013 life was so much easier with a son or brother in the bazaar who 'at the end of each day brings meat and sometimes fruit from the market.'[24]

Greater market exposure also led to changes in agricultural production and a significant shift in the crops that farmers have grown following the reductions in opium, improvements in security and the significant investments in rural infrastructure that central Helmand has seen since 2008. Times have changed and the initial response to the implementation of a ban on opium poppy in the autumn of 2008, where opium poppy was often replaced with wheat - largely due to the significant rise in wheat prices and concerns over food security at the time - evolved and by the 2009/10 growing season farmers in the environs of Lashkar Gah and Gereshk increasingly cultivated a wide range of horticultural crops, both annual and perennial. As time passed this kind of mixed cropping system became more common, not just seen in places like Bolan, Qala Bost, and Mohejerin - that were quick to diversify and meet the demands for agricultural produce from an expanding provincial capital - but across a much wider geographic area within central Helmand.

As the footprint of international military forces and the ANSF extended into the rural areas along the Boghra canal, and with it the ban on opium poppy, many farmers adapted to the change in circumstances. Whereas in the first year that a ban on opium was effectively imposed in an area resulted in opium poppy being replaced by a low return-low risk cropping system that consisted of wheat in the autumn, cotton, melon and water melon in the spring, and maize and mung bean in the summer, a range of perennials began to appear in areas much further from Lashkar Gah; crops like grapes,[25] pomegranates,[26]apricots,[27] greengage, as well as off-season horticultural crops like cucumber,[28] okra,[29] onion[30], egg plant,[31] tomato. Farmers also began to experiment with summer crops such as radish,[32] carrot,[33] and cauliflower to sell in the market whereas before they had only grown them for household consumption.

Growing numbers of Polytunnels in Bolan

Farmers also invested in improved production techniques supported by donor assisted programmes and their own ingenuity. For example, there was a rapid expansion in the number of polytunnels which could be seen across the canal command area in 2013. In 2011 these very same tunnels had not been erected in areas where the Taliban dominated because farmers feared retaliation for advertising the fact that they had received development assistance.[34] Furthermore, farmers adapted the initial designs and took to building their own polytunnels from items that they purchased locally in the bazaar, including abandoning the more costly metal struts originally used, in favor of wooden ones, which it is claimed were less likely to be stolen by local drug users.[35] Farmers across central Helmand also adopted other new technologies as they became affordable - such as waterpumps, generators, solar panels and mobile phones - exploiting them not only to improve their quality of life but also their agricultural productivity. Solar panels for instance are used for anything from providing lighting, running a refrigerator or tubewell, and even for starting a car when the battery has expired.

Greater care was also given to crops that farmers have grown for many years; improving the yields and economic returns on old staples like melon, [36] water melon, [37] and even wheat. A farmer in Chanjir commented on his change in perspective, saying: 'In the past we gave no attention to wheat', and the yield data for wheat would tend to support his claim. For example, in 2009 wheat yields were typically between 140 to 170 man[38] per jerib[39] in the canal irrigated areas of central Helmand (the equivalent of 3.1 to 3.6 metric tones/hectare). In late 2013 farmers rarely reported yields of less than 160 man per jerib in the irrigated areas, and 200 man per jerib (the equivalent of 4.5 metric tons per hectare) or more, was not uncommon amongst those interviewed. Indeed, such was the expansion in wheat production - and the improvements in security on the main highways - that those trading wheat in the bazaars of Lashkar Gah and Gereshk reported that as much as two thirds of the wheat grain that they purchased in Helmand was sold to traders in provinces such as Kandahar, Kabul and Ghazni. Those trading fruit and vegetables in the cities made similar claims, and reported that traders from Kabul and Ghazni were regular buyers in Helmand, where a few years ago insecurity had significantly hampered trade both within Helmand and with other provinces.

Those farmers who have done well over the last few years have seen their capital grow; they have taken advantage of the increasing number of private schools and universities in Lashkar Gah and supplemented their children's education in public schools with the growing number of private courses that became available. These farmers can still afford to marry off their sons despite the high bride prices that persist[40] even in the absence of opium poppy across much of the canal command area. They can also meet the high costs of private healthcare when the public system is seen to be deficient, paying to send family members to private medical practitioners in Lashkar Gah, Kandahar and Quetta.[41] Even those without the financial where-with-all for private health and education have seen improvements in public heath provision and in education standards in their area. For example, Loy Bagh in Nad e Ali now boasts a high school, as well as a private high school for girls, something that has gained increasing support amongst the population where it was not present three or four years ago.

This is not to say that that opium poppy had become a thing of the past in the canal command area. Far from it; cultivation persisted and the threat of resurgence was real. Indeed, despite the growing 'legal economy' in the canal command area of central Helmand opium poppy still maintained a foothold in the livelihoods of those who appeared to have abandoned the crop in recent years. For one, there were signs of an attempt to return to cultivation in Marjah in Block F4D5 in the autumn of 2013. It was not extensive cultivation - just farmers testing the water and seeing how the government might respond. None had cultivated more than two jeribs of poppy but buoyed by a sense of solidarity amongst their fellow villagers they were willing to risk it. As one farmer announced: 'The government announced that poppy is banned but we have cultivated it; we will see what happens'.[42] Secondly, in areas like Aqajan Kalay, Loy Bagh, Zarghun Kalay and Chanjir in Nad e Ali, and across Marjah a number of farmers claimed small amounts of opium poppy had persisted - only a few biswa[43] - inside the compound walls in the gardens where fruit and vegetables are produced for household consumption. Thirdly, sending a family member to work on the opium crop of others, perhaps during the harvest in Bakwa in Farah, in Khanishin in Helmand or in the former desert area north of the Boghra canal, was a source of income that many farmers in this area had not yet given up on, more so in those areas where the market for horticultural crops continued to be thin, such as Marjah and in parts of western Nad e Ali.

Yet even these sources of income were at risk as of late 2013. While there was uncertainty in Marjah as to whether the government might react against the return of cultivation, elsewhere there was a sense of a provincial authority - and in particular an ALP - that was resolute in its desire to maintain low levels of poppy cultivation in the 2013/14 growing season. Across the canal command area from Aqajan Kalay and Malgir in the north to Aynak in the south, farmers referred to the ban on opium poppy cultivation and the commitment of the local authorities and the ALP. There were even rumors that the provincial government was looking to recruit women police officers to aid with eradication of opium poppy within household compounds. The seclusion of women has long been a tradition in rural Afghanistan not only restricting the mobility of women outside the home but also severely curtailing the access male non-family members are given to the area within the compound wall. For those wishing to cultivate opium poppy this tradition had proven advantageous as it had made the authorities reluctant to enter household compounds in order to destroy the opium crop. When the government began to extend its reach into central Helmand after 2010

wealthy farmers invested heavily, paying as much as USD 275 per jerib to build walls around larger parts of their land so as to allow more extensive poppy cultivation, knowing the government would be reluctant to enter.[44] It was thought that the planned recruitment of women police officers for the eradication campaign in the spring of 2014 would allow the women of the household to be managed in keeping with local custom, and the crops inside the compound to be inspected and if necessary destroyed - but only time would tell if this would happen.

To farmers this potential loss of what was often just a small amount of opium poppy from behind the compound walls was made worse by the poor opium yields and the low pay that wage laborers had received during the opium poppy harvest in the spring 2013. Indeed, many farmers complained of the low wages their family members had received when working in the former desert land north of the Boghra canal, where opium poppy had flourished since 2008. Wage labor rates of less than USD 5.00) were common in these former desert lands whereas for those that travelled further afield - to Dishu, Khanishin or even the former desert areas of Bakwa on the Farah-Nimroz-Helmand border - the pay had been at least twice as much - a function of better yields. Those in the canal in Shin Kalay, Koshal Kalay and in Marjah - where a large proportion of farmers had sons and brothers who had worked on the opium farms of others during the harvest season - were unsure as to whether the crop would be damaged once again by the American's that they blamed for the disease that had hit the crop (see below). The result was in much of the canal command area, the combined effect of a second consecutive year of low yields - with the crop in 2013 being particularly poor; low opium prices of around USD 120 to 140 per kilogramme;[45] pressure from the provincial authorities and the ALP; and the income opportunities that were available for those with capital and resources, was enough to deter a return to widespread cultivation - at least for another year.

And those who were not so lucky

While the kind of improvements in quality of life that many farmers have experienced in central Helmand since 2008 will be welcomed by many, we should be careful not to exaggerate just how widespread this effect is across the canal command area. It is important to note that even in 2013, and despite all the investments that have been made in central Helmand, there remains a sizeable part of the population that has not seen the kind of increase in non-farm income or the expansion in the cultivation of perennial and annual horticultural crops, that others - often more privileged by their location, resource endowments, and capital - have. In fact there are a number of groups that have seen a deterioration in their quality of life, particularly as the ban on opium poppy was extended into more remote parts of the districts of Nad e Ali and Marjah.

One of the most obvious groups that has been disadvantaged by the international effort in central Helmand were those farmers who own irrigated land, who do not have a non-farm income, and who persisted with a cropping system that largely consists of wheat, cotton, maize and mung bean. This group is largely located in the western parts of Nad e Ali, in places like Shin Kalay and Koshal Kalay, and across many of the blocks of Marjah. Some might argue that these cropping systems are a habit and reflect an unwillingness to adapt to the changes that have taken place in central Helmand. However, farmers in these areas point to thin markets and the fact that they cannot compete with those producing high value horticultural crops in close proximity to the markets of Lashkar Gah and Gereshk. While there were some small signs of experimentation in late 2013 with a few farmers establishing polytunnels and growing off season vegetables where there had been none in 2011, there was none of the usual signs of a vibrant agricultural market - traders travelling and purchasing crops at the farmgate - as would be seen around a busy city like Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan.

The complaints from those who persisted with staples like cotton, maize, and mung bean were even louder in 2013 due to the low yields they obtained following a particularly warm summer where temperatures reached as high as fifty degrees centigrade. The mung bean was particularly poor with yields of only 10 to 25 man per jerib (the equivalent of 45 to 112.5 kilogram's), one third of what they would usually be. Cotton yields were also lower, typically ranging from 150 to 170 man per jerib (the equivalent of 675 to 765 kilogram's), as opposed to 200 man per jerib (the equivalent of 900 kilogram's) the year before, a decrease of 15 to 20 per cent. The troubles that had befallen the public gin in Lashkar Gah some years prior, and which many farmers believed had depressed the market for cotton in Helmand, remained a puzzle to many farmers who often juxtaposed the effort to ban opium with the failure to invigorate the other cash crop that they knew so well. As a struggling farmer in Louy Bagh asked: 'What do I do with this six jeribs of land? The government banned poppy and closed the cotton factory. Now no one buys our cotton'. [46]

To this group of farmers the ban on opium poppy had subjected them to a significant loss in income; in many cases of households had less than USD 1.00 per person per day to meet family expenses, including food. A dwindling inventory of opium was all that allowed those in this group to meet their basic needs. For those without a store of opium from the 'good years', their consumption of meat and fruit declined; they complained of eating meat once every two to three weeks, and of having sold off their sheep before winter rather than slaughter it for dried meat, known as 'landi'. They relied on the public health clinic for treating their sick and had only a small amount of money for medicine when the public doctor ran out - a frequent experience. Such was the economic plight of this group that they had taken to selling their long term productive assets such as their dairy cows, and even their transport, including motorbikes and cars.

Crops		Land (Jeribs)	Yield (Man/jerib)	Sold (Man)	Price (USD)	Returns (USD)
Fall						
	Wheat	6	215	900	1.36	1224
	Cotton	3	170	510	3	1530
	Alfafa	1		0		0
Summer	Maize	4	160	600	0.86	516
	Mung Bean	2	25	50	2.55	127.5
Total	Gross income					3,397.5
	Gross income/day					9.31
	Gross/income/person/day					0.93

A man cannot live by bread alone! Gross income for those who have not diversified their cropping systems in the canal command area

The second group disadvantaged by the international effort were those that owned former desert land within what was classified as 'the Food Zone' and therefore subject to an opium ban. These areas were denoted by the prefix 'dasht e' - desert of - such as Dasht e Aynak, Dasht e Basharan, and Dasht e Shersherak; where water is not obtained from the canal system but from the ground via a shallow or deep well, or from a water pump inserted in the drainage. These are areas where farmers have not just seen their income shrink since the introduction of a ban on opium poppy but have seen the amount of land that they can plant shrink as well. Unable to afford to run the generators and water pumps on revenues from lower-value crops such as wheat, maize, water melon, melon and cotton they have cut back on the amount of land they have cultivated in the winter months, sometimes by as much as fifty per cent. In the summer an even smaller proportion of the land was left for crops like maize and mung bean - even in Dasht e Aynak and Dasht e Shersherak - areas that are no distance from Lashkar Gah. As one farmer in Dasht e Aynak, explained: 'This is desert land, we need a lot of money to irrigate it. The government does not care about us, they have banned opium poppy here'.[47] With fourteen jeribs of land - and only seven cultivated in the winter of 2013/14 this farmer regretted his move from Uruzgan in 2007.

Finally, the third group that had seen their quality of life deteriorate, despite all the investments that have been made in central Helmand, were those who do not own land at all; those that rented or sharecropped land and therefore received only a small proportion of the final yield of the crops produced. This is a group that many might be surprised to hear have suffered so much, after all as 'the poorest of the poor' are they not the focus of international development effort? But the land poor found it particularly difficult in the canal command area once poppy was banned. They had gone from a scenario prior to 2008 where landowners would happily contract-out there land to tenants and sharecroppers due to the amount of labor days required to grow poppy, to a situation where it was difficult to find land at all. Even worse they had seen a significant fall in the amount of crops that they received in return for their work. For instance, when the land poor cultivated opium poppy as a sharecropper in the canal command area they received one third of the final crop, maybe even one half if they paid for some of the agricultural inputs themselves. However, once opium poppy was banned not only did those sharecropping find it harder to find land in the canal command area but they received only one fifth of the legal crops that were grown - not an attractive proposition particularly in the case of low-value wheat, cotton, maize, and mung bean.

This group had the added disadvantage of not being beneficiaries of either government or donor assistance. Those without land were not entitled to assistance - they do not belong to a specific community; they do not own land and or water. Nor were they are well connected to the village elite - the elders and 'Khans' - who captured most of the assistance of the programmes distributed by the government and international donors. Finally, given that much of the assistance was made up of agricultural inputs it was of little benefit to those without land. At best, if they found land, they perhaps received a smaller share of a better yield of one of the improved crops being distributed.

Where did all the crops go?: Dasht e Aynak in 2008 when there was extensive opium poppy cultivation that subsidized the growth of other crops, and in 2013 when opium production was abandoned.

As such, the land-poor were marginalized in every sense, and saw themselves as having been impoverished by the international effort. They viewed the government and donor community as not having catered to their needs; and a government guilty of corruption and of distributing much needed development assistance to those with land, wealth and position i.e. the least in need. For the land-poor the loss of opium poppy was the loss of everything: land, a house, credit, income, food and their health. With incomes of only a fifth of those who owned land in Marjah, Koshal Kalay or Shin Kalay it is easy to see why they fell on such difficult times and why they saw a government that was out of touch with their needs and priorities: "we request the Governor Sahib to help the people, to improve their lives, but they only know one thing and that is yelling to ban poppy'. In some cases farmers blamed the death of family members on their loss of income due to the ban and their inability to afford basic healthcare.[48]

This was a group that had suffered with the expansion of the opium ban and who had seen few benefits from the development of the rural economy that occurred, and who verbalized their resentment of the Afghan authorities and who they saw as their international backers - the governments of America and Britain, 'the angreze'. All three of these groups - those who owned land who primarily persisted with low return crops like wheat and cotton, those with land in the former desert areas south of the Boghra canal, and the landless - were profane in their descriptions of Governor Baloch, his predecessor Gulab Mangal and both the presidents of Afghanistan and the United States of America.[49] They often threatened violence towards the government and expressed a desire to see the return of the Taliban on the basis that they would allow poppy cultivation to resume. Some indicated that any support for the provincial authorities was contingent on it allowing the return of opium poppy cultivation.[50] It is, however, interesting to note that while on first appearance the land-poor would seem the most disadvantaged of the socio-economic groups within the government controlled areas of central Helmand following the imposition of the opium ban, they did have one distinct advantage over those that owned land - a 'get out of jail free card' - the capacity to relocate, find land elsewhere, and set up home beyond the reach of the government in what they saw as 'safe space'.

Trying to build a new life in the desert[51]

In 2002 the land north of the Boghra Canal and south of Highway One was just desert, containing a few scattered communities that had arrived in the late 1990s trying to escape the drought in Washir. By 2013 there were around 35,500 hectares of agricultural land; not isolated fields scattered on the north side of the Boghra Canal but contiguous fields stretching up to the outskirts of Camp Bastion/Leatherneck and home to as many as 160,000 people.[52]

The last decade has been one where many farmers in the area north of the Boghra canal have seen their capital grow. After all, most came from the canal command area where they had no land and arrived in the desert with very few possessions. By 2013 most of these settlers had a place they could call home: a house, some productive land, a motorbike, a generator and a solar panel for power, and until very recently a relatively regular supply of dried meat, as well as fresh meat and fruit 'once or twice a week'.

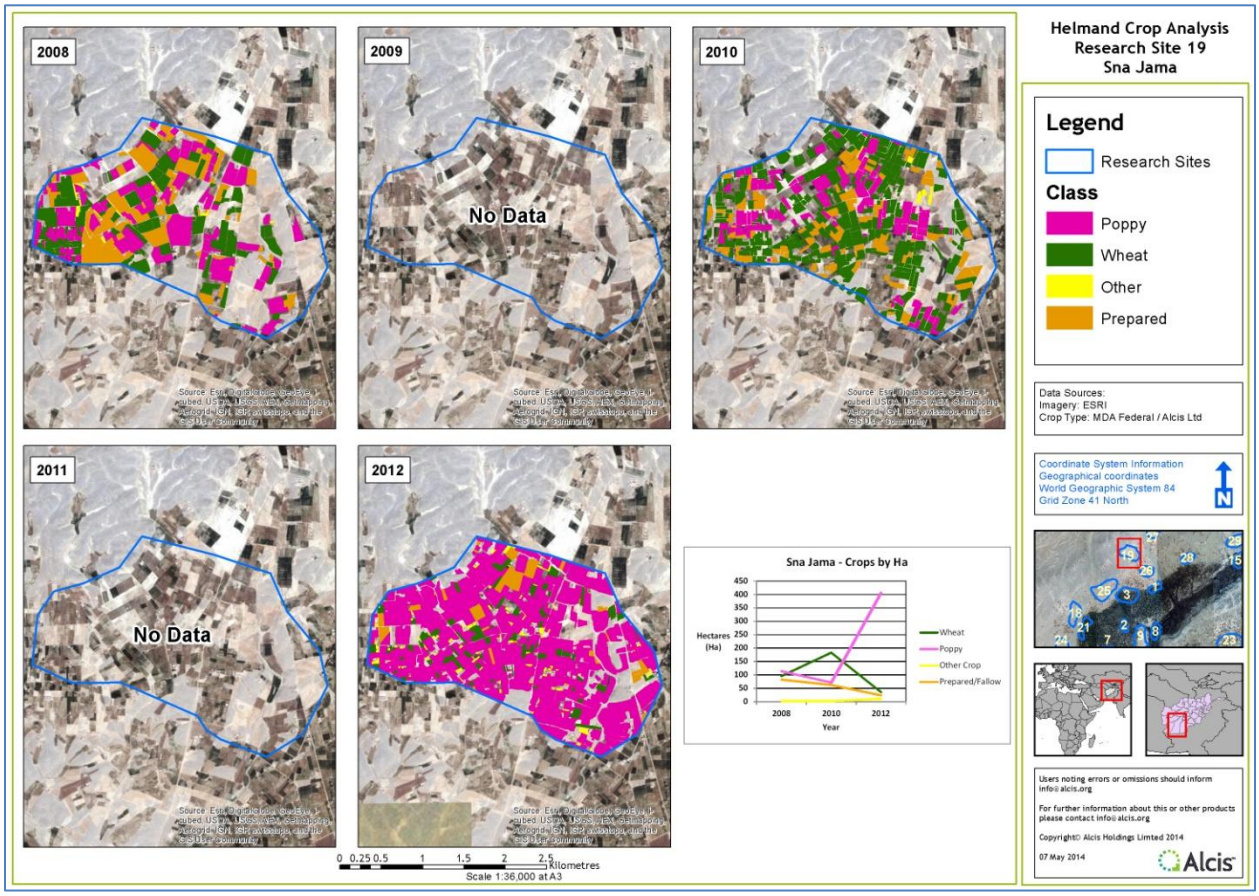
For those who first came and cleared the land it was back-breaking work; they had to remove the stones that littered the area, level the land so that it was suitable for agricultural production, apply animal manure and fertilizer, as well as sink a deep well so that they could bring water to the land, themselves and what little livestock they had. They lived in tents until they built a house, after which they sent word back to their villages and brought their families. For those who came later and either rented or sharecropped land, it was easier, as the land preparation had already been completed, and it was part of the arrangement with the landowner that there was a place to live and land all ready to be planted.

After several years of eking out an existence life became a bit easier. The bazaars that sat astride the Boghra canal grew in response to the increasing amounts of disposable income that was found in the former desert land, and a growing number of 'melas', weekly markets, began to emerge in the desert itself. Transport also became more available as all but a few households earned enough money to purchase a motorbike,[53] or even a car,[54] so that they could travel to Lashkar Gah, Kandahar or even Quetta in order to get treatment for the sick, or to buy agricultural inputs and consumables.

In addition farmers responded to new technologies as they became affordable and made farming in such a harsh terrain more manageable. Once the drilling equipment, as well as cheap Chinese and Pakistani generators and water pumps became more available in the cities of Lashkar Gah and Gereshk, farmers abandoned less reliable shallow wells for deep wells so they could get water continuously. They began to use herbicides on their opium crops in order to better manage weeds and limit the use of family labor. Farmers also took-up solar technology, mobile phones, and motorised transport, highlighting the inaccuracy of those that claim 'little has changed in Afghanistan for hundreds of years'.

Without both opium poppy and repeated counternarcotics efforts this would not have been possible. After all it was the high opium price of opium following the Taliban ban in 2000/01 and its persistence until

2004, that made agricultural cultivation in the desert an attractive proposition. At prices of well over USD 200 per kilogramme it was opium that paid for the initial investments in land and expensive deep well technology without which the land would not have been cultivated. Moreover, it was the Helmand Food Zone, with its emphasis on extension of wheat, that compelled a large number of the land-poor and landless households to leave the canal area. Unable to find land in the canal command area once the more labor intensive opium poppy was gone, these farmers and their families settled in the desert lands north of the Boghra Canal where there was a demand for their services. A cheap and mobile population, skilled in opium poppy cultivation was created that accelerated the process of settlement in this former desert area and increased both the amount of land under agriculture and the percentage of it dedicated to opium poppy.



More people, more land, more poppy: The expansion of agricultural land and poppy in Shna Jama in the desert area just south of Camp Bastion/Leatherneck, 2008 to 2012

Over time an order was also established to the rather atomized communities that initially sprang up in this former desert space. The combination of familial and tribal links, patronage networks and the Taliban provided a stability that appealed to many who had fled what they saw as the more intrusive and inequitable governance that they had found in the canal command area of Helmand under the Karzai government. Those who reside north of the canal had little faith in the formal institutions of government, those that wield state power or their foreign backers, and challenged the Islamic credentials of those in the provincial authorities - their motivation, their freedom to do anything except what they were told by the 'occupiers', and even the ethnicity of the current Governor, Naeem Baloch.[55] One only needs to read Afghan history - of the numerous rebellions against a long list of Afghan leaders; of how their rule was

called into question; and how resistance was mobilized using these very same narratives - to recognize that these accusations have a certain resonance with the rural population.

In the absence of a government that the farmers north of the Boghra canal considered legitimate and capable of delivering improvements to their lives, they looked only for a system that offered them physical security, a way of resolving disputes that was somehow considered fair, and to be left alone to earn a livelihood in whatever way they saw fit, including growing opium poppy. This is what they found in the former desert land north of the Boghra canal - as well as in similar desert terrain in other parts of Helmand, Farah,[56] Nimroz and Kandahar - and they did not want it spoilt by the government. For this they paid the Taliban only two khords[57] of opium per jerib of opium poppy cultivated; a concession of only one khord when the harvest was as low as it was in 2013 - to these farmers it was a small price to pay.

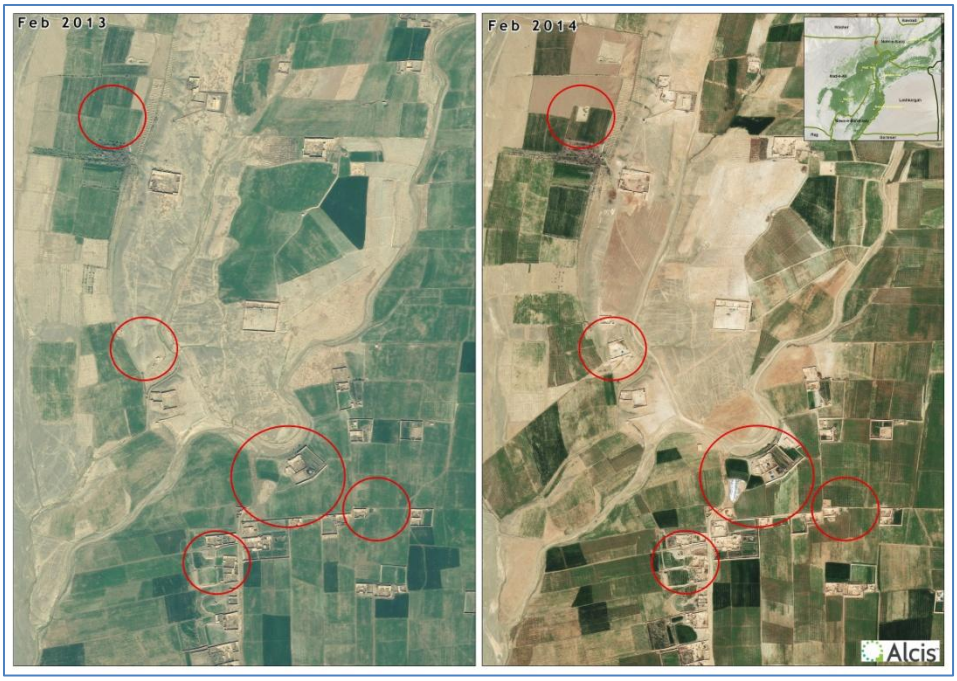
Despite the hard-won opportunities and the improvements that settlers have seen since the desert was first inhabited, life north of the canal remains tough and many still complain about the summer heat, the lack of shade, and the fact that there is no schooling for their children. But then again nor was it easy back in the canal command area or in the northern districts of Helmand. Many came to escape the conflict that escalated with the arrival of foreign forces. Like many, a farmer in Dasht e Ab Pashak described his departure from his home in Sangin in 2010 and his attempts to escape the fighting: 'because of this government I came from my village to the dasht. Always the government pushes the people. We have not seen any benefit from this government, only costs and losses. I am happy here to have poppy and no fighting'.[58] Even more came to escape the opium ban that was imposed by what they often refer to as the 'kafir government' and its foreign backers.

The impact of the opium ban on migration to the desert has been profound. For the land-poor, the ban on opium poppy and the uptake of less labor intensive crops such as wheat in the canal command area of central Helmand meant that they were no longer required by those that owned the land. Landowners could now farm their own land with family labor and consequently those without land who had relied on widespread opium poppy cultivation as a way of obtaining land and a place to live found themselves dispossessed. Absent sufficient jobs and development assistance (and with being landless the least likely to receive what was available) they had little choice but to 'go west young man', and as with America's expansion into unappropriated federal land in the 1860s, settle new land, built a home, and bring the area under agricultural production. A sharecropper from Nawa Barakzai conveyed the 'choice' he faced when relocating to the dasht, where he cultivated 18 jeribs of opium poppy, receiving like many in the desert only one fifth of the final crop 'I had no choice but to come here. I am not happy but I don't have any other way'.[59]

Since 2012, the life of those north of the Boghra canal has become much harder. For one, once Nad e Ali and Marjah were subdued, the ANSF and 'the foreigners' brought the fight to the desert. In the autumn of 2012 farmers talked of the fear that the women and children felt during the night at the sound of 'choppers' hovering overhead. They also referred to the incursions north of the canal by members of the ANSF; of the attempts by the ALP to seize their generators, their water pumps and eradicate their opium crops (or at least to demand money for not doing so). In fact, such was the anger at the behavior of the ANSF that farmers - particularly those in Shna Jama whose houses had been looted by him - celebrated the death of the mustachioed ANP commander Mohammed Wali, known as 'Braitoo', at the hands of the Taliban during the eradication campaign in Trek Nawa in the spring of 2013. [60]

In the 2013/14 planting season farmers north of the Boghra canal faced a new threat from the government. With attempts to repeat the kind of incursions that the ALP had made in the autumn of 2011 and 2012 thwarted by Taliban resistance in Dasht e Ab Pashak [61] the authorities adopted a different approach. Rather than go to the desert and be met with violent resistance, the district authorities established checkpoints along the Boghra canal and seized any vehicle that was found transporting diesel, fertilizer or water pumps. By mid December this effort to restrict the supply of critical agricultural inputs to farmers in the former desert area - ostensibly to suppress opium poppy cultivation - had succeeded in interdicting large amounts of agricultural inputs and the district centre in Nad e Ali was said to be awash with confiscated vehicles and their loads.

Some farmers complained that after being released from captivity themselves their repeated requests for the return of their vehicles and agricultural equipment had fallen on deaf ears. In some cases, existing connections, wasetah, and the offer of bribes elicited the return of their possessions, in others the authorities remained resolute in their determination to hold onto the items they had confiscated.[62] But as farmers themselves pointed out, ultimately it was not an initiative that could ever succeed in deterring the cultivation of opium poppy in the former desert lands. There was after all nothing to stop these essential agricultural inputs being transported from the north - from the city of Gereshk or anywhere else on Highway One where there is only open desert and no choke points that the government can control. To the rural population it was yet more evidence of the authorities using counter narcotics interventions, that were often celebrated by the government or donors in Lashkar Gah, Kabul or western capitals, as another opportunity for rent extraction.



They just keep on coming!: Even in 2014, and after such poor opium crops in both 2012 and 2013, there were still signs of new arrivals in the desert land north of the Boghra canal.

Although inconvenient and disruptive it was not these various acts of 'interdiction' that posed the most significant threat to the farming population north of the Boghra canal. The far more pressing concern was the repeated incidence of 'disease' that had affected their opium crop for two consecutive years. Yields were such that many talked of only half a man per jerib (the equivalent of 11.25 kilograms per hectare) even less than the one or two man per jerib they claimed to have obtained in 2012. While more than likely a consequence of poor agricultural practice -the degree of monocropping of opium that had taken place since the 2010, and failure to rotate crops or rest the land - the resounding view of farmers was of a concerted campaign of crop destruction launched by the Americans. They talked of a 'spraying campaign' that caused 'disease' and 'burned' their crops.[63] Even worse, there was not the five-fold rise in prices that had accompanied the poor yields of 2010 and the significant inflow of international military forces and ANSF into central Helmand later in the year.[64] Instead, prices fell in the immediate aftermath of the 2013 harvest, reaching as low as the equivalent of USD114 per kilogramme of fresh opium by the summer that year.[65]

The anger directed towards the government for the loss in income that farmers had experienced due to the 2013 crop failure and fall in prices was extreme. There was nothing but contempt for the government amongst the population in the former desert land north of the Boghra canal.[66] Some limited their views to abuse and questioned the character of those in government,[67] others expressed frustration and anger for what they felt was the government's relentless pursuit and the threat that the authorities posed to their way of life.[68]

Most reported cutting back on meat and fruit, foregoing their 'landi', and having trouble meeting the immediate costs of health care. Those with land recognized the severity of their situation, as one farmer

in Dasht Ab Pashak said 'If I move from this area I will lose my land because I don't have any ownership document.'[69] Some resolved their immediate financial difficulties by selling their opium stocks, others by marrying off their daughters, receiving as much as USD 9,000 from the families of their future husband.[70] The situation for those sharecropping land was even more challenging. While many of those that rented or sharecropped land wished to leave the area following the poor harvest,[71] few appeared to have found land elsewhere. After all unless opium poppy returned to the canal command area of central Helmand where were they to go? It was only because opium poppy was such a labor intensive crop that they were needed in the first place. In fact, despite the obvious problems the area faces, the population north of the Boghra canal just keeps growing and even as late as the autumn of 2013 farmers were still arriving. Most simply reassured themselves that 'a low yield of opium poppy is still better than wheat'[72] - the option they saw for themselves in the canal command area - and just hoped that the opium yields would be better in 2013/14.

This is not to say that farmers in the former desert land did not respond, or could not respond, to the risks they faced in the 2013/14 growing season. It is just to say that their options were constrained. Most, simply reduced the amount of opium poppy they cultivated and returned to a cropping system that included some wheat so that if their crop failed at least they would have a limited supply of wheat for home consumption - a practice that they had pursued before the dramatic rise in opium prices in the spring of 2010.[73] Some farmers even left land fallow, hoping that it would recover if rested and better yields could be obtained in subsequent growing seasons. Others leased their land out or contracted with farmers to cultivate on a sharecropping basis and let them carry the risk of poor opium yields. These were all rational responses designed to address uncertainty over poor opium yields and low farmgate prices while ensuring a level of food security. While the likely decrease in opium poppy cultivation in the former desert area north of the Boghra Canal in 2014 may be celebrated as a success by policy makers - as they often do when presented by a reduction in cultivation in a given year - the fundamental problem remains, what to do with a burgeoning population in the desert spaces of southern Afghanistan, who on the whole, see their lives having improved - not because of the interventions of the Afghan government and the western donor community - but despite of it.

Conclusion

This paper has documented the profound changes that have taken place in the lives and livelihoods of different sections of the rural population in central Helmand in recent years. It has considered the experiences of those that have seen great improvements in the quality of their life, in part due to investments by the international community and a process of market penetration and globalization that has increased the rural population's exposure to improved technologies; but also because of this group's privileged position with regard to both resource endowments and high opium prices when finally pressed to abandon opium poppy cultivation. It has contrasted the experience of those groups that have benefitted from the 'state building' effort, with those that have been subjected to dramatic reductions in income, so significant that in some cases it has prompted the population to up-sticks, leave the canal command area of central Helmand and attempt to start a new life in what was just desert land only ten years ago. Most importantly this paper has shown just how fragile the improvements in security and economic growth remain, particularly given the uncertainty over the future of institutions like the ALP, the scale and nature of donor investments in rural development, and the trajectory for counter narcotics policy in a post 2014 Afghanistan. While there is a great degree of uncertainty as to what the future holds for the different groups that make up the rural population of Helmand post 2014, there is one thing that is clear, and that is how much more vulnerable some parts of the population are to efforts aimed at reducing opium poppy cultivation than others, and how deficient existing efforts at drug control and development have been in catering to the needs of those most dependent on opium production for their livelihood.

ENDNOTES

[1] This report is based on a round of fieldwork conducted in twenty nine research sites in central Helmand in December 2013. This is the final round of fieldwork in a study commissioned by the British Embassy in Kabul which has been conducted every six months since May 2008 in the same research sites. Fieldwork has been undertaken by the Organization for Sustainable Development and Research (OSDR). This final round of research consisted of a total of 472 indepth household interviews: 424 with farmers, 14 with laborers in the bazaars of Gereshk and Lashkar Gah, and 34 with those trading a variety of different commodities including wheat flour, wheat grain, vegetables, diesel, solar panels and herbicides.

[2] See for example Emma Graham-Harrison's account of Helmand in the Guardian 'UK leaves its Helmand project - like its roads, clinics and bridges - unfinished' 27 February 2014.

[3] At the time of fieldwork it was reported that farmers had cultivated opium poppy in Safar some fifteen kilometers south of the district centre of Garmsir and that the government had little control of the area. Farmers in this area did not expect the government to make any effort to destroy their crop.

[4] Aqajan Kalay #4.

[5] For example, there were a lot of complaints about the ALP in Chanjir in 2012 but in 2013 there were reports that the ALP had been brought under the control of the ANP security commander. In Khwaja Baidar a farmer talked of the improvement in the attitude of the ALP; 'Now the chawarki is fine they have a good attitude with the people (Khwaja Baidar #4). In Malgir the commander of the ALP was dismissed in 2013 and the commander of the ANP in Gereshk, Hekmatullah - the son of the parliamentarian Mir Moallem Wali - was taking an active role in the security of the area, including persuading the population to refrain from cultivation. A later visit revealed cultivation was less than the previous year but that many farmers had cultivated between one and two jeribs of opium poppy that was not destroyed in the spring eradication campaign.

[6] Those in the ALP reported salaries of between 7,000 and 9,000 Afghanis per month. In December 2013 there were 58 Afghani to USD 1.00.

[7] Chanjir #4.

[8] Zarghun Kalay # 11.

[9] In 1999 a new motorbike cost around 100,000 PR in Helmand. At that time there were 50 PR to 1 USD. In December 2013 a new motorbike sold for between 50,000 and 60,000 PR, at a time when USD 1 was the equivalent of 110 PR.

[10] The Zarang is named after Zarang Ltd, an Afghan company established in 2005 in Herat that assembles motorcycles. While Zarang Ltd sells a range of different two wheel motorbikes it is particularly well known for the three wheel vehicles and trailers that it produces see http://www.Zarangltd.com/products_list/&pmcId=df8bfcd1-cac6-4f00-8659-bafc5635aa9a.html

[11] This is for an earlier model, a post 2000 model of a Corrolla or saracha might cost between USD 10,000 to 16,000.

[12] In 2013 an Iranian Massey Fergusson cost between USD 5,200 and USD 8,400 second hand, depending on its condition and around USD 12,000 new. In 2003 this same tractor cost USD 9,224 (Anthony Fitzherbert, unpublished report, September 2003, page 10).

[13] This is in December 2013 when a Zarang driver was receiving 500 PR per day at an exchange rate of 110 PR to USD 1.00.

[14] In December 2013, those driving their own car typically earned anything from 1000 PR to 1200 PR per day.

[15] The importance of a motorcycle to the everyday life of a rural Helmandi family could be seen by the reaction that one respondent from Aqajan Kalay in Nad e Ali had to the theft of his motorbike in the district centre: 'When I had a motorbike I always went to the bazaar and bought meat and fruit and other goods. Now I have do not have a motorbike I cannot go to the bazaar as it costs too much to rent a vehicle' (Aqajan Kalay #1).

[16] In December 2013, tractor owners reported receiving between 80,000 to 100,000 PR over a three to four month period.

[17] Jonathan Goodhand, Bandits, 'Borderlands and Opium Wars: Afghan state building viewed from the margins'. DIIS Working Paper, November, 2009.

[18] Aynak #10.

[19] In June 2010 prices had risen to 110,000 PR per man. At that time there were 84 PR to USD 1.00.

[20] See Mansfield, Alcis and OSDR, 'Managing Concurrent and Repeated Risks: Explaining the reductions in opium production in central Helmand between 2008 and 2011', AREU, Kabul, page 62.
[21] Of the 319 households interviewed in the 21 research sites south of the Boghra canal, 154 reported a family member that earned an off farm or non farm income, the vast majority from owning a shop, leasing out a tractor or renting out their car as a taxi. Of these 154 households, 15 had family members in the ANSF something that did not feature in the results of any of the previous rounds of fieldwork up until December 2012.
[22] Those owning a shop would typically earn anything from 500 to 1500 PR per day.
[23] In December 2013 those working in the construction industry reported that an unskilled laborer would be paid between 400 to 500 PR per day, while a skilled labor would receive from 1200 to 1500 per day. Both skilled and unskilled laborers reported that while the wage rate remained the same in 2013 compared to the same time the previous year, there were now fewer days available.
[24] Zarghun Kalay #11.
[25] The gross returns on grapes reported were from 70,000 to 105,000 PR per jerib.
[26] The gross returns on pomegranates reported were from 60,000 to 140,000 PR per jerib.
[27] There were a number of farmers that reported cultivating both apricots and greengage but these had been planted recently and had not yet borne fruit.
[28] The gross returns on cucumber reported were from 65,000 to 90,000 PR per jerib.
[29] The gross returns on okra reported were from 50,000 to 75,000 PR per jerib.
[30] The gross returns on onion reported were from 46,000 to 75,000 PR per jerib.
[31] The gross returns on egg plant reported were typically from 50,000 to 70,000 PR per jerib, but some farmers received as much as 120,000 PR per jerib
[32] The gross returns on radish reported were from 25,000 to 32,000 PR per jerib.
[33] The gross returns on carrot reported were from 25,000 to 40,000 PR per jerib.
[34] See Mansfield, Alcis and OSDR, 'Managing Concurrent and Repeated Risks', pages 64-65.
[35] It was claimed that the theft of the metal supports by local drug users had become a particular problem in Bolan due to its proximity to Lashkar Gah where many of these drug users resided. The problem was such that one farmer obtained a dog to guard his polytunnels during the night. Unfortunately, the dog attacked a man and injured him so badly that he had to be transported to Quetta for treatment, costing the owner 60,000 PR.
[36] The gross returns on melon reported were from 60,000 to 120,000 PR per jerib.
[37] The gross returns on water melon reported were typically from 60,000 to 90,000 PR per jerib, but some farmers received as much as 125,000 PR /jerib.
[38] One man is the equivalent of 4.5 kilograms.
[39] One jerib is the equivalent of 2000 square meter, and one fifth of a hectare.
[40] Bride prices reported during this round of fieldwork ranged from 600,000 PR to 1,000,000 PR.
[41] Respondents cited travel and treatment costs of 15,000 from Aqajan Kalay to Lashkar Gah and 40,000 PR to 60,000 PR for Pakistan.
[42] Marjah F4D5 #4.
[43] A biswa is the equivalent of 100 square meters.
[44] A laborer would typically be paid 250 PR per square meter to construct a wall. A wall around one jerib would consist of 2 walls of 50 meters in length and 2 walls 40 of meters in length. All of these walls would be 3 meters in height. One respondent cited paying 90,000 PR to build a wall around an area just less than one jerib in Sra Kala, in Nahre Seraj (Sra Kala #4).
[45] In December 2013 the price of opium was between 60,000 to 70,000 PR per man at an exchange rate of 110 PR to USD 1.00.
[46] Louy Bagh #14.
[47] Dasht e Aynak #5.
[48] One respondent blamed the death of his daughter on a lack of income due to the ban on poppy (Doh Bandi #2); another the death of his son (Dasht e Shersherak #7).
[49] These kind of comments are well documented and can be found in a range of reports, including most recently 'From Bad they made it worse: The concentration of opium poppy in areas of conflict' by David Mansfield, AREU, Kabul (forthcoming).

[50] A farmer in Marjah put in no uncertain terms 'I have not interest with the government; but if they allow poppy, after that I will think about them' (Marjah F4D5 #11).
[51] For a detailed account of the process of settlement north of the Boghra canal see 'From Bad they made it worse: The concentration of opium poppy in areas of conflict' by David Mansfield, AREU, Kabul (forthcoming).
[52] This estimate is based on a population density of 0.9 persons per jeribs of cultivated land. Ibid, page 54.
[53] Only one of the 112 farmers that were interviewed in the former desert area north of the Boghra canal in December 2013 did not own a motorbike.
[54] Of those interviewed north of the Boghra canal 32 (28.5%) owned a car.
[55] There were a number of farmers that questioned the ethnicity of Governor Baloch and whether he could speak Pashtu or Dari. Examples included a farmer in Shurawak who said 'This murdagow is not able to speak; he is not Pashtun and he is not Tajik' (Shurawak #13).
[56] Fieldwork was also conducted in 12 research sites in the former desert areas of Bakwa on the Farah-Nimroz and Helmand border as part of an EU funded project on the 'Unintended consequences of drug supply side policy' This work will be completed in late 2014.
[57] There are forty khords in one man, making one khord the equivalent of 112.5 grams.
[58] Dasht e Ab Pashak #11.
[59] Dasht e Ab Pashak #2.
[60] David Mansfield, 'All Bets are Off: Prospects for (B)reaching agreements and drug control in Helmand and Nangarhar in the run up to Transition, AREU, Kabul, January 2013, page 80.
[61] One old man recounted how on the 25 November 2013 the ALP had come into the area and seized two water pumps in Dasht e Ab Pashak before the Taliban stepped in. He claimed that the Taliban routed the ALP and prevented the operation continuing. The old man described how grateful he was to the Taliban and invited them for food and offered 'whatever you need I will provide for you'.
[62] Some of these vehicles and their contents still languished in Nad e Ali district centre in April 2013.
[63] For more details see David Mansfield 'From Bad they Made it Worse', pages 79-83.
[64] In May 2010 farmers claimed that their yields had fallen by as much as 60 per cent compared to 2009. However, post harvest prices initially increased to 70,000 to 80,000 PR per man (the equivalent of USD 883 to USD 952) before rising to 110,000 PR per man later in the year. This increase in price was up from 12,000 to 14,000 PR per man (the equivalent of USD 142 to USD 165) during the planting season in November/December 2009. For more details see David Mansfield, 'Helmand counter Narcotics Impact Study, May 2010', Unpublished paper for the FCO, July 2010; and David Mansfield, 'Briefing Paper 3: Central Helmand in the 2011/12 Growing Season', Unpublished paper for the FCO, January 2012.
[65] See UNODC/MCN, 'Afghanistan Drug Price Monitoring Monthly Report', July 2013, page 3.
[66] One of many accusations against the government came from a farmer in Dasht e Shen Ghazai who said 'All this poverty is from our own dogs. The kafir does everything here. They spray the crop and no one defends the farmer' (Dasht e Shen Ghazai #3).
[67] For example, a farmer in Dasht e Nawabad Shawal expressed his anger by saying 'This government is an angreze government. This kharkus governor is their son' (Dasht e Nawabad Shawal #4).
[68] 'I escaped to the dasht due to this kafir government, but they do not allow me to live here either' (Shurawak #5).
[69] This individual had settled in Dasht e Ab Pashak in 2007, paying 80,000 PR for 10 jeribs of desert land (Dasht e Ab Pashak #9).
[70] One farmer in Dasht e Ab Pashak reported receiving 1,000,000 PR for his daughter in the fall of 2013 (Dasht e Ab Pashak #3); another farmer received 800,000 PR (Dasht e Nawabad Shawal # 1).
[71] During the round of fieldwork conducted in May 2013, 90 per cent of those sharecropping land talked of leaving the area. See David Mansfield, 'From Bad they Made it Worse', page 82.
[72] Dasht e Loy Manda #3.
[73] Not one of the 112 interviewed in the former desert land north of the Nahre Boghra increased the amount of land they allocated to opium poppy compared with 2012; 62 had reduced the level of opium poppy cultivation, and 50 maintained the same level of cultivation as they had in 2012.