



ACBAR

Strategic plan

2013 - 2016



Introduction

Background, Rational, Scope

Background

The Agency Co-ordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) was created in August 1988, in response to the demand from the many aid agencies and their international donors for a coordinated approach to humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan and for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Originally, the organization was based in Peshawar, Pakistan, where it focused mainly on coordinating NGOs' humanitarian response. Since it moved to Afghanistan, ACBAR has provided the framework within which Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the Afghan Government, the United Nations (UN) and bilateral donors can exchange information, share expertise and establish guidelines for a more coordinated, efficient and effective use of resources for aid to the Afghan people. Its activities have focused heavily on information to its members and the aid community in general, coordination of activities at the national and regional levels, and advocacy on issues affecting the work of its members in Afghanistan¹.

ACBAR has registered 115 members, both national and international organizations, working in all sectors of humanitarian assistance and development. The members are the drive behind ACBAR, and their active participation is essential to ACBAR's continued dynamism. All member organisations provide humanitarian and development assistance to the Afghan people regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, political affiliations, or religious beliefs, and do not use such assistance to proselytise. No member organisation seeks to influence Afghan politics nor do they support or participate in military activities. ACBAR members must adhere to the NGO Code of Conduct whose main headings are listed below. These principles embody the values that set NGOs apart from other development actors.

Rationale

The purpose for this consultancy was to review and revise ACBAR's mandate and its strategic focus area from which ACBAR members will evolve work-plans for (2013 – 2017). These strategic focus areas were to be reviewed keeping in mind the emerging transition context, which will have security, and development shifts in Afghanistan that will impact ACBAR member NGOs and their work. ACBAR, as an umbrella organization, wants its strategic focus areas to be amended to create an enabling environment for its members to work in Afghanistan during the transition process and beyond. Furthermore, internal challenges with respect to funding and human capacity in ACBAR further prompted the need to review its strategic focus areas.

Scope

The scope of this study is limited to three outputs:

- A situational analysis that presents the key institutional and capacity gaps ACBAR has in the present. The situational analysis examines functions

¹ ACBAR strategic plan 2010 – 2012



performed under the existing ACBAR strategic plan (2010 – 2012) and their relevance during the upcoming transition process insecurity and development.

- Based on the situational analysis, revised mission, vision, core values and strategic focus areas are presented to ensure that ACBAR's planning process is geared towards meeting upcoming challenges and also realizing its own current capacity to deliver.

Detailed operational work plans of activities and a performance measurement framework to monitor ACBAR activities will be derived by members later and are not part of the terms of reference for this document.

Situational Analysis

ACBAR's current operations and engagement with its stakeholders are still directed by its previous strategic plan (2010 – 2012). However, the present transition process, where responsibility for security, and increasingly development, shifts from the international community to the government of Afghanistan, will create immense pressure on the government and will impact on Afghanistan's economy. Several analysts point out that there will be a gradual decrease in aid until and after 2014. Clearly, an economic downturn will raise the cost of maintenance and operations for agencies to maintain development and humanitarian operations in Afghanistan. This transition will clearly have an impact on ACBAR's member Non Government Organizations (NGOs) which are involved in various forms of development and humanitarian work in this country. Therefore, it is critical to reexamine the context in which its members will now implement their activities and review the relevance and also capacity of past functions performed by ACBAR for its members. This clarifies the objective of this chapter:

- To review old strategic functions – coordination, information sharing, advocacy/policy and civil society inclusion at key forums and policy level groups.
- To review ACBAR's current capacities to carry out these functions and analyze their relevance with respect to the current change in context – the transition process.
- To suggest recommendations to make ACBAR's strategic focus relevant in terms of the current transition context and also realistic in terms of its existing capacity.
- To provide an analysis of the impact of the transition process on ACBAR's members in order to understand how ACBAR's role should evolve in this context for the members.

Methodology

The situational analysis is not related to any personal views of the consultant, but evidence-based research, which has been a guiding tool for consultant's analysis of ACBAR's current abilities and relevance of its functions for the members. This evidence-based research included a combination of workshops in ACBAR's Herat, Mazar, Jalalabad, and Kabul offices with its members, staff and also key non-members, who are donors as well as government authorities. Personal face-to-face interactions with key



country directors of ACBAR member NGOs and other relevant members have also shaped this analysis.

Mapping and analysis of attendance sheets (whenever available), previous evaluations of ACBAR, and available meetings notes, particularly from the period of (2010 - 2012) implementation cycle of its existing strategic plan, have also contributed to an understanding of the overall dialogue among ACBAR, its members, and also with the government along with donors.

Limitations

The task of institutional assessment to suggest recommendations, both at policy level and organizational level is time consuming. However, with time limited to 24 days, this assessment is a general overview and it has not been possible to carry out in-depth studies of each activity of ACBAR. Also, in some cases, members' views are more personal, focused on their organization as compared to the sustainability of ACBAR, as an umbrella organization. In such cases, the consultant had to rely on personal judgment based on her research on that member NGO. Due to time limitations, the ACBAR strategy consultant focused her assessment more on ACBAR's performance and relevance in its existing strategy plan (2010 – 2012), and has not been able to go through a comparative analysis of the last 5 years in terms of ACBAR activities.

Capacity Assessment of ACBAR's main strategic focus areas

Advocacy / Policy

ACBAR's advocacy work under its existing strategic plan (2010 – 2012) has not been results-oriented. Attendance sheets and meeting notes reveal that advocacy is driven by the "personal" views of ACBAR members rather than pragmatic position taking, keeping in mind the course of the overall dialogue going on at government and donor level. Assessment reveals that policy analysis, which is an integral part of advocacy, is missing. Members have been expressing their views on various matters – gender, tax, visa, emergency coordination etc. and there is no follow-up. Also, attendance in advocacy meetings is animated when a popular government and donor event takes place and all members get together to put something before such conferences. This has resulted in ACBAR and its members following the events that government and donors plan, rather than shaping these events with professional and focused advocacy campaigns. Clearly, ACBAR's advocacy, conducted through its members has not been able to foresee such events and it has not been planned in order to position its members' views. Rather, it has been characterized by a last minute "contribution," which has been unsuccessful as a means of negotiating a stronger role for its members. Below are some key facts that demonstrate why ACBAR advocacy has not been result oriented in the last two years -

Different member views on advocacy: interviews with different members reveal that there has been a contradiction amongst members themselves in the way they want the Advocacy Working Group to function. Some members in the present context argue that ACBAR should be a cover for its members from the government and its advocacy should be geared towards maintaining the interest of its members on operational matters like tax, visas etc. As theme-based advocacy is already done by individual NGOs, some members think that ACBAR advocacy meetings should be on issues that are of common



interest to all members, while another set of members proposes more issue-based advocacy on humanitarian and development matters. Clearly, this lack of unanimous understanding of what advocacy means to each member organization has impacted the overall advocacy framework for ACBAR as a whole. The table below represents how conflicting views of members have resulted in myriads of topics of discussions in the advocacy-working group with no verifiable results. Also, these topics are more as a reaction to ongoing events rather than proactive discussions.

Time Period	Key Discussion Topic	Results
February 2013	Gender The meeting evolves discussing various aspects of gender and also looking at women rights. No specific issue or case that requires priority attention of members is discussed here.	The discussion has not been followed up to take any key positions, clearly it has not been result oriented.
February 2012	NPPs, Aid Management Policy and other Budget related issue	It was a last minute preparation for the Tokyo conference. Other areas to be covered at the Tokyo conference followed these meetings. The important role NGOs can play in the implementation of NPPs.
June 2009	Maintaining role of NGOs at sub national level.	Did not see many follow – ups on this. Also, many meeting notes not available and no proper organized filling available.
June 2009	Lack of humanitarian funding and issues of access	Even now, there is no concrete approved strategy for “access”. A recent workshop hosted by the Norwegian Refugee Council



presented excellent proposals for access but few ACBAR members attended it and no definite consensus building happened.

The advocacy discussions above were not followed by a policy analysis to inform members before they took positions, but only involved taking inputs of the members. Interestingly, the Director of ACBAR is different in most of these meetings, which demonstrates that the frequently changing leadership and different ways of leading advocacy work of ACBAR has also impacted the quality and thus has not been very result oriented.

Lack of verifiable indicators: the consultant has not been able to find a definite work plan that ever existed for the advocacy-working group. If it did, clearly it has not been followed because the above table demonstrates members taking different agendas and that there have been a lack of sustainable dialogue among members on issues of common interest.

Lack of evidence-based policy analysis: As shown in the table above, advocacy has been about discussing topics, more than deciding what the group aims to achieve, and following this up consistently with relevant authorities or donors. Policy analysis on an issue is a pre-exercise to inform members with evidence-based research on an issue of common interest to which members react and position themselves. This is clearly missing.

Lack of development-oriented dialogue: a mapping exercise by the consultant on the profiles of ACBAR member NGOs reveals that most members are engaged in development work and not just emergency relief work. Education, health, livelihoods and food security were some common thematic areas these members do good work in. However, the ACBAR membership, when invited to advocacy meetings is not thematically divided to engineer a meaningful discussion. Meeting notes, ACBAR's past leadership, and also the kind of meetings that have happened in the past two years have been "humanitarian-focused". This has resulted in ACBAR being perceived as an agency coordinating afghan-relief-focused NGOs. Its members' work in the development sector does not reflect this perception. Furthermore, the kind of donors that are mostly coming to meetings are from the humanitarian sector which bears a serious risk to the current sustainability of ACBAR members in the area of service delivery of key development needs, as there is a strong move towards afghan-led development with the government responsible for spending donor money on meeting the commitments of National Priority Programs (NPPs). Clearly, this gap in initiating dialogue with development donors has impacted advocacy as a whole because it has not helped ACBAR gear its members' position to the overall structure of National Priority Programs (NPPs). This will further limit ACBAR members' role in the implementation of the NPPs, which in turn will become important during the current Aid Management Policy (AMP) implementation phase (2013 – 2017), in which government commitments are to be met based on the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF).



Vacant positions – the position of Advocacy & Communications Manager has been vacant for several months. In the absence of the advocacy manager, the Director has usually been leading the meetings. The current Director is enthusiastic and diligent in supporting different initiatives in ACBAR, but does not have the support necessary to share the tasks. Furthermore, the position of an Advocacy Manager will become a key issue in the coming months, as there is an upcoming London conference and the views of ACBAR members need to be coordinated for them to be represented fully.

Lack of regional input -workshops with the regional info coordinators and the members suggested that they hardly contribute to any advocacy issue discussed at the Kabul level. Members suggested that they find themselves cut off information regarding government and donor positions on matters, and they are never asked to provide input to issues relevant to ACBAR members' mutual interests. These reviews of the participants about ACBAR advocacy are backed by a previous ACBAR evaluation done in 2008, which reported similar capacity gaps related to regional input in advocacy meetings in Kabul².

Coordination

In the last two years, lack of effective fundraising has had an inverse impact on the coordination mechanisms of ACBAR, especially at the regional level. In Herat, currently the office is shut down and no one is there for coordination. Also, in the last two years the office human capacity has been reduced from 7 to 1. One person has been responsible for coordinating ACBAR's various meetings, without the support of a basic means of transport. . This has resulted in missing many meetings and has created a high level of work pressure on one person. There is a similar situation in the Jalalabad and Mazar offices; when one person is coordinating all activities in each location. There is no provincial presence of ACBAR. One person in the two regional offices - Mazar and Jalalabad are also coordinating provincial issues, if they arise. Clearly, coordination is not ACBAR's strength, as compared to previous years. Below is ACBAR's current capacity to coordinate; the chart below also indicates comparative capacity with respect to the regional offices:

No.	2010	2011	2012	2013
Kabul	30	32	33	23
Jalalabad	7	7	7	1
Herat	7	7	7	1
Mazar	9	7	7	1
Total	53	53	54	25
			Internship=7	33

Particularly in Jalalabad, interviews with ACBAR members stated that many times, the ACBAR regional coordinator is required to be a mediator between the government authorities in Jalalabad and the NGOs. However, because he is alone attending many meetings, he is not present when NGOs are there to approach him. His role in Jalalabad is well respected and most members argue in favor of retaining the Jalalabad office, as ACBAR's role as a mediator between government and NGOs is of great importance in that region. During a workshop conducted by the consultant in April 2013 in Jalalabad,

² "Evaluation of the Agency for Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief", Bill Sterland, FrederikPrins, Page 28, July 2008.



members presented a need to have a sub information officer to support the current Regional Info Coordinator in Jalalabad. ACBAR's role in Jalalabad was appreciated in terms of relationship building with the government. Members suggested that ACBAR's reliance on transport facilities from other agencies is becoming an additional burden to them and that the office should be well equipped with transport for the regional coordinator to attend these meetings.

In Mazar one Regional Information Coordinator also runs the office alone. This office also suffers from capacity issues related to the lack of transport and interviews with members suggested that the Regional Coordinator alone is not able to manage his presence in all meetings. However, in Mazar key issues of NGO members were related to security as compared to Jalalabad members who wanted mediation with the government authorities. In Mazar, NGO members pointed out that many times insurgent groups have threatened the activities of NGOs, particularly those engaged in the delivery of health services. Insurgent groups have threatened to close down clinics on many occasions. Here, members still rely on ACBAR as a trusted negotiator not just with the government but also in cases of security incidents.

Despite ACBAR's current capacity shortfalls, the participation of NGO members in coordination meetings at the regional level is high as compared to Kabul. Interviews with ACBAR's members at both the regional and Kabul levels suggest that, despite the Kabul office being highly capacitated with staff as compared to regional offices, ACBAR enjoys the greater support of its members' regional representatives.. Even the literature review from a previous evaluation conducted in July 2008 supports the observation that most regional coordinating meetings are attended by many members. .

However, the coordination remains oriented towards the humanitarian. The views of members both at regional and Kabul level suggested that they find interactions with key development donors like the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and other development-focused donors missing. Clearly, as pointed out above, this lack of interaction with the development sector has contributed to the alienation of ACBAR members from the overall current country- led, country-owned movement for development implementation, both at government and donor level. It has also pigeonholed ACBAR's image as an agency that coordinates only relief NGOs.

Despite its current capacity gaps, members particularly at Kabul level find ACBAR coordination with respect to major international conferences like London, Bonn etc. useful and important forum to mobilize civil society voices.

Information Sharing

ACBAR's key strengths and competitive advantage right now is its information services, such as, job announcements, Request for Proposals (RFPs) and other Request for Quotations (RFQs) advertised on its website. These services were appreciated more at the regional level where national NGOs, which, in general, no longer have direct interactions with donors, are able to apply for these proposals. ACBAR also updates information on member directories and other information about members.

However, at the regional level, in particular, members felt that a sector-wide trend analysis on NGOs is missing on the ACBAR website and they would benefit from this



information. Also, for developing partnerships with other NGOs, it is important that ACBAR provides information on all NGOs and the sector they work in.

During the strategic planning workshop, the consultant was also informed by all members that a digital resource center is a must for ACBAR to have on the website. This digital resource center should provide not just information on all NGOs and their thematic areas, but also information on donor interests related to funding trends, as well as analysis for member NGOs etc. Furthermore, a look at the website suggests that many documents have not been updated on a regular basis. The Advocacy area has just four to five papers.

Interviews with many civil society organizations and some key donors, such as, Tawanmandi and OCHA, suggested that a common information resource repository for grassroots-oriented Afghan NGOs is missing. Many donors would like access to these organizations and would like to offer them grants for their work and facilitate capacity development. ACBAR should include this as part of its information services and offer to members only.

Lastly, a review of the existing website reveals that it is not updated regularly. The trainings and advocacy tab contains obsolete and outdated information. A number of recent trainings conducted in 2013 are not reflected on the page. A majority of the ACBAR members suggested a need for the ACBAR website to become a knowledge management and information repository on anything related to NGOs which further supports the work of the NGOs. ACBAR's new website is going to be launched soon and with this new website the hope is that it will serve as an information hub organized strategically to make it easy for members of various thematic sectors to get information on present and future issues of interest to them.

Afghan Civil Society Inclusion

The current composition of ACBAR's membership does not demonstrate success at mobilizing the strengths of its current Afghan NGOs. Out of 115 members of ACBAR, 46 are Afghan NGOs while the rest are all international. ACBAR is still the oldest and most well-respected coordination body, instituted in August 1988 in response to the demand from the many aid agencies and their international donors for a coordinated approach to humanitarian assistance. However, currently, there are many other coordinating bodies, such as Afghan NGOs' Coordination Bureau (ANCB), Afghan Women Network (AWN) and South Western Afghanistan and Baluchistan Association (SWABAC) which have been representing the voice of Afghan civil society and in some cases, such as ANCB, have also been involved in representing Afghan NGOs on tax issues cases of taxes and further supporting capacity development.

A review of attendance sheets of these meetings demonstrates that it is international members which are most likely to attend the most relevant meetings taking place at ACBAR– the Directors meeting, the Afghanistan Humanitarian Forum etc.. Afghan members are hardly seen at ACBAR premises engaging in any relevant issue. The ACBAR advocacy meeting, which is a key forum to discuss humanitarian and development issues and mobilize member opinion, is also largely attended by international organizations.



When inquired about possible reasons for lack of engagement of afghan NGOs and ACBAR's ability to mobilize their viewpoint, many members and non-members highlighted the issue of "perception" and "identity". It is mostly perceived to be led by internationals and has more international members. It is not seen as a cause-oriented organization that defends the rights of national Afghan NGOs and promotes capacity development for them. Furthermore, it was stated by some members that ACBAR's international members are likely to have a less culturally sensitive perspective on social issues in Afghanistan, such as, women rights, owing to their promotion of western ideas. Furthermore, it is clear now that ACBAR is seen more as a service-providing organization that gives information on NGOs, and in light of this, it was suggested that ACBAR should strive to a level of excellence in providing expert analysis on areas that impact NGOs operationally in Afghanistan, in order to help generate interest among its afghan members who are worried about the future lack of funding.

Interviews with some local coordinating bodies suggested that during the Bonn and Tokyo conference, ACBAR was not leading the afghan civil society voice but was pledged to support them. This led the Director during the Bonn conference, out of resentment, not to support this move, and this led ACBAR to be further marginalized and has decreased the interest for this organization among some national members.

Lastly, many stakeholders interviewed suggested that supporting capacity development of afghan NGOs, and supporting their interactions with donors, so that they have access to funds for being able to perform their functions, would earn ACBAR credibility. Indicating that ACBAR should branch out of its current coordination role to offer more support to national NGOs in Afghanistan who would want to be its member seeing prospects for their capacity development.

Other financial and management functions

A general review of financial documents reveals that proper record and documentation exists with the finance department and finance reporting is managed properly. However, there does not seem to be a systematic filing system in place for meeting minutes, attendance sheets and presentations done in these meetings.

Meeting minutes of the last two years were difficult to obtain for the consultant. Clearly, monitoring and reporting to map the interest and participation level of ACBAR members in a systematic way needs to be done. This includes systematic records of SC meeting, attendance sheets etc.

The Steering Committee (SC) – a proper selection mechanism needs to be in place for the SC. Members volunteer for the chair and in many cases members have heavy workloads outside the ACBAR context and are not fully engaged in responsibilities that entail to support ACBAR. Attendance at meetings is poor and many times it was reported in interviews with members that on several occasions SC meetings have taken place without a quorum. Previous evaluations conducted in July 2008 also highlighted these management issues with respect to the steering committee. Interviews with the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) suggest that ACBAR could institutionalize its SC in an effective way. In PHF, it is the country directors of organizations who are selected on a yearly basis and if the member leaves, a replacement from the same organization becomes a member automatically. However, in ACBAR it is individuals that are elected



to the SC and if the member is not around, there is no replacement or accountability mechanism for his / her absence.

Furthermore, looking at the available meeting notes of the SC, it seems that the strategic level discussions are less but daily bureaucratic matters related to the membership fee, hiring of consultants, proposals for grants etc.

Lastly, fundraising for ACBAR's institutional core costs continues to remain a challenge. There seems to be no fundraising strategy in place that is decentralised in nature and allows regional representatives of members to support fundraising. Directors come and go and the fundraising mechanisms are personality-driven, based on the Director's background and effectiveness. ACBAR as an institution does not have a proper fundraising plan sorted out. Interviews at provincial level suggest that, they would like to be a stakeholder in supporting ACBAR's fundraising work. Similar suggestions were part of the evaluation conducted in July 2008, about working out a strategy for fundraising but no follow – up has been made. This lack of planning has impacted overall management of the human capacity at ACBAR, with lack of finance in 2013 leading to major cuts in staff numbers.

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Furthermore, it is interesting to note that although the level of member engagement and participation is moderate, the membership numbers have increased in the last three years. This implies that ACBAR members still value ACBAR information services and an effective communications strategy of ACBAR is not in place to market its services.

Implementation of ACBAR's current strategic plan

ACABAR's current strategic plan has two major shortcomings; firstly it does not have a vision and mission. Secondly, interviews in the beginning of this current strategic review exercise reveal that many members were unaware that ACBAR had a strategic plan. This indicates that a proper orientation with all members was not done when the strategic plan (2010 – 2012) was finalized. This clearly reflects a weak ability on the part of ACBAR to mobilize its members' strength. There are a few committed members who are seen regularly in all meetings and follow – up on ACBAR events but out of strength of 115 members its just 7 to 8 reoccurring faces. This is a critical challenge as these members are international and will be staying in Afghanistan for only a certain period of time. When they leave, ACBAR will lose these few committed people.

Also, the current strategic plan's overall focus is more on activities related to coordination, advocacy and overall information sharing, but it lacks a results-oriented approach. Furthermore, as the sections below will discuss the emerging transition process context of the upcoming three years and serious need to review the focus of ACBAR to adapt itself to the upcoming context.



New aid context: impact of transition process on ACBAR members

The context in which ACBAR member NGOs will now operate is one of transition to security in the country and the coordination of development aid. . According to the new Aid Management Policy, analysis suggests that this transition will entail a gradual decrease in the volume of aid until and after 2014, which could cause an economic downturn. Projections suggest that real GDP growth may fall from the 9% average a year over the past decade to almost 5% during 2011-18. The biggest impact will be on fiscal sustainability, with the projected financing gap still being 25% of GDP by 2020.

The Tokyo agreement, which secured total pledges of \$US 4 b / year development aid from the international community from 2012 through 2015, suggests a period of short-term stability and predictability. Thereafter it is not clear whether aid will fall gradually or precipitously.

The future amount of aid disbursed through NGOs is also not clear. Will donors really honor the 50% on-budget pledge? If not, perhaps more will become available to NGOs. However, there would appear to be sufficient scope in the other 50% to meet many NGO strategies and plans.

At the international level, declining aid is partly caused by Afghanistan's position in the competing domestic and international priorities of donors and the persistence of the global financial crisis. At the national level, the withdrawal of foreign military forces and a reduction in local spending may increase unemployment. It may make GIRA unable to bear the operations and maintenance costs required for sustaining development achievements. By 2020, all combined operation and maintenance costs are estimated to be twice the size of domestic revenues. Afghanistan will thus face increasing budget constraints over the coming years and have to reprioritize and rethink its strategies.

Clearly, a decline in overall civilian aid when the military pulls out will have an impact on country's economy and also cause unemployment. This security and development shift is expected to increase financial pressure and operational issues for ACBAR member NGOs who will be impacted by this economic downturn. In the present scenario, interviews with many member NGOs suggest that the challenges with respect to getting visas are increasing. Many members particularly expats working in national NGO were denied visa as these jobs should be for Afghans. Clearly, the rising issue of unemployment will further make operational environment with respect to NGOs difficult in terms of securing visas from the Afghan government.

With respect to the financial sustainability of ACBAR members as the transition progresses, it is evident that the overall cut to civilian aid is expected to have an inverse impact on ACBAR member NGOs' financial stability as well. A recent international analysis in Devex talks about serious financial pressures that particularly medium-sized NGOs may go through when the aid cuts begin. The analysis points out that these medium-sized NGOs in particular, which currently are mostly dependent on US donors, will have an urgent need to identify alternative sources of funding and grants to prevent them from financial shock. Analysis – NGO exposure to US aid cuts by John Morales in Devex, states that “without alternative funding sources, the operations of small and medium-sized NGOs can be severely restricted by the budget constraints that the United



States may well face for the next decade. If sequestration continues, they will have to fight for the money”³.

Furthermore, the overall analysis suggests that, in general, US grant giving has slowed down and clearly alternative sources are important for NGOs to have in order to survive.

Clearly, for ACBAR NGOs this analysis will have an impact on the financial sustainability of NGOs, not just US-funded, but also NGOs funded by other donors, as the budgets for other donors are also expected to shrink. Furthermore, the implementation of the Aid Management Policy (AMP) also brings many changes in the aid context in which the ACBAR member NGOs will operate. The AMP supports the implementation of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, which focuses on making use of government structures, and a move towards government-owned and led development and humanitarian initiatives. The conditions placed upon the GIRA in the TMAF with regard to the donor aid agreed in Tokyo mirror the 5 key peace building and state building goals of New Deal. Clearly an increase in the use of government structures means use of operating budget for implementation of development priorities. AMP further states that as the transition progresses slowly 80% of the development assistance will be geared towards supporting the implementation of the national priority programs and anything that falls outside that framework will not be endorsed. AMP recommends NGOs to alter their programs to fall under the NPP structure. Clearly, any development programs implemented by ACBAR member NGOs that are not designed within the NPP framework will eventually not be endorsed. The NPPs collectively embrace the majority of development activities of most NGOs. There is large disagreement between the Ministry of Finance and the donors about what ‘Alignment’ means. Almost all donors are recommending to NGOs that their plans are aligned with the objectives – thus leaving considerable scope for NGOs. The Ministry of Finance, however, wants a closer alignment of specific ‘deliverables’, which is an interpretation which potentially can constrain many NGOs. Donors also point out that there are still a further 20% of the allocations which they can use to fund whatever they want. This further deteriorates the existence of a financially sustainable environment for ACBAR members. Currently, many ministries in Afghanistan have parallel project structures and programs like the National Skills Development Program in Ministry of Labor, Social, Martyrs and Disabled Affairs (MoLSAMD), the AMP recommends that these parallel project structures should be eventually phased off. The existing grant management units in most ministries, which are like parallel support structures should eventually become, institutionalized government departments. The impact of this phase out of parallel project structure is unknown for the NGOs. Currently, many parallel project structures and programs have NGOs as their implementation partners. It can be insinuated that as the New Deal commitments are piloted in Afghanistan to encourage use of more government structures and slowly the process of institutionalizing grant management units as permanent government departments begins, the NGO engagement will be much more dependent on the consistency of NGO programs with the government priorities and the overall NPP framework. Also, it will also be dependent on relationship with the government as it is possible that the preference would be to have *taskeel* (civil servants) or the National Technical Advisors (NTA) involved in implementation of government priorities. Therefore, the role of NGOs and their sustainability will become difficult if they

³ “Analysis- NGO exposure to US aid cuts”, John Morales, Devex, 17 April, 2013, (accessed on April 23, 2013)



do not perform activities that fall under the government plans and priorities for development.

With respect to humanitarian aid, currently it is off budget. But as the New Deal progresses, it is highly likely that consultations with donors and the government can make a push to get humanitarian aid also under the government control. Clearly, this move further adds pressure on the NGOs to align themselves with the government. Also, it will be important here for ACBAR to advocate on behalf of its members to sustain humanitarian aid off budget as emergency response is timely and it should not be contingent upon government capacity to spend budget.

Apart from the new aid context that will be at play, which will impact ACBAR members financially and operationally, the pull out for NATO forces will add security dimension to the environment in which ACBAR members operate.

Analysis of various stakeholders 'expectations from ACBAR

Based on interviews with all members and key non-members, this section provides an analysis on the expectations of ACBAR stakeholders in the present context of the transition process. This analysis is provided to streamline ACBAR activities for the upcoming strategic plan and revisit its focus areas. Member expectations and needs will help in strategizing focus areas based on needs as well as what realistically ACBAR may deliver.

With respect to most donors interviewed, national NGO capacity development should be the priority area of engagement for ACBAR. Interviews suggested that when aid is expected to decline, donors are expected to fund mostly the development sector programs falling under the National Priority Program (NPP), negatively affecting many national afghan NGOs. A similar issue will also affect international NGOs. Those with low capacity do not understand how to alter their proposals, grant requests etc. Here, according to some donors, ACBAR can play a role as a facilitator to organize relevant trainings, at least for its national member NGOs. Also, its membership, which comprises of both national and international NGOs, offers the organization a competitive advantage for information sharing and lessons learned between national and international NGOs. Furthermore, ACBAR has been a coordinator and facilitator to organize interactions with donors and government authorities to keep its members updated on upcoming relevant facts in both the humanitarian and development arena. This competitive advantage should be used to organize more such interactions so that its members can benefit from it and share such lessons learned.

Donors from the humanitarian sector did find the coordination function of ACBAR relevant but suggested that this activity would become more relevant to provinces as the security deteriorates – in other words, there is a need for a decentralized coordination effort. In this case, if ACBAR plans to lead coordination with OCHA, it should have strong presence in most provinces and in particularly in the south and east provinces, where many international agencies find their access limited. Moreover, it was realized that coordination alone is not enough; expectations are that some tangible outputs like supporting members for access to funds or capacity development should come out of coordination.



For government authorities, capacity development of NGOs with respect to timely reporting of taxes was the key issue. Also, during meetings with officials from the visa department, it is likely, that as the economic pressure mounts when the military starts a pull out, the government of Afghanistan will be posed with the question of unemployment and international aid workers employed in national NGOs will find it harder to get visas considering these jobs should be secured for afghan nationals. Here, ACBAR is expected to play the role of representing its members to improve their relationship with the government and facilitate more interactions in ACBAR through information sharing.

Lastly, interviews with most members suggested that they want ACBAR to play a supportive role in representing their ongoing financial and operational challenges with the government of Afghanistan. ACBAR should according to many members create an enabling environment for the NGOs to carry their humanitarian and development work. Most members were keen on capacity development of national members and also wanted to contribute lessons learned to facilitate capacity development. However, very few members suggested that capacity development would be a shift from the original mandate of ACBAR, which is focused on coordination and relevant information sharing. With respect to regional representatives of members, capacity development was the key agenda and also they would like ACBAR to continue its information sharing on jobs and RFPs. Moreover, proposal writing, grant writing and interactions with key donors were priority areas of engagement in the discipline of capacity development.

Most members suggested that advocacy should be focused on areas of common interest and thematic area advocacy should be left to members who are doing that for their organizations independently. The quality of advocacy needs vast improvements. If advocacy is undertaken on humanitarian and development matters to influence policies then that should be of common interest to all members.

Key recommendations to overcome existing capacity gaps:

The following section discusses priority areas of engagement for ACBAR to overcome existing gaps, which will support the organization to implement its new strategic focus areas discussed in the next chapter:

1. Organize Development Coordination Forum– ACBAR has always focused on enhancing interactions with the humanitarian sector donors and other stakeholders in this arena. The current meetings like AHF etc. also effectively brings on board head of donor agencies like OCHA, ECHO etc. that are the key humanitarian donors. Many ACBAR's directors themselves come from an emergency response background. There are obvious strengths and weaknesses in this regard. On one hand a director with strong humanitarian skills will naturally understand the dynamics of any humanitarian context, its standards, donor thinking etc. On the other hand, this does pose a problem as the development perspective is lacking, which in turn have other dynamics at play. In the present context of the aid curriculum in Afghanistan, where the government is responsible for meeting the targets of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF), currently 50 percent of funding for development aid is managed through the government, which needs to be used to successfully implement the NPPs. Soon this percentage is expected to increase to 80 percent and NGOs are urged to alter their programs based on the NPP framework if they wish to continue seeking funding. ACBAR should organize a development coordination forum that invites key development partners like the World Bank, UNDP etc. This forum should also invite in particularly



guests like the head of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), the head of the ongoing Capacity Building Results (CBR) Facility program of the WB, both of whom are heavily engaged in civil service reforms with the government and other government department heads, which are key to these processes surrounding the NPPs. The gap with respect to understanding various aid coordination mechanisms is visible at ACBAR, there is no technical advisor that comes from a development background and understands different government aid mechanisms. Such an expert could have substantial impact of the Aid Management Policy for the ACBAR members. This should be addressed through increased information sharing with development actors on a monthly basis.

2. Fill key vacant positions: The position of an Advocacy/ Communications Manager is vacant since months. An annual conference in London is soon approaching and other key coordinating agencies have already started to prepare for it. It is likely ACBAR will once again resort to a last minute animated advocacy process, which does not bring fruitful results. The priority area of engagement for advocacy is to integrate ACBAR member NGOs in overall the NPP implementation structure. It will be beneficial to hire a manager who has good understanding of the government, development donors and the overall development versus aid coordination structure to complement the Director. It is furthermore critical to hire two policy officers of Afghan origin. Competitive salaries should be paid to these policy officers to hire high capacity Afghans who understand their government well. It is advised that one policy officer comes with strong economical/econometrical skills to fully understand the complexity of the transition from aid to development policy implementation via the government and the NPPs. The second policy officer should equally be from a legal background, as much policy work with legislative perspectives will direct the coming work for the implementation of the NPPs. Further to that, and with no little impact, issues such as taxation, visas etc., are likely to be dealt with and in an easy manner for ACBAR and its members.

A final suggestion is to hire an Afghan expert skilled in all aspects of development sector implementation, such as grants and proposal writing, with training and facilitator skills capable of training, capacity building and informing ACBAR members on any aspect of the development framework.

3) Relevant strategies: ACBAR should make its fundraising, advocacy and communications systematic. Therefore, firstly a fundraising strategy needs to be in place that also involves roles of regional ACBAR employees for inputs. This strategy should be discussed with SC members and should have key guidance of the treasurer member who is well versed with ACBAR financial challenges.

An advocacy strategy, which is flexible to add new issues for discussion in case something unexpected happens in Afghanistan, should be adopted. This strategy should clarify a work plan and also relevant member list of who will attend. Out of 115 members, many are humanitarian and many are both humanitarian and development NGOs, thus the strategy should be able to identify grouping of members based on their profile. This strategy should also have a monitoring framework for measuring advocacy results with verifiable indicators to ensure the success of ACBAR lobbying and advocacy initiatives.

A communications strategy should be drafted that clarifies both internal and external communications. The strategy should also clarify provincial coordination mechanisms as



ACBAR Strategic Focus Areas (2013 – 2016)

The results of the situational analysis that examines ACBAR's key capacity gaps and also the relevance of its existing strategic focus with respect to current transition process context were considered before new strategic focus areas were finalized. Therefore, the strategic focus areas for 2013 – 2016 focus on outcomes to overcome existing capacity gaps and also align itself with key national plans, frameworks like the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF), New Deal⁴ and new policies like the Aid Management Policy (AMP) to facilitate their implementation through ACBAR members. The donors and the government of Afghanistan have identified the following key thematic areas in context of the transition process;

- 1) Afghan-led Development,
- 2) Capacity Development,
- 3) Alignment and Use of Government Systems,
- 4) Coordination and Harmonization,
- 5) Accountability for Results,
- 6) Transition Issues, and
- 7) Sustainability of Development.

The strategic focus areas were finalized to complement these priorities through ACBAR and its member's work. Therefore - advocacy/policy/outreach, aid effectiveness and capacity development are key areas of engagement for 2013 - 2016. Information and coordination, which are key activities performed by ACBAR, are cross-cutting issues, across all functional areas to continue existing activities of ACBAR for its members like annual conferences, networking events and information services like job openings, RFPs and other membership benefits.

Vision

ACBAR is as a trusted facilitator with a view to supporting Afghanistan as a peaceful and just society where people live with dignity and achieve fulfillment.

Mission

ACBAR is an independent body for the collective voice of NGOs operating in Afghanistan, dedicated to aid effectiveness, capacity development, advocacy, coordination, and information exchange services to address the humanitarian, recovery and sustainable development needs of the country effectively and efficiently. The members of ACBAR are committed to work in partnership with each other, the government, donors, local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and communities to support **afghan – led** humanitarian and development assistance.

Core Values

⁴The New Deal identifies five Peace building and State building Goals (PSGs) – legitimate politics; security; justice; economic foundations and revenues and services, describing these as 'an important foundation to enable progress towards the MDGs'. The New Deal also identifies ten key areas where international engagement needs to change to focus on new and important ways of engaging and building mutual trust, including a shift to country-led fragility assessments; the re-evaluation of formal compacts; stronger support for political processes; more effective support for capacity development; greater transparency of aid; increased use of country systems and more timely and predictable aid.



The Code of Conduct (COC) is a set of shared norms, principles and values that aims to guide the conduct of NGOs in Afghanistan. Below are the general principles of ACBAR as promoted by the COC:

1. We are committed to comply strictly with international humanitarian principles and human rights law.
2. Our work is based on principle of DO NO HARM and it focuses on responding to emergencies, to chronic needs, reducing the impact of disasters and climate change, and dealing with the root causes of poverty, meeting basic needs, and enabling communities to become resilient and self-sufficient.
3. We are accountable to those whom we seek to assist, to those providing the resources, and to legal authorities.
4. We are transparent our dealings with the government and community partners, the public, donors and other interested parties.
5. We are independent and we strive to maintain our autonomy according to Afghan and international law, and to resist the imposition of conditionality or corrupt practices that may compromise our missions and principles.
6. We will not discriminate against any individual or group on the grounds of gender, political affiliation, ethnic origin, religious belief or sexual orientation

Strategic Focus - Advocacy/ Policy/ Outreach

Rationale/ Brief:

As the transition progresses, the Aid Management Policy implementation (AMP) will promote country led and government owned development and humanitarian initiatives. Development partners will align at least 80% of their development assistance with the NPPs and might gradually close down all programs that fall outside the of the NPPs framework. Currently, it is projected to be 50 percent and is slowly moving to 80 percent as the transition progress. On the other hand, aid for humanitarian assistance⁵, which is kept out of the AMP and is off budget for now, may also be considered to be under government control as the move towards piloting the New Deal in Afghanistan continues. This situational analysis suggests three key outcomes for ACBAR's advocacy and policy work to **increase member input at policy level;**

- 1) To maintain through advocacy humanitarian aid "off budget"⁶ while increasing government planning and support to humanitarian access to target groups. This is because emergency assistance should be timely and not be contingent upon the government's current capacity to spend the budget as it involves lives of people. However, the government should play an important role in facilitating planning through policies that promote greater humanitarian access.

⁵**"Humanitarian Assistance"** means assistance designed to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of emergencies. To be classified as humanitarian, aid should be consistent with the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

Humanitarian aid includes:

- Disaster prevention and preparedness;
- The provision of shelter, food, water and sanitation, health services and other items of assistance for the benefit of affected people and to facilitate the return to normal lives and livelihoods;
- Measures to promote and protect the safety, welfare and dignity of civilians and those no longer taking part in hostilities and rehabilitation, and reconstruction and transition assistance while the emergency situation persists.

⁶**"Off-budget"** means any inflow of resources or spending's that are excluded from the national budget and not managed through the government systems.



- 2) To position ACBAR member NGOs within the formal structure of the NPPs for implementation to support government led development assistance.
- 3) To ensure ACBAR members are free from visa, tax and other operational challenges to ensure their success at implementing humanitarian and development assistance in Afghanistan.

Objective: **Increase common member input at policy level⁷**

Activities

- 1) Organize regular advocacy working group meetings for humanitarian members and development-focused members for their inputs.
- 2) Develop a policy in consultation with donors and the government to engage with the opposite forces post 2014 to ensure access to people in humanitarian need.
- 3) Support advocacy that increases government planning for dealing with opposition forces to ensure humanitarian assistance is timely carried through.
- 4) Assimilate ACBAR member inputs in the fragility assessments that will be conducted during the implementation of the Aid Management Policy (AMP) and shape development partner decision making for funding development assistance. Ensure that ACBAR member's inputs promote and position ACBAR members in the formal NPP structure for implementation.
- 5) ACBAR policy officers to provide every month to its members an analysis on various meetings, upcoming policies and legislations that impact financial and operational status of ACBAR members.
- 6) Get member's input on other relevant humanitarian and development policy matters, which are of common interest to the Advocacy Working group.

Objective: **Promote financially sustainable and operationally viable environment for its members.**

Activities:

1. ACBAR to develop an annual advocacy strategy that gives a sustainable plan for advocacy as Afghanistan in transition may be prone to unexpected social, political and economic changes.
2. The ACBAR policy team to develop analysis on the impact of parallel project structures of the government and advocate for a continued role of NGOs in service delivery through financial assistance through formalized grant management unit structures in government ministries.
3. The Advocacy team to address issues related to tax, NGO law. The Advocacy team to liaise on a regular basis with policy departments of all ministries to update its members about new policies, which may influence on their operational mobility for work in Afghanistan. Based on members consent the advocacy manager and policy officer are to research the impact of these policies and develop a mechanism for lobbying and outreach.
4. The ACBAR advocacy team to interact effectively working with ICRC and MSF and other members not part of the cluster system on issues related to security with respect to the health sector. Aid workers and their beneficiaries to ensure no

⁷**The objective one** – increase member input at policy level will ensure the three-priority areas discussed – humanitarian aid off budget, ACBAR member within the formal structure of NPP implementation and representation of ACBAR members to the government to alleviate operational challenges.



duplication of work on advocacy related issues with John Hopkins University initiative.

5. ACBAR will engage effectively with international and national media at least once per two months to demonstrate the work of its members and discuss lessons learned.

Objective: Improve the ability of members to coordinate with, and influence policies of, the government and donors.

Activities:

- 1) Organize ACBAR member's policy inputs for annual conferences like Bonn, Tokyo and London etc. And facilitate their interactions with the government and donors.
- 2) Represent ACBAR members in cases related to visa rejections and tax issues with the government.
- 3) Organize networking events and workshops like AHF, CHF and start a development coordination forum that also brings in donors from the development sector also along with humanitarian sector and relevant government authorities.

Objective: Improvement in perception of members with government, donors and target groups

- 1) ACBAR advocacy/communications team to write and report important issues related to access and accessibility modalities,
- 2) ACBAR to engage media to facilitate outreach work for NGOs to highlight good work done by the NGOs, assisting in facilitating their acceptance in communities and also at government level
- 3) ACBAR to work with members to develop outreach strategies to communicate to communities their commitment to impartiality, transparency and accountability.
- 4) Publish a monthly magazine that informs about the work of ACBAR members.
- 5) ACBAR will engage effectively with international media at least once per two months to demonstrate the good work of its members and discuss lessons learned.
- 6) Improve and sustain ACBAR information services – bulletins, member directory, job announcements, RFPs and add additional information in demand to promote ACBAR's good services while improving its image as a service provider.
- 7) Launch these services on a new upgraded ACBAR website.

Strategic Focus: Aid Effectiveness

Strategic Focus: Aid Effectiveness

Rationale/ Brief

The new Aid Management Policy which will be implemented from now towards to the end of 2017, demonstrates the key role NGOs and the civil society can play for supporting the government of Afghanistan in meeting the commitments pledged of Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF). Overall, the new AMP states that the role of NGOs is critical in three areas – aid coordination and harmonization, supporting monitoring and results mechanism for aid effectiveness and overall stresses the need for NGOs to streamline their project activities based on overall NPPs framework to enhance their role in service delivery.



The role of CSOs and NGOs with respect to Aid Coordination and Harmonization of Mechanisms is evident in Policy 15 of the AMP. This policy states that most of the existing coordination mechanisms lack the ability to conduct high quality dialogue that is more policy focused and action-oriented and less process oriented. Likewise, development coordination is more prevalent at the national level while at sub-national levels such mechanisms are not well developed. Moreover, the membership of these forums is drawn mainly from DPs and the line agencies. The GIRoA recognizes the need to streamline donor coordination and to involve all actors in planning and policy formulation through periodic consultation. GIRoA also aims to enhance the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and media to conduct independent analysis of public spending and to hold both the government and donors accountable for development results⁸.

However, CSO role is not limited to improving coordination mechanisms and input at policy level, AMP through its Policy 19, GIRoA recognizes the valuable contribution of parliament, CSOs, media, academia and private sector to the development process and wishes to increase the effective demand for good governance.

Lastly, increasing overall implementation role of ACBAR NGOs is critical as New Deal is under pilot in Afghanistan. This agreement proposes a country led and country owned development assistance mechanism. Currently, development partners have aligned 50 percent of their assistance under the government of Afghanistan for implementation of NPPs. Soon, as per the AMP; development partners will align at least 80% of their development assistance with the NPPs and should gradually close down all programs that fall outside the NPPs framework. Therefore, it is important that ACBAR members, who are operational on the ground and have done a credible job in implementing various development initiatives, support the government to meet TMAF commitments.

Objective: Increase ACBAR member role in the implementation of National Priority Programs (NPPs) and other government, Development Partner plans

Activities

- 1) Research and evaluate international best practices for supporting a grant mechanism of donors in consultation with government and donors.
- 2) Ensure that the grant mechanism clarifies ACBAR member NGO role in implementation of NPP component and maximizes opportunities in particular for ACBAR national member NGOs

Objective: Increase ACBAR member role in aid coordination and harmonization mechanisms

Activities:

- 1) Provide inputs and analysis to the annual development cooperation dialogues that the GIRoA plans to conduct.
- 2) Keep ACBAR members updated with detailed Portfolio Reviews the development partners will conduct to map government performance. Collect ACBAR member input and voice their opinion in JCMB and other forums where AMP implementation is tracked.

⁸“ Aid Management Policy for Transition and Beyond”, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Finance, Page 21.



- 3) Advocate through its Advocacy Working Group the views of the members pledging the government to review and reform Development Assistance Database (DAD) as the central aid information management system to ensure transparency in sharing of information about TMAF spending and commitments.
- 4) Invite development partners to ACBAR development corporation meetings and suggest them to inform and present their timely and accurate reporting on aid activities and advocate that the government register these into the (DAD).

Objective: Increase ACBAR members input in Accountability and Results Mechanisms for aid effectiveness

Activities

- 1) Facilitate ACBAR members to get their input in upcoming donor joint risk assessments. These assessments will evaluate the role of the government in meeting the commitments of TAMF based on legalized and formalized donor rules and policies to ensure there is no corruption and transparent use of funds.
- 2) Regularly, involve focal points selected at each province to get their feedback on development initiatives, particularly NPP implementation in their thematic area at sub national level.
- 3) Use this member input to provide input to joint risk assessments that the donors plan to conduct.
- 4) ACBAR policy officers to also as part of their work plan provide evidence based analysis on issues that impact ACBAR member NGOs; and regularly provide this analysis to Advocacy Working Group.

Strategic Focus Area: Facilitation & Capacity Development

Rationale/ Brief

ACBAR through its new strategic framework supports the identified following key thematic areas of priority for the Afghan government - 1) Afghan-led Development, 2) Capacity Development, 3) Alignment and Use of Government Systems, 4) Coordination and Harmonization, 5) Accountability for Results, 6) Transition Issues, and 7) Sustainability of Development. However, ACBAR and its members acknowledge that sustainability of development can be ensured if the capacity of national NGOs is developed. Also, an in-depth situational analysis of ACBAR conducted suggests that many national NGOs do not have access to grants, as they are not well informed about emerging grants, donor strategies and opportunities. ACBAR's competitive advantage of being an umbrella organization for not just national but also international NGOs offers a robust forum for knowledge exchange to develop capacity of NGOs. Through its capacity development endeavors, it also hopes to encourage other afghan NGOs who are not part of ACBAR network yet to join and thus enhance afghan civil society inclusion in ACBAR's activities.

Objective: Increase funding opportunities for ACBAR member NGOs

Activities:

- 1) Encourage member NGOs to attend donor coordination forum as well as AHF meetings and facilitate their interactions with donors from development and humanitarian sector.
- 2) Update member NGOs about reviewed and revised donor strategies so that they can align their funding requests based on new policies.



- 3) Organize specialized trainings in areas of proposal writing; grant writing and developing log – frames.

Objective: Improved policies and legislation providing enabling environment for members

Activities:

- 1) Detailed review and evaluation of existing policies and legislation. Recommendations for improving policies and legislation
- 2) Support Government of Afghanistan in development of more enabling policy, legislation and strategy for civil society/Afghan NGOs in Afghanistan
- 3) Conduct trainings on NGO law, Code of Conduct and relevant humanitarian principles for ACBAR members.

Objective: Increase relations among members through international, national and regional and provincial networks developed.

Activities:

- 1) International NGOs support the development of Afghan NGO Networks at National Level and in their working areas.
- 2) Providing training, capacity building and material support to newly established Afghan NGO Network
- 3) Implement communications and advocacy component with ENNA.
- 4) Improve and make MOU with US – Interaction US NGO, the network for Afghanistan for USA for advocacy and communication for Afghanistan in the US state department.
- 5) International Council of Voluntary agencies (ICVA), a MOU to develop implementation of new code of conduct and relevant deadlines.
- 6) ACBAR will develop and contact to develop MOU with AZIA network, German network VNRO, French network COFA, Australia and Japan.
- 7) ACBAR to strengthen relations with regional networks - HIME (Iran) for refugee related issues and with PHF (Pakistan Humanitarian Forum) for refugee and disaster and emergency response.

Implementation Recommendations

The section below, will enunciate some implementation guidelines that will support ACBAR's strategic framework to be implemented. The recommendations are focused on the three revised functional areas for ACBAR – advocacy/ policy/ outreach, aid effectiveness and capacity development.

Advocacy/ Policy/ Outreach

- 1) ACBAR Advocacy Working Group members should focus on issues that are of priority as the transition progresses – 1) positioning ACBAR members in NPP framework (development group), 2) Maintaining humanitarian aid off budget to ensure emergency response is timely and not dependent on government capacity to spend 3) Creating an enabling environment for ACBAR members to operate in Afghanistan.



- 2) A work plan should be developed which has some identified results the members attempt to achieve and verifiable indicators should be in place for members to map the progress of advocacy.
- 3) This work plan should be monitored after every six-month to ensure that members are engaged in results based advocacy.
- 4) Once the work-plan is decided among members, Advocacy should be followed up by policy officers every month providing both humanitarian and development group members with one evidence based analysis each before they come to the meeting to take positions.
- 5) This evidence based policy analysis should become part of ACBAR services every month for its members.
- 6) The Advocacy manager hired should have understanding of government aid and budget mechanisms – ARTF, Tied Aid, pay and grading system and role of grant management units. This is to ensure ACBAR can position its members in activities related to NPP and also protect the interest of its humanitarian sector members to maintain humanitarian aid off budget.

Capacity Development

Hire a fulltime Afghan capacity development expert who is afghan. Other than trainings, ensure that learning by doing is facilitated. This person can sit with some members to ensure their queries related to proposals, grant writing etc. are answered.

Coordination and Information Sharing

These are two cross cutting functions of ACBAR, which are performed in all the three functional areas. With respect to coordination, it is understood that coordinating at provincial level is critical as security deteriorates. But ACBAR does not have capacity for that. Therefore, focal points from Afghan ACBAR member NGO to be assigned responsibility in each province and they should be coordinated with ACBAR regional info coordinators. Three additional moving officers should be hired who visit regional coordinators and other focal points in their assigned region to keep provincial actors involved in Kabul centered activities – capacity development, advocacy and contributions for aid effectiveness.