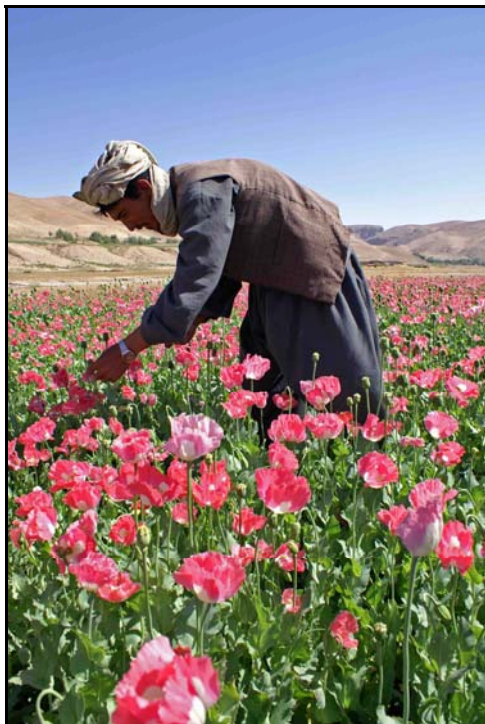


Beyond the Metrics: Understanding the Nature of Change in the Rural Livelihoods of Opium Poppy Growing Households in the 2006/07 Growing Season



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The author would like to thank his Afghan colleagues who continue to undertake fieldwork in increasingly trying circumstances. Their considerable efforts do not go unnoticed. Thanks also go to Pierre-Arnoud Chouvy, Paul Fishstein, Anthony Fitzherbert, David Macdonald, Adam Pain, and numerous staff from the Afghan Inter Departmental Drugs Unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development for their comments on earlier drafts. Any omissions or errors in the report are my own. The contents are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the Government of the United Kingdom. Particular thanks go to the individuals and groups who continue to share their time in the field despite other more pressing priorities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The counter narcotics policy debate on Afghanistan continues to be shaped by numbers. Political commentators, drugs analysts and the media all focus on the official release of the annual opium poppy survey produced by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The number of hectares cultivated and the proportion of the total crop eradicated, what some refer to as ‘the metrics’, continue to be cited as the most important benchmarks by which performance can be judged. A reduction in the amount of land cultivated with opium in a given area or nationally is automatically seen as a sign of progress.

When significant reductions in cultivation have occurred in a given area, as was the case in the province of Nangarhar in the 2004/05 growing season and in the province of Balkh this year, it is immediately lauded as a success. The fall in levels of cultivation is typically attributed to the commitment of the provincial and local authorities and on the role of counter narcotics information strategies. Little attention is given to how households have replaced the multifunctional role that opium poppy plays in rural livelihood strategies and therefore whether the shift in cropping patterns is part of a wider process of diversification of both crops and income, or simply a temporary response to a political imperative.

This report suggests that performance measures for drug control cannot simply be seen in terms of reductions in opium poppy cultivation and that there is a need to understand the qualitative nature of any change in cropping patterns and livelihood strategies before labelling changes in any given area a success. It uses fieldwork from nine different provinces to outline that crop and income diversification is taking place in many areas around provincial centres even in those provinces where opium poppy is considered entrenched. In some provinces, such as Nangarhar, Laghman and Baghlan these areas may consist of a number of districts adjacent to the provincial centre. In others, such as Helmand province diversification may only be limited to the area or sub district in closest proximity the provincial centre.

What these various districts and sub districts have in common are well functioning markets. They produce a range of agricultural crops for sale in the provincial centre or for regional markets. Some even produce for export to Pakistan. Complex intercropping patterns are adopted so as to increase productivity and maximise the returns per unit of land. In these areas vegetable traders are mimicking many of the practices adopted by opium buyers, including purchasing the crop at the farm gate and offering advance payments. Consequently the costs of transportation and ‘facilitation fees’ are being met by traders from Jalalabad and Kabul rather than farmers themselves.

In these areas the shift out of opium poppy, which is particularly labour intensive, and into high value horticulture also frees household labour to find work in the city nearby. The proximity of these areas to the provincial centre means that transport costs are minimal and those working in the city can reside in their own household at night, which is preferred by family members from a social perspective and increases their net return on daily wage labour rates. Consequently, the result of crop

diversification and a shift out of opium poppy cultivation can be an increase in both the net returns per unit of land as well as non-farm income.

Typically these areas that are adjacent to the provincial centre also see the benefits of being part of the wider Afghan state. The improvement of physical infrastructure such as roads and irrigation has reduced transport costs and improved agricultural productivity. Their proximity to the provincial centre also reduces the number of 'checkposts' demanding taxes and bribes and thereby reducing the net returns on licit crops. Communities in these areas also believe there is a 'security premium' associated with their location near the provincial centre, enabling investments in crops with longer maturation periods and facilitating the trade of legal goods and services. Eradication is also perceived to be a credible threat and can act as a catalyst for making the shift from opium poppy to diversifying cropping patterns and income streams.

However, the report also highlights that this pattern of change in rural livelihoods is localised and is not uniform across any given province. In those areas where legal markets are severely constrained opium poppy remains a low risk crop in a high-risk environment. It produces a non-perishable, high value low weight product suitable for transporting on poor roads where transport costs are high and damage to more fragile products is extensive. It has a relatively guaranteed market where traders will purchase at the farmgate and thereby absorb the transport costs and 'facilitation fees' associated with the trade in legitimate crops in rural Afghanistan. These traders and indeed neighbours will also offer advance payments on the future opium crop prior to its harvest, allowing households to meet their living expenses during times of food insecurity or illness. In many areas growing opium also denotes a capacity to repay debts and will facilitate loans in both cash and in-kind.

As a labour intensive crop opium poppy creates wage labour opportunities for a large swathe of the population who can find work weeding and harvesting the crop at preferential rates of pay. The staggered nature of the crop cycle, varying by altitude and micro-climate can extend the period of employment available for those with knowledge of the plant and who are willing and able to travel to approximately three months. The scale of the labour input required over this period puts upward pressure on wage labour rates in other non-opium related sectors of the economy like in construction, services and agriculture.

The report highlights that those areas in which access to legal markets is constrained are not necessarily remote but may be only a short distance from the provincial centre, particularly in those provinces where the security situation is acute. Pressure to reduce cultivation in these areas through coercion not to plant and eradication has resulted in opium poppy being replaced by wheat and has not promoted a shift to high value horticulture. Without a viable cash crop and with the loss of local off-farm income opportunities associated with the harvest of opium, households have typically been compelled to send increasing numbers of family members in search of work. They have migrated to find employment in the opium fields of other provinces in which a ban has not been enforced, or in the construction industry in regional centres or across the borders to Pakistan and Iran.

Where household dependency ratios are large and employment opportunities limited, or where there are insufficient males within the household to be able leave the women and children unattended, the enforcement of a ban on opium has been found to prompt the sale of long-term productive assets and increasing debts. In the more remote areas where population densities are acute, opium poppy cultivation has been entrenched for some years, and where the support for the government has always been tenuous, resurgence in cultivation can be expected after only one season. In those areas nearer the provincial centre, with better access to assets such as land, water and labour markets, and where tribal structures are less cohesive a prohibition of opium poppy may continue into a second year.

The report highlights that where households have not diversified their cropping patterns in response to eradication the destruction of the standing opium crop can exacerbate political tensions. In many of these areas the political support for the government can often be characterised as at best ambivalent given that contact with the state is often fairly limited. However, eradication can provoke a hostile response and the talk of spraying elicits the threat of violence and/or a declaration of intent to actively support Anti Government Elements. The perception that corruption is endemic amongst those conducting eradication (including their involvement in the drugs trade), and reports of bribery and partiality during implementation further weakens the legitimacy of counter narcotics efforts. The report warns that there is a need to tread with caution to ensure that the right balance between security, governance and economic growth are attained and sustainable reductions in opium poppy cultivation are delivered and growing levels of insecurity in rural Afghanistan are not to be further undermined.

Key findings

- *Described as a 'success story' in 2004/05 opium poppy cultivation has now returned to many districts in the province of Nangarhar. The resurgence in cultivation in the province is occurring in areas that have experienced two years of very low levels of opium poppy cultivation and where many households have had to sell off long-term productive assets, migrate and borrow to sustain themselves. Population densities in these areas are high. These are areas that have typically replaced opium poppy with wheat and have not diversified into other high value crops due to the absence of local purchasing power and market penetration.*
- *However, in the eastern region negligible levels of cultivation are likely to be sustained in those districts adjacent to the provincial centre in the provinces of Nangarhar and Laghman. Even in the southern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand reductions in cultivation can be expected in areas in close proximity to the provincial centre where households have access to both agricultural commodity and labour markets and where the writ of the government can be maintained. In these areas there is evidence of greater diversification in*

cropping systems and a shift to high value horticultural production. In these areas vegetable traders are mimicking many of the advantages of the opium trade, offering advances, purchasing at the farmgate and absorbing transportation and transaction costs. The same pattern of trade can be seen in many of the provinces in which opium poppy is cultivated.

- *In the northeast increasing wage labour rates and falling opium prices have deterred planting. In some areas the production of high value vegetables, such as onion and potato can generate higher net returns than opium poppy. The recovery of livestock markets has also aided the balance in cropping patterns resulting in shift towards wheat and fodder crops. This process has been aided by a proactive counter narcotics effort in some areas.*
- *Reductions are also expected across the province of Balkh. Concerted efforts by the provincial and local authorities have been undertaken at a time when the economics of opium production are less attractive. There is the resounding perception amongst the local population that the authorities are in a position to enforce the law on the prohibition of opium poppy this year. There is also evidence of increasing diversification into high value crops in the central districts of Pul e Khumri and Baghlan in the province of Baghlan.*
- *In the central province of Ghor the failure of rainfed wheat in the 2005/06 growing season combined with particularly low opium yields and falling farmgate prices have constrained opium poppy cultivation. Better levels of precipitation in the 2006/07 planting season have led to increasing amounts of household land under cultivation but priority has been given to crops intended for household and livestock consumption and not opium poppy.*
- *The returns on opium poppy are not unassailable. In some areas complex intercropping systems can generate higher incomes, particularly where combined with non farm income opportunities. Moreover, it is likely that the net returns on opium poppy cultivation will continue to fall. High wage labour rates for itinerant harvesters and falling farmgate prices will further diminish the crops profitability in the east and south. With the onset of the harvest, farmgate prices in Nangarhar are the lowest that they have been for a decade. Combined with high levels of cultivation in Helmand it is likely that prices will fall even further.*
- *These legal income opportunities are, however, not open to all. In many areas farmers find their access to agricultural commodity and labour markets constrained by high transport costs, poor roads, the imposition of taxes and bribes, and environmental factors. For example, in the southern region increasing levels of cultivation are to be anticipated in those areas in which heightened insecurity is impinging on agricultural and labour markets. In such a high-risk environment it is rational to cultivate a low risk crop like opium poppy. In these areas (as elsewhere) corruption and insecurity is reducing the margins on legal goods and restricting crop diversification even in areas relatively close to the provincial centre.*

- *It is typically the resource poor that monocrop opium poppy. They have particularly small landholdings, large families and particularly high accumulated debts. These households are typically located some distance from provincial centres. This group has a limited choice of alternatives to opium poppy cultivation.*
- *The vast majority of farmers are aware that opium poppy is 'illegal' and that it is forbidden under Islamic law. However, there are many that do not feel the government either has the capacity or the willingness to enforce a ban on opium poppy cultivation.*
- *In most of the provinces counter-narcotics messages lacked credibility. The perception that local officials themselves cultivated and were involved in the trade did not convince those interviewed that there was a genuine commitment on behalf of the authorities to reduce levels of cultivation. In some areas statements regarding the legality of opium poppy were seen as an annual exercise more for an external audience than for the farmers themselves. It was only in the provinces of Balkh and Laghman that the majority of those interviewed believed the authorities were able and willing to impose a ban on opium production in the current growing season.*
- *In Nangarhar respondents believed the government's position on eradication would determine the security of the region during the 2006/07 growing season. So much so that the threat of the local authorities pursuing an aggressive eradication campaign resulted in many farmers suggesting their ambivalence towards the government at the time of planting might manifest into a more active opposition, including joining with the Anti-Government Elements.*
- *In both the southern provinces, of Helmand and Kandahar as well as Farah, there were increasing reports of Taliban and government officials finding ways to coexist. Respondents suggested that in many areas both sides had made agreements not to engage in hostile action. These agreements left the government officials undisturbed in the district centres whilst the Taliban were free to operate in the surrounding rural areas*
- *The impact that eradication has on future planting remains context specific. Where improvements in security and greater government presence coincide with viable livelihood opportunities the threat of eradication may play a catalytic role in pushing farmers to both diversify their cropping patterns and off-farm and non-farm income streams. However, where these conditions are not in place eradication can increase household debts, exacerbate political tensions and result in further cultivation in subsequent years.*
- *Eradication is often seen as partial, targeting those in close proximity to the district centre or major roads as well as those who do not have contacts in local government or who are unable to pay bribes to leave their crop*

undamaged. The incidence of bribery and the practice of compensating fellow villagers for the loss of their crop may even be leading to higher rates of cultivation and is undermining the perception that eradication is a credible threat to farmers across a given area.

- *Eradication of the standing opium crop through the use of ‘spray’ was found to be an area of contention. It was not clear whether farmers distinguished between the different methods of dissemination, aerial or ground-based. There was a resounding perception that spraying would result in crop failures and sickness and perhaps the death of livestock and people. ‘Spraying’ was perceived by farmers as an act of hostility against the population and not solely targeted at their plants.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of the debate in the international media on opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is primarily on ‘the metrics’, the numbers of hectares cultivated and the proportion of total crop eradicated. These two figures are the ones most frequently cited by journalists, political commentators and drug control policy makers and are used as the most important benchmarks by which performance can be judged. Indeed, it is rare to see a presentation on the situation in Afghanistan, hear testimony to legislative committees or read an article in the international media that does not cite these figures and infer success or failure depending on the latest trends. When cultivation falls in a given area there are discussions about how this ‘success’ can be replicated, where it increases, or eradication targets are not reached there are talks of removing provincial and district officials, or revising the National Drug Control Strategy.

Running parallel to the discussion on ‘the metrics’ are the rural communities in Afghanistan that cultivate a range of crops including opium poppy, or live in areas where opium production is constrained by socio-economic, political and environmental factors (usually the latter) and work as itinerant harvesters in neighbouring provinces where opium poppy is actually grown. Others may not cultivate opium poppy on their own land or on the land of others but simply receive higher wages in construction, agricultural labour, and trade to due to the inflationary effect opium production has on the economy.

These households live in an environment that is largely distinct from the government of Afghanistan, its institutions and the policy debates that shape counter-narcotics policy. They make decisions about how they will allocate household resources, including land, labour and capital based on a range of different factors. The amount and quality of owned land; the arrangements for obtaining sharecropped or leased land; the likely price of agricultural commodities at the point of sale; the cost of transporting goods to market; the likely losses incurred en route; the potential threats posed to life and goods when travelling to market; the levels of past and anticipated precipitation; access to irrigation and its source; the availability of unremunerated family labour; the likely cost of hired labour; the amount of accumulated debt; the mechanisms for obtaining seasonal loans; the likelihood of incurring significant expense due to family illness, marriage or death; the choices of crops and employment made by the previous generation and neighbours. These are just some of the factors households will consider when deciding how they will invest their resources.

When a household allocates resources to opium production, be that land, labour and/or capital, it is typically just one decision amongst a portfolio of investments. Understanding how these decisions are made requires an understanding of the assets that a household can draw upon and the opportunities that it can potentially exploit. Understanding the consequences of these decisions is equally important. It helps establish whether any shift in cropping patterns and potential reduction in the level of opium poppy cultivation is part of a sustainable process or merely a short-term measure aimed at countering political pressures.

This report explores these decisions, what informs them and their consequences (intended or otherwise). It is based on 481 in-depth interviews conducted in twenty-three different districts and across nine provinces in Afghanistan. It explores a cross section of households across Afghanistan and attempts to explain the circumstances, socio-economic, political and environmental, which drove them to cultivate opium poppy (or not) in the 2006/07 growing season. It recognises that, given the complex and dynamic relationship between the various factors that inform household decision-making and how these are shaped by particular circumstances, it is problematic to simply ask households why they do or do not cultivate opium poppy.

Instead the report looks at the range of assets that households have at their disposal, their perceptions of the type of 'governance' that they are subject to, the services that are delivered, and the ways in which the rule of law, particularly with regard to the eradication of the opium crop, is enforced. It also identifies the possible explanations for moving in and out of opium poppy cultivation this year. The analysis is not intended to be exhaustive; it is limited by sample size, the prevailing security situation, and the increasingly sensitive nature of the subject matter. There is a need to exercise caution when attempting to extrapolate the findings of this work. That said, the report does provide valuable insights into the process of change in rural livelihoods in Afghanistan and gives voice to a population that is so often caricatured by both policy makers and the media in their debates on counter-narcotics policy in Afghanistan.

2. METHODOLOGY

This Study represents the fifth in a series of annual reports funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the Government of the United Kingdom.¹ To explore the different motivations and factors that influence opium poppy cultivation and how these will inevitably differ by location and socio-economic group, fieldwork was conducted in a number of different areas within the provinces of Badakhshan, Balkh, Baghlan, Farah, Ghor, Helmand, Laghman, Nangarhar and Kandahar. Where possible districts with very different assets were selected for fieldwork within each province. Typically, districts in close proximity to provincial centres that generally had better access to water, land and both agricultural commodity and labour markets, as well as at least theoretically better security, were chosen along with more remote areas where land holdings were more marginal and market failures more commonplace.

Even within these areas, interviews were conducted with households across a range of different socio-economic groups. Of those interviewed, 73% owned land. Of these, 14% employed others to work their land, 63% worked their own land, and the residual 23% obtained further land on a tenancy or sharecropping basis (sometimes both), as well as farming their own land. Over one quarter of those interviewed owned no land at all, obtaining access to land on either a sharecropping (22% of respondents), or tenancy basis (4% of respondents).

Every attempt was made to visit the districts and the households where fieldwork was conducted in previous years of this Study. However, whilst it was possible to visit the majority of the districts covered at the same time in the 2005/06 growing season, security was problematic in some areas of the country, limiting fieldwork to the most accessible (and secure) districts in some provinces. The analysis presented in this report is of course constrained by this bias. For example, much of northern Helmand continued to be off limits and fieldwork was only possible in the central districts, and even in these areas there were problems where there had been none in the 2005/06 growing season. For example, as opposed to previous years fieldworkers could not visit the district of Marjah. The road between Marjah and Nade e Ali was being patrolled by the Taliban and was considered too insecure even for surveyors from the province.

Indeed, in most of the districts of Helmand and Kandahar visited there was a deep suspicion of anyone who was not from the particular district in which fieldwork was being undertaken. The districts of Panjwai and Maiwand in Kandahar were particularly tense following fighting between the Taliban and Coalition Forces, and in Nad e Ali there was the perception that there was increasing levels of cooperation between the Taliban and village communities.

¹ The first report was conducted during the 2002/03 growing season for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The second was produced as a Technical Paper for the UNODC/ONDCP Second Technical Conference on Drug Control Research and covered the 2003/04 growing season. The third and fourth reports in the series were produced for the Afghan Drugs Inter Departmental Unit of the Government of the United Kingdom, the last of which is available on line at: [http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/FinalFinal2005DriversDocumentdm%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/FinalFinal2005DriversDocumentdm%20(2).pdf).

Security in the province of Farah had also taken a turn for the worse. In November 2006 the bus that fieldworkers were on en route from Grishk in Helmand was stopped and passengers were relieved of their cash, watches and mobiles. In July 2006 the same fieldworkers were shot at in Farah district when they failed to stop at a police check post to pay 'tax'. By December 2006 they were unable to visit the district of Gulistan due to insecurity and their mobility in Bala Bulok was also limited by Taliban incursions. Attempts to visit the district of Lash Wa Juwayn, where UNODC reported cultivation had fallen from 1,568 ha in 2004/05 to 215 ha in 2005/06 were also curtailed by the insecurity.

In eastern Afghanistan it was possible to revisit all the districts in which fieldwork had been conducted in 2005/06. However, in the district of Khogiani in the province of Nangarhar there were clear signs of increased tension. The district administrator, known as the woliswal, and the security commander had been killed in a bomb attack a month prior to fieldwork. An attempt had already been made on the life of the district administrator's replacement. Taliban tapes were being distributed in the area and there were reports of 'men with guns' being seen at night.

In the districts of Faizabad and Keshem in the province of Badakhshan security was on the whole unchanged. The district of Jurm was the exception where a number of robberies had occurred, including an armed robbery at the offices of a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) and the theft of the carpets from a local mosque. The atmosphere in the central bazaar was tense with many of the shopkeepers expressing increasing frustration over the local commanders who believed were behind the growing insecurity. Security in the provinces of Balkh and Ghor allowed fieldwork to be conducted in the same districts that were covered in the 2005/2006 growing season.

In total, 481 in-depth interviews were undertaken in twenty-three districts across nine provinces in which opium poppy is cultivated. Interviews were conducted during the winter planting season so as to generate a clearer understanding of the factors households considered when allocating their land to different crops. Undertaking fieldwork at this point in the agricultural calendar rather than prior to planting also allowed for a degree of verification of cultivation patterns.

The extent of planting differed by region and the different microclimates present. For the sample as a whole, 51% of land had already been planted with a winter crop at the time of interview. However, recognising the sequencing of planting dates, with opium poppy typically planted before wheat and other winter crops, the land already cultivated represented two thirds of the opium crop that those interviewed reported they would plant.

In the southern region four-fifths of household land had already been planted at the time of interview. This land represented 96% of the opium crop that those interviewed in Kandahar and Helmand reported that they would be cultivating this year. The proportion of land planted at the time of fieldwork in the provinces of Ghor and Badakhshan was far less than in the lower altitudinal areas in the south at only 23% and 37% of household land respectively. However, even in Badakhshan, where

opium poppy is also planted in spring, respondents claimed they had cultivated almost half the land they would be allocating to opium poppy this year. In Nangarhar province respondents claimed that they had planted 66% of the land they were going to allocate to a winter crop and 78% of this seasons opium poppy crop.

This report also draws on the examples given and stories that respondents told of events that were pertinent to their particular circumstances. These anecdotes (by their very nature), are not representative of the life stories of any one particular group, but instead are illustrative of the stresses and impacts of some of the changes currently underway in rural Afghanistan. These personal narratives represent the voices of Afghan farmers that are sometimes not heard in policy debates and discussions on opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.

Whilst any illicit economy presents fundamental research problems, the rural household continues to be the most accessible unit of analysis when looking at the opium economy in Afghanistan. Focusing on the household also provides a basis for cross-referencing findings and, drawing on research on the role of opium poppy in rural livelihood strategies in Afghanistan over the last decade,² tracing changes in the socio-economic, political and environmental processes that influence farmers in their decision to engage in illicit opium poppy cultivation. The same cannot be said for researching other aspects of the illicit economy, such as corruption, heroin production and trafficking (both internal and cross border), access to information on which is far more problematic and where there is currently little reliable comparative data, either quantitative or qualitative, to draw upon.

² See Annex 1 for bibliography.

3. DIVERGING TRENDS: A STORY OF RESURGENCE, REDUCTIONS AND CROP FAILURE

Key Findings

- *Described as a ‘success story’ in 2004/05 opium poppy cultivation has now returned to many districts in the province of Nangarhar. The resurgence in cultivation in the province is occurring in areas that have experienced two years of very low levels of opium poppy cultivation and where many households have had to sell off long-term productive assets, migrate and borrow to sustain themselves. Population densities in these areas are high. These are areas that have typically replaced opium poppy with wheat and have not diversified into other high value crops due to the absence of local purchasing power and market penetration.*
- *In the north-east increasing wage labour rates and falling opium prices have deterred planting. In some areas the production of high value vegetables, such as onion and potato can generate higher net returns than opium poppy. The recovery of livestock markets has also aided the balance in cropping patterns resulting in shift towards wheat and fodder crops. This process has been aided by a proactive counter narcotics effort in some areas.*
- *Reductions are also expected across the province of Balkh. Concerted efforts by the provincial and local authorities have been undertaken at a time when the economics of opium production are less attractive. There is the resounding perception amongst the local population that the authorities are in a position to enforce the law on the prohibition of opium poppy this year. There is also evidence of increasing diversification into high value crops in the central districts of Pul e Khumri and Baghlan in the province of Baghlan.*
- *In the central province of Ghor the failure of rainfed wheat in the 2005/06 growing season combined with particularly low opium yields and falling farmgate prices have constrained opium poppy cultivation. Better levels of precipitation in the 2006/07 planting season have led to increasing amounts of household land under cultivation but priority has been given to crops intended for household and livestock consumption.*

As in previous years the patterns of opium poppy cultivation are far from uniform across the provinces covered by this Study or indeed within the provinces in which the fieldwork was conducted. Whilst at the aggregate level it is possible to delineate changes in opium poppy cultivation over the last twelve months on the basis of potential reductions in cultivation in the northern provinces and increases in both the south and east this masks the diversity within the provinces themselves. Nor would such a geographical differentiation capture the qualitative nature of the changes that have taken place and how land previously cultivated with opium poppy or other crops is being used this season.

This section gives an overview of the shift in cropping patterns that has occurred amongst those interviewed for this Study and how these differ on an intra- and inter-province basis. It also begins to look at the explanations for changing cropping patterns within the provinces covered by fieldwork and how these differ between districts. It suggests that the overall outlook for the 2006/07 season is not positive given the predictions of increasing levels of cultivation in those provinces where opium poppy has typically been concentrated in the south and east, and the expectations of reductions in the northern and north eastern provinces, where levels of cultivation have typically only been around a quarter of the total hectareage.

3.1 Resurgence

3.1.1 Nangarhar

Levels of cultivation look likely to increase across much of the province of Nangarhar. After two consecutive years of relatively low levels of opium production, respondents in the districts of Khogiani, Chapahar and in lower Shinwar report that they will be cultivating the majority of their land with opium poppy this year. In the district of Achin, bordering Pakistan, and in Upper Shinwar, where the population returned to significant levels of opium poppy cultivation in the 2005/06 growing season, the amount of land allocated to the crop looks set to increase further.

Tensions were high in these areas. Respondents were clear that they were unwilling to endure a further ban on opium poppy cultivation, particularly given that other provinces that they perceived to be wealthier than them not only persisted with opium poppy cultivation, but increased levels of production. Whilst respondents' views on the Government of Afghanistan in these areas could be considered ambivalent, their attitude towards eradication was hostile. Many suggested that they would meet any eradication campaign with force and there were reports that a collective response to the provincial authority's request to communities not to plant opium poppy this year was being formulated on tribal grounds.

'In the past we cultivated poppy. We could afford to marry, do our Haj and help poor people. Now we borrow because we have not grown poppy for two years'. Upper Shinwar, Nangarhar.

The province of Nangarhar is known for its relatively small landholdings (an average of 9.2 jeribs among those interviewed) and high population densities (1.9 persons per jerib among those interviewed). Consequently, few households would be self-sufficient in wheat flour even if they were to monocrop wheat. To meet the deficit in income created by the significant reductions in opium poppy cultivation, households require crops and/or labour to sell. The data suggests that, in Chapahar, respondents have been relying on the latter, whilst in the districts of Khogiani and Shinwar a level of opium poppy cultivation has been maintained.

The data shows particularly low levels of horticulture and fodder crops being cultivated in the districts of Shinwar, Khogiani and Chapahar, even last year when opium poppy cultivation was relatively low. Households in these areas would seem to simply substitute opium poppy for wheat cultivation when required. Other crops occupy as little as 6% of cultivated land and seem to be largely for household consumption. In 2006/07 it appears that the land allocated to wheat last year will be rotated and the emphasis will be on opium poppy. A similarly small proportion of household land will be allocated to vegetable and fodder crops this year as it was in the 2005/06 growing season.

Table 1: Percentage of household land dedicated to different crops, in Nanagarhar and selected districts

	Wheat		Vegetables		Poppy		Fruit	
	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07
NANGARHAR	67	39	9	12	24	48	0	1
Achin	23	15	2	2	75	84	0	0
Chapahar	96	30	4	0	0	70	0	0
Khogiani	62	43	7	4	31	54	0	0
Shinwar	67	23	2	2	31	70	0	5
Surkhrud	79	64	20	34	1	2	0	0

Of the districts in Nangarhar covered by this fieldwork it is only in the district of Surkhrud that negligible levels of opium poppy cultivation look likely to be maintained.³ Surkhrud continues to benefit from its proximity to the provincial centre of Jalalabad where there is demand for agricultural produce and labour. Markets are reported to be functioning relatively well in the district of Surkhrud (and Behsud and Kama). Vegetable traders are mimicking many of the practices adopted by opium buyers, including purchasing the crop at the farm gate and offering advance payments. Consequently the costs of transportation and ‘facilitation fees’ are being met by traders from Jalalabad and Kabul rather than farmers themselves.

The market for onion in central Nangarhar seems to have defied expectations. The tendency for onion prices to collapse due to overproduction and the inflow of Pakistani produce has not materialised so far. The data collected by this Study suggest a sizeable increase in the average amount of household land allocated to horticulture and fodder crops, from 20% in 2005/06 to 34% in the 2006/07 growing season. Onion, okra and tomato are reported to have done particularly well in

³ Key informants report low levels of cultivation in the districts of Behsud and Kama as well.

2005/06 and there are reports of increasing levels of cultivation of these crops in the 2006/07 growing season.

3.1.2 Helmand and Kandahar

Cultivation looks set to increase in the southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar. Here, growing insecurity and opium poppy cultivation appear to go hand in hand. In Helmand the situation is particularly acute. Security, even in the central part of the province, precluded travel to Marjah, a district that has been covered in each of the four predecessors to this annual report.

There was a fairly consistent picture of increases in cultivation across the districts of Grishk, Nad e Ali and Nawa Barakzai. Of those cultivating opium poppy (all of those interviewed in these three districts, except two farmers in Grishk), 55% reported that they would increase the amount of land they allocated to opium poppy this year compared with the 2005/06 growing season; the rest reported they would maintain the same level of cultivation as the year prior. None reported they would reduce the amount of land they dedicated to the crop, including those that claimed their crop had been destroyed during the 2005/06 eradication campaigns. The result is respondents increased the average amount of household land they dedicated to opium poppy from four to five jeribs.

There are however signs of continued low levels of cultivation around the provincial centre. Indeed, none of those interviewed in the district of Lashkar Gah reported that they were cultivating opium poppy. Here, as in Surkhrud district adjacent to Jalalabad, it was reported that almost a third of land was allocated to vegetable and fodder crops. In fact, respondents in Lashkar Gah reported some of the most diverse cropping patterns compared to the sample as a whole. Almost all of those interviewed in the district cultivated water melon, three quarters cultivated tomato, two thirds cultivated cucumber and onion, and a third cultivated melon. The result being, of the average amount of household land cultivated, just over six jeribs were dedicated to high value vegetable crops.

Obviously the rather idiosyncratic nature of developments in vegetable production in Lashkar Gah tends to distort the provincial data. Whilst a larger proportion of larger average landholdings would appear to be allocated to vegetable crops amongst respondents in Helmand province than in Nangarhar, it is still less than 10% of the average landholdings of those interviewed in Grishk, Nad e Ali and Nawa Barakzai in 2006/07. This is despite the fact that each of these districts are adjacent to the provincial towns of Lashkar Gah and Grishk, in Helmand making them far more comparable with the district of Surkhrud in Nangarhar. It is likely that those districts some distance from the provincial centre in Helmand have an even higher proportion of household land allocated to opium poppy and lower levels of vegetable and fodder production. Indeed, if Lashkar Gah is excluded from the provincial data, the proportion of land allocated to opium poppy amongst respondents in Helmand is reported to increase from one quarter to one third of average household land.

The increase in the proportion of land allocated to opium poppy in the province of Kandahar this year would not appear to be as large as it is in Helmand. However, this may well be explained by the relatively large amounts of land allocated to opium poppy by respondents in the 2005/06 growing season. It is particularly notable that the amount of household land allocated to opium poppy in the Kandahar districts of Arghandab, Maiwand and Panjwai is so significant, at 48%, 64% and 56% respectively. The amount of land that respondents report that they intend to cultivate with wheat is particularly small given the relatively large size of landholdings (an average of 12.7 jeribs amongst those interviewed). However, the proportion of household land dedicated to fruit crops is also particularly high amongst respondents in Kandahar, ranging from 13% in the district of Maiwand to 33% in Arghandab. This is broadly consistent with the results of last years Study, where an average of 23% of the landholdings of those interviewed in Kandahar in 2005/06 was allocated to fruit crops.⁴

The exception to the trend in increasing levels of opium poppy cultivation in the province of Kandahar is, as in other provinces, the district located in closest proximity to the provincial centre, the district of Dand. Respondents in Dand report significant reductions in the proportion of land allocated to opium poppy, falling from 46% in 2005/06 to 10% in the 2006/07 growing season. Those interviewed in this district also report the largest proportion of household land dedicated to vegetable and fodder crops at 39% of household land (up from 11% in the 2005/06 growing season) and one of the highest incidences of eradication, with 66% of those interviewed reporting the loss of their crop in 2006. In this district reductions in opium poppy over the last twelve months would appear to be offset by a significant increase in vegetable production and the cultivation of more land with wheat.

Table 2: Percentage of household land dedicated to different crops, in Helmand and Kandahar and selected districts

	Wheat		Vegetables		Poppy		Fruit	
	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07
HELMAND	63	61	18	15	19	24	1	1
Grishk	65	61	12	10	21	27	2	2
Lashkar Gah	70	68	30	32	0	0	0	0
Nad e Ali	51	50	12	7	31	47	0	0
Nawa	57	57	12	7	31	36	0	0
KANDAHAR	18	12	5	14	54	54	24	21
Arghandab	9	8	9	12	47	48	35	33
Dand	22	30	11	39	46	10	21	21
Maiwand	23	11	4	12	62	64	12	13
Panjwai	18	12	1	15	54	56	25	18

⁴ Mansfield, David (2006). "Exploring the 'Shades of Grey': An Assessment of the Factors Influencing Decisions to Cultivate Opium Poppy in 2005/06." A Report for the Afghan Drugs Inter Departmental Unit of the UK Government (February).

3.2. Reductions

3.2.1 Balkh and Baghlan

Both economics and the government seem to have turned against opium poppy in Balkh and Baghlan. At the time of fieldwork the price in the province of Balkh was as low as US\$60/kg and US\$60-80/kg in Baghlan.⁵ This compares with US\$100/kg in Helmand and Kandahar, and US\$193/kg (but falling rapidly) in Nangarhar. Each of the northern provinces had experienced poor yields last winter season and complained of particularly high wage labour rates during the harvest season.

For example, in the district of Anderab in Baghlan it was reported that high ground water led to weeds, high moisture content and low yields. Combined with wage labour rates for itinerant harvesters of up to one half of the final crop for those with the requisite skills⁶ the net returns on opium poppy were less attractive than they had been: *'we work hard all year and yet it is those that work only a short time that gets the crop'*. In the districts nearest the provincial centre, Baghlan and Pul e Khumri, high-value vegetable production has the potential to generate higher returns than opium poppy cultivation. There, the asphalt road has brought access to markets in Kabul and Mazar, stimulating vegetable production.

It is reported that the provincial and local governments in the province of Balkh were more active in trying to deter cultivation. Respondents in the districts of Balkh, Chemtal and Chahar Bolak were more reticent about admitting to cultivating opium poppy, compared to previous years. In the district of Charhar Bolak there were also reports of a concerted effort by local officials to reduce planting. In contrast to Helmand and Kandahar, officials and sometimes the Governors in the northern provinces were reported to travel to the districts to convey these messages; reinforcing the message that the government's writ extends beyond the provincial and district

Table 3: Percentage of household land dedicated to different crops, in Baghlan and Balkh and selected districts

	Wheat		Vegetables		Poppy		Fruit	
	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07
BAGHLAN	67	60	30	37	4	3	0	0
Anderab	65	73	15	16	21	11	0	0
Baghlan	74	59	26	40	0	0	0	0
Pul e Kumri	51	43	49	57	0	0	0	0
Tala Wa Barfak	84	85	8	10	8	6	0	0
BALKH	57	62	40	37	2	0	0	0
Balkh	49	56	48	42	1	0	1	1
Charbolak	56	68	42	32	2	0	0	0
Chemtal	60	64	36	36	4	0	0	0
Shulgara	67	56	32	44	0	0	1	0

centres. In Sholgara district it was reported that one of the key leaders of the area linked with the Government of Afghanistan had been active in dissuading the local population from planting opium poppy. Only one respondent of the fifty-eight interviewed in Balkh province reported that he would be cultivating opium poppy this coming season.

According to respondents in the district of Anderab (Baghlan province) much of the land cultivated with opium poppy in the 2005/06 growing season will have wheat grown on it this year. These contrasts markedly with the reports of those interviewed in the districts of Pul e Kumri and Baghlan. Respondents in these two districts report that they did not cultivate opium poppy in either the 2005/06 growing season and nor do they intend to in 2006/07. They also report they will be further increasing the proportion of land they allocate to vegetable and fodder crops and reducing their levels of wheat cultivation in the coming year. The amount of land dedicated to wheat, vegetables and fruit crops in the district of Tala Wa Barfak remain relatively unchanged across the two seasons.

Amongst those interviewed in Balkh, there would appear to be a reduction in both opium poppy and vegetable and fodder production and an increase in wheat cultivation. Indeed, 93% of those interviewed either intended to maintain the same level of wheat cultivation in 2006/07 as they cultivated in 2005/06 or wanted to increase the amount of land they allocated to the crop. Only four of those interviewed in Balkh anticipated reducing the amount of land they planted with wheat this growing season, three of whom reported that they had less land to cultivate in 2006/07 compared with 2005/06.

3.2.2 Badakhshan

In the province of Badakhshan wheat remains the dominant crop occupying the largest proportion of average household land of any province covered by this fieldwork except Ghor. Reports suggest that the price of both wheat grain and wheat straw was relatively high during the planting season at 110 to 130 Afs⁷ per seer⁸ (US\$2.2 to US\$ 2.8) and that the recovery of the livestock numbers has increased both the use and exchange value of the crop. Falling opium prices, lower than average yields and high wage labour rates have deterred opium poppy cultivation in some parts of Badakhshan. Frost in the spring combined with unseasonal rains during the harvest season led to crop damage and in some places complete failure.

In the district of Baharak in Badakhshan, en route to Jurm, posters against opium poppy cultivation could be seen (although there are issues around the target audiences understanding of these) and early eradication, using tractors, was being undertaken under the auspices of the Afghan Eradication Force. This force subsequently moved into the district of Jurm after the fieldwork had been completed.

⁷ At the time of fieldwork, the exchange rate was 50 Afghanis per US\$1.

⁸ One Kabuli Seer, is a unit of measure used in Badakhshan and other parts of the country. It is the equivalent of seven kilogrammes. In the province of Nangarhar one seer of opium is the equivalent of 1.25 kilogrammes.

Amongst those interviewed for this Study, levels of opium poppy cultivation were reported as relatively static. This is despite the fact that 17% of those that cultivated opium poppy in the 2005/06 growing season reporting that they would not cultivate the crop this year. Of those that abandoned the crop this growing season half had lost their crop to eradication in 2006, and two of them claimed their crop had been destroyed every year of the last four. A further four respondents reported that they would reduce the amount of land they allocated to opium poppy in comparison to 2005/06, citing a shortage of unpaid family labour and the threat of eradication as the reasons.

In contrast to this, eight respondents reported that they would increase the amount of opium poppy they would grow in 2006/07: two more than doubling their crop and one increasing the amount of land he allocated to opium poppy from three jeribs in 2005/06 to thirteen jeribs in 2006/07. Two of those who were increasing cultivation this year, both in Jurm, claimed their crop had been eradicated in the 2004/05 and the 2005/06 growing seasons. A further respondent in Kishim had moved from cultivating all 2.5 jeribs of his land with potato in 2005/06 to cultivating only one jerib of potato and 1.5 jeribs of opium poppy in the 2006/07 growing season. This shift in cropping patterns was attributed to low potato yields due to disease.

Amongst those interviewed in Kishim there seems to be an increase in the amount of land allocated to high-value horticulture. Potato and onion seem to be particularly popular, with two thirds of those interviewed cultivating these crops. In other parts of Badakhshan, fieldwork has shown that the net return on these two crops is potentially higher than for opium poppy this season.⁹ In Faizabad, there is a much lower incidence of vegetable cultivation amongst those interviewed. Instead, fodder crops such as flax, alfalfa, patak and ghamu are cultivated, although almost half of those interviewed also reported cultivating marijuana. In Jurm, only one respondent cultivated onion and another cultivated potato. All but two of those interviewed cultivated less than half of their land with wheat, a further two monocropped it. None of those interviewed in the district of Jurm reported that they had a member of the family earning wage labour.

Table 4: Percentage of household land dedicated to different crops, in Badakhshan and selected districts

	Wheat		Vegetables		Poppy		Fruit	
	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07
BADAKHSHAN	73	70	16	18	12	12	0	0
Jurm	73	68	10	9	18	21	0	0
Faizabad	71	69	19	22	10	10	0	0
Kishim	77	75	17	19	6	5	0	0

⁹ See Mansfield, David (2007) 'Governance, Security and Economic Growth: The Determinants of Opium Poppy Cultivation in the Districts of Jurm and Baharak in Badakhshan' A report for the Aga Khan Development Network. February.

3.2.3 Laghman

Low levels of cultivation will be largely maintained in Laghman although there will be some increases in the district of Alingar. The vibrancy of the vegetable market in Qarghai, Mehtarlam and Alishang is seen as the major reason for opium poppy not returning to the area. Respondents in all three districts report that, on average, they allocate more than one third of their total landholdings to vegetable and fodder production.

Those interviewed in Laghman also believed there has been an increase in the amount of development assistance flowing into the area, much of it focusing on income generation as well as infrastructure. Improvements in the road have reduced the travel time to Kabul markets where produce can now be transported direct. There are also reports of vegetable traders providing improved seed and establishing collection centres in villages at which farmers can sell their harvest on a daily basis. Farmers cultivating gandoneh¹⁰, cucumber, onion and okra are all obtaining good returns.

Those that did report that they would be cultivating opium poppy in the coming season were all located in the district of Alishang. In this area landholdings are broadly the same as those interviewed in the other districts of Laghman, at around 7.5 jeribs. All reported that their crops had been affected by low precipitation last year and that they would be increasing their level of opium poppy cultivation to make up for the food and cash deficit. All but one had accumulated debts ranging from a minimum of 15,000 Afs (US\$300) to a maximum of 120,000 Afs (US\$ 2,400). All of them were increasing the amount of land they dedicated to opium poppy in comparison to the 2005/06 growing season and all of them anticipated paying off their debts with the proceeds from their crop within the next twelve months. Amongst this group cultivation of vegetables was rare.

None of those interviewed in Alingar, and in particular none of those who claimed that they would be cultivating opium poppy this season, reported that they cultivated the array of crops grown by respondents in Mehtarlam, Qarghai and Alingar. Typically in Alingar respondents cultivated alfalfa as fodder for their animals and a few grew onions for commercial purposes (but none of them more than one jerib).

¹⁰ Gandoneh is a perennial alium cut like chives. It is often inaccurately translated as leek. In this report it is referred to by its Afghan name. (Anthony Fitzherbert: personal communication).

Table 5: Percentage of household land dedicated to different crops, in Laghman and selected districts

	Wheat		Vegetables		Poppy		Fruit	
	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07
LAGHMAN	65	62	32	33	2	5	1	1
Alingar	78	69	10	8	9	20	3	3
Alishang	64	62	36	38	0	0	0	0
Mehtarlam	69	65	31	35	0	0	0	0
Qarghai	50	50	49	49	0	0	1	1

3.2.4 Farah

On the whole, respondents in the province of Farah reported marginally lower levels of opium poppy cultivation in the 2006/07 growing season compared to 2005/06. This was due to the lower levels of opium poppy cultivation reported in the districts of Pusht Rud and Farah offsetting the increases reported by respondents in Bala Bulok.

Reductions in cultivation were typically attributed to lower than average opium yields in the 2005/06 growing season, the increase in wage labour rates and falling opium prices. At the time of planting it was reported that the price of opium was around 5,500 Afs (US\$ 110) per kilogramme. It was also claimed that wage labour rates during the previous harvest had risen from one seventh or one eighth of the final yield to one quarter. In the west, both falling prices and higher wages were largely attributed to the increase in the level of cultivation in the southern province of Helmand, although it was also suggested that low yields last season had strengthened the negotiating position of itinerant harvesters looking for a greater share of what was a smaller total crop.

There was a general feeling that even in the districts of Farah and Pusht Rud, in close proximity to the provincial centres, viable economic alternatives were not in place. It was certainly the case that much of the land not cultivated with opium poppy or wheat was typically dedicated to barley and fodder crops such as alfalfa rather than high-value vegetables, suggesting the market for horticultural crops is limited. Whilst there is some evidence of the cultivation of cucumber in the district of Farah, it is nominal, and in Pusht Rud there was only one respondent cultivating vegetable for commercial purposes.

The availability of irrigation water clearly acts as a constraint on the production of horticultural crops. Indeed, 91% of those interviewed in Farah reported that low levels of precipitation had affected their crop, 70% of which suggested this would increase the pressure to cultivate opium poppy. This was particularly so in those areas where there was a heavy reliance on tubewells¹¹ as a source of irrigation. In these areas there

¹¹ A device installed into a well to extract ground water from an aquifer. A well is first drilled into the ground and then a pipe assembly is lowered which consists of an intake section and a discharge section.

was a general consensus that only opium poppy could meet the costs of running and maintaining a tubewell.

It was reported that in the light of the pressure to reduce opium poppy cultivation and the natural constraints on legal agricultural production there is an increasing reliance on migration to Iran as an income generating activity in Pusht Rud and Farah. Indeed, in the districts of Pusht Rud and Farah it was reported that there were much higher rates of migration with 80% of those interviewed claiming that at least one member of their household was working in Iran compared to 40% in Bala Bulok where opium poppy cultivation continues unabated.

In Bala Bulok the only constraint on more extensive cultivation was the small size of landholdings. With an average of 7 jeribs for those interviewed in Bala Bulok and a population density of 2.5 persons per jerib, cultivated land is certainly a significant constraint.

	Wheat		Vegetables		Poppy		Fruit	
	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07
FARAH	54	49	23	30	23	21	0	0
Farah	63	60	23	32	15	9	0	0
Pusht Rud	59	50	23	36	18	15	0	0
Bala Bulok	38	34	23	17	39	49	0	0

3.3. Crop Failure

3.3.1 Ghor

There was widespread crop failure in Ghor in the 2005/06 growing season. Rainfed wheat fared particularly badly and, according to most respondents, yielded less wheat grain than was initially planted. Low precipitation, and infestations of mice and locusts were to blame. The opium crop was also poor, with low precipitation and disease regarded as the causes. Yields of less than one kilogramme of opium per jerib were not uncommon. Some plots were simply left as fodder for livestock.. The lack of crop rotation, and poor plant husbandry also contributed.¹²

The effects of low opium yields were exacerbated by a fall in opium prices attributed to overproduction in the southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar. By planting season there had been some recovery in prices at around 4,800 Afs (US\$ 96) per

The intake section consists of a slotted part, the well screen, and a blind pipe. The discharge section consists of housing pipe, pump and discharge mouth or sprout.

¹² Mansfield, David (2006) Opium poppy cultivation in the provinces of Nangarhar and Ghor' A report for AREU/EU's Applied Thematic Research into Water Management, Livestock and the Opium Economy. AREU, Kabul. December.

kilogramme (up from 4,000 Afs (US\$ 80) per kilogramme in July) but it did little to encourage opium poppy cultivation.

In 2006/07 improved levels of precipitation during the planting season for the winter crop allowed for more land to be brought under cultivation. There was little desire to increase the level of opium poppy cultivation. Typically this extra land was to be used for wheat and fodder crops whilst levels of opium poppy cultivation would be kept constant. Indeed, three quarters of those that reported that they would be cultivating opium poppy in the 2006/07 growing season claimed that they would be cultivating exactly the same amount of opium poppy as they did the year before.

Table 7: Percentage of household land dedicated to different crops, in Ghor and selected districts

	Wheat		Vegetables		Poppy		Fruit	
	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07
GHOR	81	83	10	9	8	7	2	2
Dawlatyar	74	75	11	10	15	16	0	0
Chaghcharan	82	83	8	8	10	9	0	0
Sharak	83	88	11	9	2	0	4	4

4. THE DISTRIBUTION OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings

- *In the eastern region negligible levels of cultivation are likely to be sustained in those districts adjacent to the provincial centre in the provinces of Nangarhar and Laghman. Even in the southern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand reductions in cultivation can be expected in areas in close proximity to the provincial centre where households have access to both agricultural commodity and labour markets and where the writ of the government can be maintained. In these areas there is evidence of greater diversification in cropping systems and a shift to high value horticultural production. In these areas vegetable traders are mimicking many of the advantages of the opium trade, offering advances, purchasing at the farmgate and absorbing transportation and transaction costs. The same pattern of trade can be seen in many of the provinces in which opium poppy is cultivated.*
- *The returns on opium poppy are not unassailable. In some areas complex intercropping systems can generate higher incomes, particularly where combined with non farm income opportunities. Moreover, it is likely that the net returns on opium poppy cultivation will continue to fall. High wage labour rates for itinerant harvesters and falling farmgate prices will further diminish the crops profitability in the east and south. With the onset of the harvest farmgate prices in Nangarhar are the lowest that they have been for a decade. Combined with high levels of cultivation in Helmand it is likely that prices will fall even further.*
- *These legal income opportunities are, however, not open to all. In many area farmers find their access to agricultural commodity and labour markets constrained by high transport costs, poor road, the imposition of taxes and bribes, and environmental factors. For example, in the southern region increasing levels of cultivation are to be anticipated in those areas in which heightened insecurity is impinging on agricultural and labour markets. In such a high-risk environment it is rationale to cultivate a low risk crop like opium poppy. In these areas (as elsewhere) corruption and insecurity is reducing the margins on legal goods and restricting crop diversification even in areas relatively close to the provincial centre.*
- *It is typically the resource poor that monocrop opium poppy. They have particularly small landholdings, large families and particularly high accumulated debts. These households are typically located some distance from provincial centres. This group has a limited choice of alternatives to opium poppy cultivation.*

It is clear that there are diverging trends in opium poppy cultivation this year, as there are almost every year. Disaggregating data and analysing trends at the level of the province (and its constituent parts) clearly has its role given the administrative units that make up the Afghan state. However, given that provincial and district authorities typically can often only extend their writ over those districts in close proximity and are compelled to compromise with, or even abandon, those areas that are more remote or are inhabited by opposing political factions, perhaps it is of greater interest to disaggregate data not by the political boundaries on a map but those on the ground.

The quantitative and qualitative data obtained from this Study supports the assertion that areas near the provincial centre have access to economic opportunities that in some instances are simply not available to neighbouring districts, let alone more remote areas. In some provinces, such as Helmand, locations that are benefiting from increased economic opportunities might be small in area, not even covering an entire district. In other provinces it is possible to see diversification in cropping patterns and increased wage labour opportunities across a number of districts.

This section explores some of the constituent parts of livelihoods strategies, in particular crop production and wage labour opportunities, and how these vary according to location within provinces. It looks at the qualitative nature of change in cropping patterns amongst those that move in and out of opium production, as well as those that cultivate a range of different crops and those that monocrop opium poppy. By doing so it questions just how sustainable some of the changes we are seeing in cropping patterns might be.

Table 8: Percentage of household land dedicated to different crops for all provinces								
	Wheat		Vegetables		Poppy		Fruit	
	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07
ALL	60	55	23	25	15	18	3	3
BADAKHSHAN	73	70	16	18	12	12	0	0
BAGHLAN	67	60	30	37	4	3	0	0
BALKH	57	62	40	37	2	0	0	0
FARAH	54	49	23	30	23	21	0	0
GHOR	81	83	10	9	8	7	2	2
HELMAND	63	61	18	15	19	24	1	1
LAGHMAN	65	62	32	33	2	5	1	1
KANDAHAR	18	12	5	14	54	54	24	21
NANGARHAR	67	39	9	12	24	48	0	1

4.1 ‘The Haves’: Diversifying Livelihood Strategies

In Afghanistan the majority of households do not produce sufficient wheat flour to meet their basic food requirements even if they cultivated wheat on all their land.

Land holdings are typically too small, household members too numerous and wheat yields too low. Consequently, households produce a few crops that will satisfy a proportion of their direct food requirements (and that of their livestock), typically wheat and small amount of vegetables and fodder for household consumption, as well as a source of cash income so that they can purchase the items that are needed to meet their basic needs. Typically, cash income is derived from producing crops for market and/or the sale of labour, which could be off-farm and/or non-farm.

Those households that are considered less vulnerable to shocks and crises such as crop or market failure, illness within the family, or unemployment would be those that can draw on a range of different income streams. Diversity in the number and types of crops cultivated for sale can provide a cushion against such shocks and suggests that agricultural markets are functioning in a given area. Those that only have a single cash crop, even if it is one that is considered relatively lucrative like opium poppy, can experience significant shortfalls in income, problems in securing loans, in-cash or in-kind, and restricted access to other assets, such as land, if that crop fails, is prohibited or there is a downturn in price.

Amongst those interviewed for this Study there was a wide range of different crops cultivated. In total, twenty-two different vegetable and fodder crops were reported by respondents, not including wheat, opium poppy and fruit crops. However, the degree of diversity in cropping patterns differed considerably between and within provinces. For example, the districts of Baghlan and Pul e Khumri in Baghlan province had some of the most diverse cropping patterns, with respondents typically cultivating five or six vegetable and fodder crops as well as wheat. It is suggested that growth has been stimulated by the improvements to the Kabul to Mazar road. A range of crops including melon, water melon, onion, squash, carrot, tomato and okra are all exported from these two districts to the markets in both Kabul and Mazar, as well as Faizabad in Badakhshan.

However, in the districts of Anderab and Tala War Barfak in Baghlan province there are typically far fewer crops cultivated. For example, in the district of Tala Wa Barfak less than a third of those interviewed cultivated vegetables, and where they did it was typically only potato. Other crops grown were generally fodder crops such as alfalfa and barley. The variety of crops cultivated in the more accessible districts of Baghlan and Pul e Khumri were not found on the land of those interviewed for this Study.

'I have thirty jeribs of land. Last year I cultivated four jeribs of onions. The remaining part of my land I cultivated with wheat and a small part with clover. I got 1,600 seer per jerib of onion and sold at harvest time for 100 Pakistani Rupee (PR) per seer., a total of 160,000 PR. I bought a car with the money. This year I will cultivate more onion, perhaps fifteen jeribs. My neighbour when he saw how well I had done said he would grow all his land with onion but he only has one jerib'.
Surkhrud district, Nangarhar.

'Last year I only cultivated Gandoneh. From one and a half jeribs of land I have to feed eleven family members and only two of us work. I have a car. I sell my crop in Kabul market. It is only a two and a half hours drive. One jerib of Gandoneh gives a yield of one hundred seers. The price of Gandoneh in Qarghai is 30 PR per seer but in summer in Kabul I can get 40 PR to 50 PR per seer and in winter 80 PR to 100 PR per seer'.
Qarghai district, Laghman.

The same pattern was seen across all the provinces in which fieldwork was conducted. Those respondents that resided in districts closest to the district centre cultivate the widest range of crops. The districts of Pul e Khumri, Baghlan, Faizabad, Kishim and Lashkar Gah were found to cultivate the widest array of crops of all the districts covered. Indeed, even in the provincial centre of Helmand respondents reported diversifying their cropping patterns, cultivating crops such as cucumber, potato, onion, tomato, melon and water melon for sale in the provincial market.

The lowest incidence of crop diversification occurred in the districts of Shinwar, Achin, Chapahar and Khogiani (Nangarhar province), Bala Bulok (Farah), Nad e Ali (Helmand), Tala Wa Barfak (Baghlan) and Kandahar Arghandab, Maiwand and Panjwai (Kandahar). Apart from in the district of Tala Wa Barfak these were the only districts in which, on average, at least half of the household land of respondents was cultivated with opium poppy in 2006/07.

In those districts where a wide array of crops are grown the market for high-value vegetable crops is reported to be thriving. In the districts of Pul e Khumri and Baghlan it is reported that traders pay advances on onion and potato a few days before harvest of up to half of the value of the crop. They provide the bags for packing and purchase direct at the farmgate. The same practice for potato and onion, as well as some other crops, is reported in the district of Surkhrud in Nangarhar, Kishim and Baharak in Badakhshan, as well as Qarghai and Mehtarlam in the province of Laghman.

Respondents also report that a number of crops they are growing are receiving good prices. In the district of Surkhrud onion, okra and tomato were reported to generate good returns, particularly when the low labour input is factored in. In Balkh district, melon and water melon were perceived as crops that obtained a good price. In the districts of Qarghai and Mehtarlam in the province of Laghman, okra not only offered a steady flow of income due to its multiple harvests but traders set up buying stations in the villages, thereby eliminating the transportation costs incurred by the farmer. This contrasts markedly with the situation in the district of Farah where it was reported that farmers were responsible for transporting goods to market themselves.

In the district of Kishim in Badakhshan, onion and potato were well favoured. Fieldwork in the district of Baharak, neighbouring Jurm, conducted at the time of the winter planting

‘During the harvest season for okra, buyers set up a station in this village and buy the crop everyday. At planting time they bring good quality seed and distribute it to the farmers. The seed is given as an advance and it is repaid at harvest time. No interest is charged. It costs 200 PR (US\$ 4) per kilogramme. Between five and seven kilogrammes of seed are required per jerib. The harvest for okra is between June and October. During this period the price of okra varies from 30 PR to 100 PR per seer.’ **Qarghai district, Laghman.**

‘I cultivated half a jerib of okra last year and got a yield of five seers a week for a thirteen week period. I transported the crop to the centre of Farah at a cost of 10 Afs per seer. I sold it for only 20 Afs a seer in the market leaving only ten Afs a seer profit after transport costs. I have not even included the cost of diesel for the tubewell.’ **Farah district, Farah.**

season, suggested that the net returns on each of these crops had the potential to be higher than that for opium poppy, particularly for those that relied on hiring wage labour during the harvest season for opium poppy. Intercropping these plants with others, as we have seen in Surkhrud, Behsud and Kama in Nangarhar over the last few years, has the potential to generate even higher net returns.

Even in the south respondents talked of the high returns that were achievable for particular commodities. For example, the district of Arghandab is well known for its fruit, including grapes, peaches, apricots and pomegranates. Respondents reported gross revenues of between 20,000 (US\$ 333) and 30,000 PR (US\$ 500) per jerib of pomegranates. They also reported that those purchasing the crop incurred the labour costs of picking the fruit and often offered advance payments on the future crop. In the district of Dand, high-value vegetable crops were being cultivated to meet the demand in the city of Kandahar. Cucumber, onion, potato and green vegetables were cultivated by a number of those interviewed. There were also reports of some farmers cultivating off-season vegetables, including tomato and egg-plants, as a way of increasing the returns on their land.

'Black cumin'¹³ is also cited as a crop that is being cultivated in increasing amounts in the province of Kandahar, particularly in the district of Arghandab. Gross returns are high, with respondents claiming 60 maund¹⁴ (270 kg) of black cumin per jerib and prices of 2,000 PR (US\$ 33) per maund.¹⁵ However, there is a three year period prior to the crop yielding. To ensure some revenue is generated prior to the third year, the black cumin is typically intercropped with other crops. In those areas nearest Kandahar city, wheat is cultivated amidst it for the first two years, after which the land is exclusively dedicated to the black cumin. In more remote areas opium poppy is intercropped with the black cumin.

However, being located near a provincial centre does not just offer a market for the sale of agricultural crops, it also provides wage labour opportunities. For example, respondents in Arghandab and Dand reported travelling into Kandahar city to find employment at a rate of around 200 PR (US\$ 3.3) per day. In the district of Surkhrud, Nangarhar there were not only jobs in the city of Jalalabad but in the district itself making bricks.

Whilst those in other districts can also travel to the provincial centre in search of employment they are often constrained by distance and transport costs. This makes daily travel impossible, and temporary or seasonal

'There are four families using this one brick kiln. We took a loan of 100,000 PR four years ago. We agreed that every year we should repay the owner of the kiln 20,000 PR so that after five years we will repay the loan. We also agreed that we would not work for anyone else, just the owner of the factory. We are paid 170 PR for every 1,000 bricks we produce. We get paid at the end of each week. We produce 1,000 to 1,200 bricks per day on average and in summer 2,000 bricks.'
Surkhrud district, Nangarhar.

¹³ What is referred to as 'Black cumin' is actually *Nigella Sativa*.

¹⁴ A maund is a unit of measure typically used in the southern region of Afghanistan. It is the equivalent of 4.5 kilogrammes.

¹⁵ It is also reported that the crop can be sold as plants after two years, fetching between 40,000 (US\$ 667) and 50,000 PR (US\$ 833) per jerib.

relocation to the city a must. However, few wish to be away from their families and some might find it particularly difficult to do so if there are not sufficient men in the household to stay behind to look after the women and children during these absences. Typically there is a preference for remaining with the family, and in particular residing in the family compound at night. This, combined with better access to social networks in the city (due to proximity and perhaps even relatives working there), gives those farmers residing in areas adjacent to the provincial centre a distinct advantage in finding work.

4.2 'The Have Nots': Migration, The Return To Opium Poppy Cultivation And Monocropping

4.2.1 Migration

Where high-value vegetable production is constrained by the environment or distance to the markets, the sale of livestock (and its by-products) and labour is often used as a source of income. Unfortunately for those in Ghor, livestock prices have fallen following the failure of both the rainfed wheat crop and opium production last year. The former has resulted in increasing the cost of winter fodder, the latter a shortage of cash income: both have resulted in a reported increase in livestock sales. In the province of Badakhshan, it is reported that livestock prices have increased, and for those who have had restocked their herds (typically the relatively wealthy and often with the proceeds of opium poppy cultivation) this has increased the use and exchange value of wheat and fodder crops and in turn reduced levels of opium poppy cultivation.¹⁶

'I only got a visa for one month. It cost 25,000 Afs (US\$ 500) for both the visa and the passport. I got a loan to pay for it. I went to Iran six weeks ago and got a job through a 'Takadar' (building contractor). After working for him for one month I went for my money. I was owed 85,000 Afs (US\$ 1,700). But when I went to collect my money I was arrested by the police and sent back to Afghanistan. I believe it was the Takadar who told the police my visa had expired so he did not have to pay me.'
Chaghcharan District, Ghor

For those who have neither sufficient cash crops nor livestock, non-farm income has been an important part of rural livelihood strategies.¹⁷ In areas where there are limited employment opportunities locally this can often mean migration. In the provinces of Ghor, Farah and Badakhshan migration to Iran continues to be an important source of cash income. In Baghlan and Nangarhar, Pakistan is the usual destination for migrant workers who cannot find sufficient work locally.

¹⁶ Mansfield, David (2007) 'Governance, Security and Economic Growth: The Determinants of Opium Poppy Cultivation in the Districts of Jurm and Baharak in Badakhshan' A report for the Aga Khan Development Network. February.

¹⁷ Grace, Jo and Adam Pain (2004). 'Rethinking Rural Livelihoods in Afghanistan'. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.

In the past, residing in a poppy growing area has typically been correlated with low levels of migration.¹⁸ However, when levels of production have fallen significantly, levels of migration have increased. This has been witnessed in parts of Nangarhar following the implementation of the opium ban in 2005 and 2006, as well as in Ghor in 2006 following crop failure.¹⁹ In Nangarhar, in many of the districts where rates of migration were seen to increase, such as Shinwar and Chapahar, opium poppy was simply replaced with wheat, a crop with low labour demands, leaving whatever surplus household labour there was free to travel in search of employment.

In the province of Farah it is reported that there are far higher rates of migration to Iran from the districts of Farah and Pusht Rud than in Bala Bulok, where opium poppy cultivation continues. In these areas it would seem that, despite their proximity to the provincial centre, there are constraints on the production and sale of high-value horticulture that makes migration the more viable option for many households. Proximity to Iran and cross-border ethnic and economic links clearly helps.

However, migration is not without its costs and risks.²⁰ There are increasing reports that the Iranian authorities are imposing restrictions on Afghan workers. For those going legally there are reports that the authorities are limiting the duration of visits. For those travelling illegally or staying beyond their visa there is the perception that the Iranian authorities are more vigilant. In Farah respondents also seemed concerned that regardless of how migrants travelled to Iran, officially or unofficially, there was the risk of theft on their return. In Nangarhar, there are reports that those returning to Pakistan may be radicalised, not only by their perception that their expectations have not been met in Afghanistan, but also by Anti Government Elements on their return to Peshawar and other border areas.

4.2.2 Moving In And Out Of Opium Poppy Cultivation

Of course there are other livelihood options beyond high-value vegetable production, the sale of livestock and migration. One is to take up opium poppy cultivation. Of those interviewed, 6% claimed they had taken up opium poppy cultivation in the 2006/07 growing season. This compares with 8% of those interviewed that reported they had cultivated opium poppy in the 2005/06 growing season and abandoned it in 2006/07.

It is interesting to look at the differences between these two groups as a way of understanding some of the motivations that lay behind those decisions. Of the 27

¹⁸ Negar Ghobadi, Johannes Koett, and Renos Vakis Moving out of poverty: migration insights from rural Afghanistan. January 2005.

¹⁹ See Mansfield, David (2006) Opium poppy cultivation in the provinces of Nangarhar and Ghor' A report for AREU's Applied Thematic Research into Water Management, Livestock and the Opium Economy. AREU, Kabul. December. Mansfield, David (2005a). "Pariah or Poverty?: The Opium Ban in the Province of Nangarhar in the 2004-05 Growing Season and Its Impact on Rural Livelihood Strategies." GTZ Project for Alternative Livelihoods in Eastern Afghanistan: Internal Document No. 11.

²⁰ Alessandro Monsutti (2006) Afghan Transnational Networks: Looking Beyond Repatriation. AREU, Kabul.

respondents that had not cultivated opium in the 2005/06 growing season but had taken it up in 2006/07, three quarters were from the province of Nangarhar. The others were scattered across the provinces of Ghor (Chaghcharan and DawlatYar), Farah (Pushtrud), Laghman (Alingar), Baghlan (Anderab) and Badakhshan (Kishim).

Accumulated debts amongst this group were far higher than amongst those that abandoned opium poppy cultivation in 2006/07, and land holdings were also almost three times smaller (see Table 10). Those that claimed that they had taken up opium poppy cultivation in the 2006/07 growing season also reported that they had less diverse cropping patterns, cultivating on average 93% of their land with wheat and only 7% of the land with other vegetable or fodder crops in the 2005/06 growing season.

Indeed, 70% of those that reported that they had taken-up opium poppy in 2006/07 mono-cropped wheat in 2005/06. The rest cultivated at least two thirds of their land with wheat, leaving a maximum of a jerib of land for vegetable crops like potato or onion. Their return to opium poppy was significant, from zero cultivation in 2005/06 to 56% of their total cultivated land allocated to the crop in 2006/07. Typically these households had simply replaced last year's wheat cultivation for opium poppy in 2006/07.

This situation contrasts markedly with those that claim they have abandoned opium poppy in 2006/07. This group claimed that they had only cultivated 11% of their land with opium poppy the previous year. They too exchanged wheat and opium poppy, although on this occasion substituted the land they had allocated to opium production in 2005/06 with wheat in 2006/07.

In contrast to those that had taken up opium poppy cultivation in 2006/07 those that abandoned the crop reported that they had cultivated on average 29% of their land with vegetable and fodder crops in the 2005/06 growing season and 59% of their land with wheat. Of these, one third had cultivated onion, one fifth tomatoes, one quarter alfalfa, and one fifth planted barley, amongst a range of other crops. In total, between them this group cultivated eleven different crops as well as wheat and orchards. One third of this group had allocated more than half their land to vegetable and fodder crops.

One respondent in the district of Faizabad in Badakhshan reported that he was cultivating eight different crops in 2006/07, including wheat, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, okra, alfalfa, flax and marijuana. Of those that reported that they had abandoned opium poppy in the district of Dand in Kandahar this year, two thirds of their land was cultivated with vegetable and fodder crops, suggesting a high level of diversity in cropping patterns.

Those that had abandoned opium poppy in 2006/07 also reported that they had experienced eradication in previous years. Indeed, 74% claimed that their crop had been destroyed in 2005/06 and 31% that their opium poppy had been eradicated in 2004/05. One farmer in Dand district, Kandahar, claimed his opium crop had been destroyed for three consecutive years, beginning in 2003/04, but had only just

abandoned opium production. This particular household had six people (of which four were under the age of twelve), three jeribs of land and had cultivated one jerib of wheat, one jerib of tomato and one jerib of onion in 2006/07. They did not have any accumulated debt but nor did they have access to non-farm income.

Most of the others that had abandoned opium poppy showed far more diverse cropping patterns. For example, those who had claimed that they had ceased to cultivate opium poppy in the province of Balkh this year had on average 45 jeribs of land and allocated 13.5 jeribs of land to vegetable and fodder crops. On average, these households cultivated 49% of the land with wheat in 2005/06, 40% to vegetable and fodder crops and only 11% of the land to opium poppy. Once they had abandoned opium poppy in the 2006/07, these households report maintaining their cultivation of vegetable and fodder crops at the same level but increasing the amount of land they allocated to wheat to an average of 60% of total cultivated land.

Of those interviewed that abandoned opium poppy in 2006/07, 24% were in Badakhshan, 26% were in Balkh and a further 25% were in Kandahar. Those that abandoned opium poppy in Kandahar were all from the district of Dand that has a wide range of economic opportunities, including both high-value vegetable production and wage labour.

Table 10: A comparison of those taking up and abandoning opium poppy in 2006/07				
	Taking up poppy in 2006/07		Abandoning opium poppy in 2006/07	
Cultivated land	6.8 jeribs		19.5 jeribs	
Average amount of accumulated debt	US\$1,020		US\$71	
Proportion of households with accumulated debt	59%		9%	
Average amount of accumulated debt of those with debts	US\$1,721		US\$625	
Method of repayment	81 % opium		99% agriculture and wage labour	
Households with source of non-farm income	41%		43%	
Persons per jerib of cultivated land	1.9/jerib		1.85/jerib	
Proportion of land allocated to vegetable and fodder crops	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07
	7%	4%	28%	26%
Proportion of households drought affected	85%		51%	
Proportion of households with experience of eradication	2005/06	2006/07	2005/06	2006/07
	0%	0%	31%	74%

4.2.3 Monocropping Opium Poppy

Another interesting group of respondents are those that monocrop opium poppy. After all, working on the premise that the returns on opium poppy are higher than for other crops, this group would appear to conform with the classic model of profit maximising behaviour. However, the incidence of households that only cultivate opium poppy remains small. Of those interviewed, only 7% allocated all their agricultural land to opium poppy. This represents 15% of those interviewed that cultivated opium poppy.

What is notable is that the landholdings of those that only cultivated opium poppy in 2006/07 were particularly small at only 4.5 jeribs, compared to the sample as a whole (14 jeribs), those that cultivated opium poppy in 2006/07 (12.5 jeribs) and those that did not intend to cultivate opium poppy at all in 2006/07 (15.2 jeribs). Those that monocropped opium poppy for the last two consecutive years faced even more acute land constraints with an average of 3.7 jeribs of land.

Population densities were higher for those households that monocropped opium poppy in both 2005/06 and 2006/07, having 3.3 persons per jerib of cultivated land, compared to 2.8 persons per jerib for those allocating all their land to opium poppy in 2006/07, and 1.5 persons per jerib for those that cultivated some of their land with opium poppy in 2006/07 and 1.4 persons per jerib for those respondents that did not cultivate opium poppy at all in the current growing season.

There were also a number of households that monocropped opium poppy in 2006/07 but did not do so the previous year. This group had a greater equity in their cultivation of wheat and opium poppy the previous year, allocating on average 51% of their cultivated land to poppy, 46% to wheat, and 3% to fodder and vegetable crops. This group did not cultivate fruit crops in 2005/06. By 2006/07, the balance had shifted fairly dramatically with 100% of cultivable land being allocated to opium poppy. Respondents from Nangarhar dominate this group (68%), particularly from the districts of Chapahar, Shinwar and Khogiani, reflecting the resurgence in cultivation in these districts after relatively low levels of cultivation in 2004/05 and 2005/06. The district of Bala Bulok in Farah also features heavily (30%) amongst those who monocropped opium poppy in 2006/07 but did not do so in 2005/06.

What is apparent from this analysis is that there is a higher incidence of accumulated debt amongst those that monocrop opium poppy. For example, of those growing only opium poppy in the 2006/07 season three quarters report that they have accumulated debts. The proportion is even higher for those who report that they monocropped opium poppy in the 2006/07 growing season but did not do so in 2005/06. Of this group 86% claim they have accumulated debts. This is in contrast with the sample as a whole, of which only 32% report unpaid debts. Of those that claim that they will not grow opium poppy in 2006/07 the incidence of accumulated debt is even smaller at only 29%.

The only group with a lower incidence of accumulated debt is that which claims to have abandoned the crop in 2006/07 after growing it the previous year. Of this group

only 9% have accumulated debts and the average debt is only US\$71. Within this group those that have unpaid debts owe only US\$ 625, half that of any other group. have unpaid debts

The picture the data supports is one in which the resource poor that monocrop opium poppy. They have particularly small landholdings, large families and particularly high accumulated debts. These households are typically located some distance from provincial centres. This group has a limited choice of alternatives to opium poppy cultivation. Like those that did not cultivate opium poppy in 2005/06 but are cultivating it this year, the majority of those monocropping opium poppy reside in Nangarhar.

Table 11: Incidence and level of accumulated debt amongst specific groups of respondents			
	Proportion of households with accumulated debt (%)	Average debt (US\$)	Average debt amongst borrowers (US\$)
All	32	395	1206
No poppy cultivated 2006/07	29	336	1148
Cultivated poppy 2006/07	37	461	1260
Abandoned poppy 2006/ 07	6	71	625
Monocropped poppy 2005/06 and 2006/07	62	772	1255
Monocropped poppy 2006/07	76	1282	1677
Took up poppy 2006/07	60	1020	1721
Took up monocropping of poppy 2006/07	86	1589	1840

5. GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY

Key Findings

- *The vast majority of farmers are aware that opium poppy is ‘illegal’ and that it is forbidden under Islamic law. However, there are many that do not feel the government either has the capacity or the willingness to enforce a ban on opium poppy cultivation.*
- *In most of the provinces counter-narcotics messages lacked credibility. The perception that local officials themselves cultivated and were involved in the trade did not convince those interviewed that there was a genuine commitment on behalf of the authorities to reduce levels of cultivation. In some areas statements regarding the legality of opium poppy were seen as an annual exercise more for an external audience than for the farmers themselves. It was only in the provinces of Balkh and Laghman that the majority of those interviewed believed the authorities were able and willing to impose a ban on opium production in the current growing season.*
- *In Nangarhar respondents believed the government’s position on eradication would determine the security of the region during the 2006/07 growing season. So much so that the threat of the local authorities pursuing an aggressive eradication campaign resulted in many farmers suggesting their ambivalence towards the government at the time of planting might manifest into a more active opposition, including joining with the Anti-Government Elements.*
- *In both of the southern provinces, as well as Farah, there were increasing reports of Taliban and government officials finding ways to coexist. Respondents suggested that in many areas both sides had made agreements not to engage in hostile action. These agreements left the government officials undisturbed in the district centres whilst the Taliban were free to operate in the surrounding rural areas*

Opium poppy cultivation does not take place in a vacuum. In Afghanistan there are institutions and policies that influence the way the opium trade operates and the functioning of the legal economy. Households have to consider the wider environment in which both legal and illegal markets operate. For example, whether the prevailing security situation allows them to transport goods to markets or whether it would in fact be preferable to produce a crop where purchases are made at the farm gate. Households also have to consider whether the government has the authority to enforce the rule of law, not only in enforcing an opium poppy ban but protecting life and property so that they might make more longer-term investments. This section looks at

respondents perception of this wider environment: their knowledge of the legal status of opium poppy cultivation, the confidence they have in the Government of Afghanistan to enforce a ban on opium production, as well as their sense of the changing security situation in which they are making decisions regarding how to invest their resources.

5.1. Counter-Narcotics Messages: Who Has Heard Them And What Are Their Views

The vast majority of respondents were aware that opium poppy is a prohibited crop in Afghanistan. Indeed, all of those interviewed reported that the central government had banned opium poppy this year. Moreover, 88% of those interviewed reported that the local authorities had issued statements banning opium poppy in the 2006/07 growing season. This differed little across the provinces.

As in previous years, the radio would appear to be the major source of information for rural communities, with 89% of all those interviewed, and more than three quarters of respondents in each of the different provinces covered during fieldwork, reporting that they had been made aware of the ban on opium poppy through this medium.

However, information flows are complex and multifarious even in relatively isolated rural communities in Afghanistan. Reflecting this, respondents reported they had also received information on the ban from other media, including fellow villagers, elders, mullahs, direct from the local authorities, and television. For example, in the provinces of Badakhshan, Helmand and Kandahar, 27%, 16% and 21% of respondents, respectively, reported that they had been informed of the ban by the local mullah. Respondents in none of the other provinces except Balkh (5%) and Baghlan (2%) indicated the clergy had disseminated information on the prohibition of opium poppy this year.

In Kandahar and Helmand, information on the ban was more dependent on community networks, with 38% and 65% of those interviewed, respectively, reporting that fellow villagers and elders were the origin of information on the prohibition of opium poppy. In Balkh, 14% of those interviewed reported that they had been informed of the ban on opium poppy directly by the local authorities; in Farah it was 9%. This may not seem a large proportion of those interviewed, but when it is considered that these were the only two provinces in which respondents reported that the local authorities had informed them of the ban it does suggest a more proactive dissemination strategy than in other parts of the country.

The degree of outreach by the local authorities in Balkh in directly issuing a ban on opium poppy cultivation to the population is perhaps partly reflected in respondents' perception of the authorities commitment to enforce it. All of those interviewed in the province of Balkh believed that the local authorities were in a position to implement a ban on opium poppy cultivation in 2006/07. This was not reflected in the data from any other province except for Laghman, where 83% of those interviewed were of the view that the local authorities were in a position to implement a ban. In all of the

other seven provinces covered by this fieldwork the majority of those interviewed either did not believe the local authorities were able to implement a ban on opium poppy or had any intention of imposing a ban, despite their respective statements.

Indeed, what is rather surprising is that, even in relatively secure provinces such as Ghor, only 24% of those interviewed believed the local authorities could impose a ban on opium poppy cultivation. As one respondent in Angarhan in Chaghcharan district, Ghor, commented 'The government announces a ban every year but it does nothing'.

In Helmand province there was an overall sense that the counter-narcotics messages lacked credibility. The perception that local officials themselves cultivated and were involved in the trade did not convince those interviewed that there was a genuine commitment on behalf of the authorities to reduce levels of cultivation. In the district of Bust, a number of respondents claimed that a previous Governor had allowed them to cultivate opium poppy in exchange for a payment. They did not know whether his successors would be party to the same arrangement. The view that the 2005/06 eradication campaign had been influenced by those both willing and able to pay a bribe to local officials also served to weaken the impact of any message that the authorities would not tolerate opium poppy cultivation this season.

In some districts in the southern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand, as well as parts of Farah, there was little confidence in the capacity and/or willingness of the provincial and district authorities to impose their will. The fact that counter-narcotics messages were disseminated in many districts indirectly, through a process of calling elders and villagers to the provincial and district centres and requesting them to tell farmers not to plant, rather than district woliswal travelling to the villages themselves was seen as symbolic of the weakness of local government. In the districts of Panjwai and Maiwand (Kandahar province), Nawa Barakzai and parts of Nad e Ali and Grishk (Helmand) and Bala Bulok and parts of Pusht Rud (Farah) there was a general sense that the local authorities: 'cannot come here and destroy our poppy'. Others commented on the use of elders to disseminate counter-narcotics messages, suggesting their agreement to support the ban was only superficial: *'the elders agree [that poppy should be banned] until they have left the city'*.

In both the provinces of Badakhshan and Baghlan there were significant numbers of respondents (70% and 60% of respondents respectively) who simply did not believe the local authorities were able or serious about implementing a ban despite statements suggesting to the contrary. Often there was disdain for the authorities and the belief that statements regarding the legality of opium poppy were an annual exercise more for an external audience than for the farmers themselves. In Badakhshan one third of those interviewed just did not believe the local authorities were serious about the ban, while in Baghlan one quarter of respondents were of this view. Some respondents cited the imposition of 'tax' on the sale of opium in a number of district bazaars as evidence that the local authorities were not committed to banning opium poppy. It was believed that these taxes were paid to the district security commander and were charged at a rate of 2-4% on the value of sales in the local bazaar.

In Nangarhar, the provincial authorities were viewed as being actively engaged in disseminating the message that opium poppy is banned this season and all of those interviewed were aware of the announcement of a ban. Respondents reported that the Governor had visited a number of key districts himself and told people not to plant. Elders also had a number of meetings with the Governor in Jalalabad.

However, it was reported that the imposition of the ban on opium poppy cultivation across much of Nangarhar from 2004/05 to 2005/06 had created tension between elders, villagers and the local authorities that were increasingly coming to the surface. It was claimed that villagers were criticising elders for imposing the ban in Nangarhar when other provinces had continued cultivating. It was reported that elders were told they had not served the interests of those that they were meant to represent in their previous negotiations with the provincial authorities. It was reported that elders were in turn conveying the message to the district and provincial authorities that the ban was no longer acceptable and that *'there was one Afghanistan but different laws'*.

It was also reported that the largest tribes in the east, the Shinwari, the Khogiani and the Mohmandi, had met individually and agreed that they would plant opium poppy and that they would also resist eradication. At the time of fieldwork these tribes had not yet met collectively but it was reported that the mechanisms were in place to do so should the government decide to take an aggressive position on eradication. The elders of each of the tribes had presented their position to the Governor either in Jalalabad or in their districts. They had argued that they were not in a position to maintain the ban on cultivation for a third consecutive year and were particularly unwilling to do so in light of the fact that other provinces, Helmand in particular (which they consider wealthier than Nangarhar), were increasing their levels of opium poppy cultivation.

There was a general sense that the situation in Nangarhar was in a state of flux at the time of the fieldwork; that respondents were not *'for the government'* but *'not against the government'*. However, there was the view that should the government choose to eradicate their crop they would be forced to act against it, including joining with the Anti-Government Elements that are becoming increasingly active in the province, most notably in Khogiani. It was reported that, at a meeting in December in Shinwar district with elders from the districts of Shinwar, Deh Bala, Durbaba, Achin, Bati Kot and Nazian, the Governor's frustration at the united position of the Shinwari tribe prompted him to threaten that *'NATO and the government would bomb villages if communities resisted eradication'*. At the time of fieldwork, many respondents viewed Nangarhar as a tinderbox in which the government's position on eradication could determine security in the region.

Indeed, it was particularly notable that respondents in Nangarhar were far more aggressive and threatening in their language than they had been in previous years. For example, in areas in close proximity to the centre of Khogiani, where households simply accepted the ban in 2005 and 2006, threats were made against the current district administrator: *'if he comes here to eradicate he will end up like the previous woliswal'* (who was killed along with the district security commander and head of intelligence during Ramadan). There were reports of significant unrest in the area.

Hajji Zaman (a commander from Khogiani, based in Peshawar) was believed to be particularly active and there were reports of 'Taliban' leaflets and tapes being distributed in the area only 5 km from the district centre. Many respondents claimed that there had been deterioration in the security situation within their district, with reported sightings of unknown armed men during the night.

The result of this increase in tension in the province of Nangarhar was that, in stark contrast to last year where three quarters²¹ of those interviewed believed the authorities could impose a ban on cultivation, 77% of those interviewed in the province this year reported that the authorities were 'too weak' to enforce the ban. Indeed, it was only in the district of Surkhrud, adjacent to the provincial centre of Jalalabad, where households believed the local government had the authority to implement a ban. In Achin and upper Shinwar the ban on opium poppy implemented during the 2004/05 growing season had already been broken in 2005/06. Inevitably, none of the respondents in these areas believed the local authorities were in a strong enough position to impose a ban on opium poppy in 2006/07. However, in the districts of Khogiani, Chapahar, and in lower Shinwar, where the ban had been largely enforced in both 2004/05 and 2005/06, none of those interviewed believed the local authorities were in the position to enforce a third consecutive year.

5.2 The Changing Security Environment

Security would seem to be intrinsically linked with the perception of the central, provincial and district authorities' ability to impose their will on the local environment. Clearly judgements regarding the security situation in a given area are not only informed by the incidence of direct military confrontations between Government of Afghanistan, Coalition Forces and Anti Government Elements but also by the general law and order situation within a given area. Incidents of crime, family and tribal enmities, corruption and the presence of Anti Government Elements all influence these perceptions. The failure of the local and provincial authorities to act against these incidents and improve the security situation were seen by respondents as a sign of weakness.

Moreover, further discussions with respondents revealed that rather simple assessments of perceptions of changes in the security situation over the last twelve months masked a far more complex and caveated assessment of the local security environment and its impact on a range of different actors. For example, on first response the majority of those interviewed in Khogiani were of the view that the security situation had remained the same over the last twelve months. However, on further enquiry respondents indicated the security situation remained largely the same for those from the district but for those from outside the district, and particularly for Government of Afghanistan or Non Governmental Organisation staff, it had deteriorated considerably, culminating in the death of the district woliswal and the security commander one-month prior to fieldwork.

²¹ Mansfield, David (2006). "Exploring the 'Shades of Grey': An Assessment of the Factors Influencing Decisions to Cultivate Opium Poppy in 2005/06." A Report for the Afghan Drugs Inter Departmental Unit of the UK Government (February). page 11

The same trends were seen in other districts, suggesting respondents' statements regarding changes in the security situation over the last twelve months were particular to their own situation and that households were rather adept at adapting to the prevailing security situation at any given time, possibly leading to an underestimate of the security risk in some areas. It is also worth noting that respondents' perceptions of security across a wider area are rather limited. For example, 54% of those interviewed stated that they were unaware of the changes in the security situation in their province, whilst only 6% responded 'do not know' when asked about the security situation in their district.

Despite these caveats, what is notable is the shift in perceptions of security over the last twelve months. For example, when asked at the planting time of the 2005/06 growing season, two thirds (65%) of those interviewed were of the view that the security situation in their district had improved over the last twelve months, almost one third (32%) thought it had deteriorated and 2% of respondents 'did not know'. However, by November and December of 2006, 60% were of the view that security remained as it was the previous year but 34% thought it had deteriorated and 6% did not know. None of those interviewed reported that security was improving when asked this open question about how security had changed in their district over the last twelve months.

Mohammed Khan had 35 jeribs of irrigated land. He had no sons or brothers just a wife and daughters. He had 50 maund of opium stored in his house. In the night his cousin came to his house and killed him. He did it for the land as no one else could inherit it. The wife has been married off to someone else by force. The government has no power to resolve this. **Maiwand district, Kandahar.**

'I am one of two brothers. We are both landless. In 2006 my brother went to a neighbouring village to work harvesting grape. When Panjwai was bombed my brother was killed. He left one wife and four children. Last year we cultivated five jeribs of land as sharecroppers. This year I have taken ten jeribs of land. I will cultivate all of the land with opium poppy as now I have to look after my brother's wife and children. There are now ten children in my family and two women. The government cannot come here to eradicate my crop.' **Panjwai district, Kandahar.**

Of course, views on the security situation differed considerably by province. Given the security situation in the southern provinces, it is of little surprise that all of those interviewed in Kandahar and almost three quarters of those interviewed in Helmand were of the view that security had deteriorated in their districts over the last twelve

'The government is not able to eradicate our land this year. Every day there is fighting between ISAF and the Taliban. The government do not have the time to destroy our crop. They killed local people but called them Taliban.' **Panjwai district, Kandahar.**

months. Indeed, the situation in the south seemed particularly acute and the overall impression from respondents in the districts in the south covered by the fieldworkers was typically one of a government that was weak and would not endure: *'If the government cannot control this district how can it control the country'*. *'The government can't do anything for us'*.

Some respondents even suggested that Government of Afghanistan had a life expectancy of between one and two years. Moreover, reports from the districts of Maiwand and Panjwai in Kandahar, and Nawa Barakzai, Girishk and parts of Nad e Ali in Helmand suggested that the Taliban are seen as more reliable intermediaries in local disputes and crimes than local officials who insist on payment. There were a number of examples given in Panjwai and Maiwand of the Taliban dispensing the kind of swift justice many rural Afghans might favour. It was reported that this was done promptly upon taking control of an area and then news of these actions were distributed by radio and by word of mouth. There was also the fear that working with the government would bring reprisals: *'If we cooperate with the government during the day the Taliban will come and arrest or kill us during the night'*.

'There was a man who was one of the gunman of a local commander [in Panjwai district, Kandahar]. He killed another man in this village. The family tried to act against the killer but the government did nothing. When the Taliban returned to Panjwai they arrested the man and killed him. They announced that he was killed in accordance with Sharia law.'
Panjwai district, Kandahar

'In this district [Maiwand] a businessman and his son were killed in their car six months ago. After killing them the thieves took the car. The man's relatives requested that the woliswal and the police investigate the crime but nothing was done. When the Taliban came to the area they found the three thieves responsible. They killed all three men and left their bodies by the road. The car was returned to the family of the businessman.'
Maiwand district,

Corruption was seen as endemic amongst government officials and one of the major reasons for an alienated populace (although the NATO bombing in Panjwai seems to have provoked considerable anger across the districts in Kandahar and Helmand where fieldwork was undertaken). The incidence of check points and the imposition of 'taxes' on cars and trucks by the Afghan National Police was a common complaint. One respondent reported that there were over 40 check points between Herat and Kandahar city and that each charged 20-50 Afs (US\$ 40 to US\$ 1) per car and between 100 to 500 Afs (US\$ 2-10) for each truck.

In both the southern provinces, as well as Farah, there were also increasing reports of Taliban and government officials finding ways to coexist. Respondents suggested that in many areas both sides had made agreements not to engage in hostile action.

'One month ago one of the gunmen of a local commander stopped a trader in minerals and took them for himself. People say they were worth around 400,000 Afs. When the gunman came to the bazaar the district police tried to arrest him. It resulted in shooting in the bazaar. My shop was shot up by gunfire. Some of the clothes in my shop were filled with bullet holes. I cannot sell them now so I wear them. The commander's gunman escaped from the bazaar and was not arrested. He is still free today.'
Jurm district, Badakhshan.

These agreements left the government officials undisturbed in the district centres whilst the Taliban were free to operate in the surrounding rural areas (these arrangements would not seem to be too dissimilar from those in place in the late 1980s and early 1990s prior to the fall of the Najibullah regime).

Respondents in Farah were more divided in their views on the security situation, with 45% of those interviewed believing it had got worse over the last twelve months, and 48% believing the security situation remained the same. There were clearly growing security

concerns that were affecting the different districts covered by the fieldwork to varying degrees. For example, in November 2005 fieldworkers could cover the district of Gulistan, but in November and December it was considered too insecure. Bala Bulok was an area where in the summer of this year the district centre seemed to regularly change hands between the Taliban and the government. At the time of fieldwork it was reported that the district administrator and the Taliban had reached an agreement not to encroach on each other's territory. Two thirds of those interviewed in the district of Bala Bulok believed that the security situation had deteriorated over the last twelve months. Attempts to do fieldwork in the district of Lash Wa Juwayn (where levels of opium poppy cultivation reduced considerably between 2005 and 2006, probably due to water shortages) on the Iranian border were also thwarted by insecurity. Here it was reported that theft was a common problem on the road between the provincial centre and the border.

In the districts of Pusht Rud and Farah the local governments' efforts to coerce people not to plant in the 2005/06 growing season, and to subsequently eradicate the crops of those that did not take this advice, was reported to be taking its toll. Its repetition in the 2006/07 growing season was reported to be furthering discontent. Respondents expressed frustration at the absence of viable alternatives to poppy in situ and the 'taxing' of the movement of legal goods by the Afghan National Police. In the district of Pusht Rud, two thirds of those interviewed believed the security situation had got worse over the last twelve months. There were a number of reports of migrants returning from Iran and being robbed of money and goods along the way. The government's failure to act against this crime (and even the perception that members of the Afghan National Police lay behind it) only served to increase the frustration respondents felt towards the authorities.

Habibullah was a trader of opium. He took ten seer of opium on loan from Gul Agha from Samangan province. He agreed to repay the value of the opium of 400,000 Afs (US\$ 8,000) in six months time. Habibullah then sold his opium to a local commander from the district but did so on the understanding that the local commander would pay 45,000 Afs (US\$ 900) per seer once the opium had been sold. One month later the local commander came to the house of Habibullah and told him that he did not have his money nor the opium; the opium had been seized by the local authorities on the road between Kishim and Faizabad. After six months Gul Agha came from Samangan to request his money from Habibullah. Habibullah could not repay. He mortgaged five jeribs of his land for 200,000 Afs (US\$ 4,000) and used two seer of his own crop. He combined this with one seer of opium he borrowed from his cousin and gave it all to Gul Agha. Habibullah now has an outstanding loan of 50,000 Afs (US\$ 1,000). He has given up trading opium as he has no capital left. He has cultivated five jeribs of land as a sharecropper on his mortgaged land this winter season. He will cultivate three jeribs of wheat and two jeribs of poppy in the spring. If the government destroys my poppy I will sell this land. There is no way for me. The commander will not pay what he owes me.

Jurm district, Badakhshan.

Even in Baghlan and Badakhshan, more than one third of those interviewed thought the security situation in their district was worse than twelve months prior. In Badakhshan, those concerned about security typically resided in Jurm district, where a number of armed robberies had taken place prior to and during the fieldwork. The tension in the area was exacerbated by the fact that most people in the centre of the

district believed one of the local commanders had orchestrated these incidents.²² In the province of Baghlan, concerns over the security situation were concentrated in the more remote districts of Anderab and Tala Wa Barfak.

Even in the province of Ghor there was a shift in the perception of the security situation amongst those interviewed this year in comparison to 2005/06. For example, twelve months prior, 97% of those interviewed were of the view that there had been an improvement in the security situation in their district since November 2004. By 2006, all of those interviewed were of the view that the security situation in their district remained unchanged over the last twelve months. This is despite the fact that respondents in Sharak and Chaghcharan referred to a spate of armed robberies and murders that had occurred at specific choke points on the road between Chaghcharan and Angharan and near the pass at Ghok in the district of Sharak.

In the province of Nangarhar, 80% of those interviewed reported that the security situation had remained unchanged over the last twelve months. Those that believed security had got worse were concentrated in the district of Khogiani, where there were concerns over the activities of Anti Government Elements and the sighting of armed men during the night. The killing of the local security commander and district woliswal one month prior to fieldwork had clearly a resonance with those interviewed as most cited it as evidence of the deterioration in the security situation.

In both the provinces of Balkh and Laghman there was the resounding view amongst those that were interviewed that the security situation had remained stable over the last year. These are the same two provinces where there was also the perception that the authorities were in the position to enforce a ban on opium poppy cultivation. It is notable that respondents in the province of Laghman would appear to continue to believe the authorities are willing and able to impose a ban in the prevailing security situation, whilst in the district of Nangarhar those interviewed were decidedly more sceptical regarding the capacity of the local authorities to impose a ban on cultivation, even though the security situation was regarded largely as being the same as it was twelve months ago. As noted above, across much of Nangarhar respondents saw the security situation as largely contingent on the authorities approach to eradication in the 2006/07 growing season.

²² For more detail see Mansfield, David (2007) 'Governance, Security and Economic Growth: The Determinants of Opium Poppy Cultivation in the Districts of Jurm and Baharak in Badakhshan' A report for the Aga Khan Development Network. February

6. ERADICATION: EXTENDING THE RULE OF LAW

Key Findings:

- *The impact that eradication has on future planting remains context specific. Where improvements in security and greater government presence coincide with viable livelihood opportunities the threat of eradication may play a catalytic role in pushing farmers to both diversify their cropping patterns and off-farm and non-farm income streams. However, where these conditions are not in place eradication can increase household debts, exacerbate political tensions and result in further cultivation in subsequent years.*
- *Eradication is often seen as partial targeting those in close proximity to the district centre or major roads as well as those who do not have contacts in local government or who are unable to pay bribes to leave their crop undamaged. The incidence of bribery and the practice of compensating fellow villagers for the loss of their crop may even be leading to higher rates of cultivation and is undermining the perception that eradication is a credible threat to farmers across a given area.*
- *Eradication of the standing opium crop through the use of 'spray' was found to be an area of contention. It was not clear whether farmers distinguished between the different methods of dissemination, aerial or ground-based. There was a resounding view that spraying would result in crop failures and sickness and perhaps the death of livestock and people. It was perceived by farmers as an act of hostility against the population and not solely targeted at their plants.*

'Eradication' represents the physical destruction of the standing crop using manual, chemical or biological methods. In the short term eradication can succeed in removing a proportion of the total crop from the market. However, the strategic goal is to raise the risks associated with opium poppy cultivation and, in combination with other aspects of drug control policy (alternative development), create the conditions by which households elect not to cultivate opium poppy in the first place.

The underlying assumption behind eradication is that the financial losses incurred by the farmer when their crop is destroyed (and the threat of it being eradicated again) will deter them from cultivating opium poppy in subsequent years. It is also anticipated that the destruction of the crop in the ground across a sufficient number of areas will also act as a deterrent to others.

This section looks at eradication and its impact not only on cropping decisions but also on political consensus. It recognises that farmers will always complain about the destruction of their crop but it documents a noticeable shift in the tone of the narrative about eradication this year in some of the key opium poppy producing provinces. It highlights the potential catalytic role eradication, or the threat of it, can have on cropping decisions in those areas where agricultural commodity and labour markets are actually functioning. But it also documents the persistence of opium poppy cultivation in those areas where eradication has been undertaken, even over a number of years, but where the absence of viable alternatives means it will not deter future planting and may even alienate the rural population.

6.1. Eradication: Its Coverage And Impact

Sixty-five respondents reported that their crop had been destroyed in the 2005/06 growing season. A further fifty-two respondents claimed that they had experienced the destruction of their crop between the 2002/03 and 2004/05 growing seasons. A number of those interviewed had lost their crop on more than one occasion. Consequently, in total, there were one hundred and fifty eight incidents of eradication reported across twenty-three of the thirty-four different districts covered by this Study.

On the surface, the impact of eradication in 2006 might look relatively convincing. In total, 14% of those interviewed reported that their opium crop had been destroyed in the 2005/06 growing season. This represents 28% of those interviewed that cultivated opium poppy that season. Of those that claimed their crop had been eradicated in the 2005/06 growing season 40% claimed that they had abandoned the crop and did not grow any poppy in 2006/07. The amount of land allocated to the crop amongst those that had experienced eradication in 2005/06 also fell from an average of 20% of total land holdings to 15% in 2006/07.

However, on closer inspection, over three quarters (77%) of those that abandoned opium poppy cultivation following eradication the previous year came from the district of Dand in Kandahar province or the districts of Charbolak, Chemtal or Balkh in the province of Balkh, suggesting that eradication may well have played a role in deterring cultivation but as discussed above other local factors were also at work.. Of those that continued to cultivate opium poppy despite having their crop destroyed in 2006, almost half (49%) reported that they would be increasing the amount of household land they allocated to opium poppy, and over a third (38%) claimed they would grow the same amount of the crop as they did in the 2005/06 growing season. Only one eighth (13%) reported that they would cultivate opium poppy but allocate less land to the crop.

It is also interesting to note that, of those that claimed to have had their crop eradicated during the 2005/2006 growing season, 40% reported that their crop had also been destroyed in the 2004/05 growing season. Yet, despite experiencing their crops destruction in two consecutive seasons, 68% of these households cultivated

opium poppy in 2006/07. It was only in the district of Dand, next to the city of Kandahar, and the district of Faizabad, surrounding the provincial centre of Badakhshan that respondents who had lost their crops in the eradication campaigns of both 2004/05 and 2005/06 were found to abandon their crop in 2006/07.

Moreover, the average amount of household land allocated to opium poppy in 2006/07 by those who had lost their crops in the two previous years remained relatively static at around one third, despite some respondents abandoning the crop this season. This was because over half of those that did cultivate in 2006/07 actually increased the amount of land they allocated to opium poppy. Almost two thirds of these respondents were located in the district of Shinwar in Nangarhar province, which has seen significant reductions in the level of cultivation since the 2003/04 growing season.

There were also three respondents in Faizabad and one in Dand that claimed that their crop had been destroyed for three consecutive years. Three abandoned the crop this year and one household persisted with cultivation regardless. Opium poppy only occupied 2 jeribs of his 25 jeribs of land. The rest of it was cultivated with wheat and fodder crops. The other three respondents allocated more than half of their land to vegetable and fodder crops, including tomato, potato, onion, okra and, in one case, marijuana.

The rather inconsistent picture that the figures portray is one in which the impact of eradication is contextual and largely dependent on the specific circumstances that a household experiences. For example, for some, eradication would seem to be a real threat and occurs annually. Indeed, 96% of respondents, even those that had their crops destroyed, believed that eradication was typically targeted at those who had land near the district centre, on the roadside and/or did not have relatives who worked for the local authorities.

'We have six jeribs of land. Last year we cultivated three jeribs of wheat and three jeribs of poppy. We had a good crop but an eradication team came to our village. They wanted 20,000 Afs in payment for them not to destroy our crop but we didn't have the money. My son argued with the eradication team when they were destroying our poppy. There was a fight and he was injured and arrested. Now the ANP want me to pay them for his money. I don't have any [money]. I will be compelled to sell my land and move to Pakistan.' **Arghandab district, Kandahar**

If this judgement is true, and it is certainly the case that some respondents were more vulnerable to repeated incidences of eradication than others, then eradication is a foreseeable event for some farmers. Yet the majority of farmers who have experienced eradication continue to cultivate opium poppy, many the following year and some after one years respite.

It is possible that, for those households who do not have access to functioning labour and agricultural commodity markets and where landholdings are, on the whole, of an insufficient size in relation to the number of household members, there are no viable alternatives and opium poppy is required to satisfy their basic needs. For others it might be that they have other assets that they can draw upon and that opium poppy occupies such a small percentage of their total landholding that its loss, were it

eradicated, is not significant, but were they to obtain a yield it would provide a welcome boost to household income. Based on the results of the fieldwork for this Study it seems fair to assume that the explanation for the inconsistent impact of eradication partly lies with the way that the eradication campaign is implemented as well as whether households, when faced with the threat of eradication, actually do have the opportunity to take-up viable legal livelihoods or not.

6.2. Eradication: A Credible Threat?

Based on the data above it would appear that the majority of those interviewed believe eradication only targets specific groups. As a result they will only see eradication as a credible threat if they are from that group and if eradication is likely to be undertaken in their area. They are also only likely to see eradication as a credible threat if it is conducted with integrity. Corruption reduces the risks some farmers associate with eradication as those with the appropriate social and political networks or with the money to pay bribes escape with their crop unscathed. Some farmers may even cultivate extra opium poppy to finance the bribes. Other biases in the implementation of eradication might also create the impression that some farmers are more vulnerable to eradication than others.

Fieldwork for this study reveals a number of problems associated with the way eradication was conducted in the 2005/06 growing season. Corruption, collusion, and inconsistency in the way eradication was implemented within a given area all militate against raising the perceived risks that some households will associate with cultivating opium poppy. Of the nine provinces in which in-depth interviews were conducted it was only in Ghor that there were no reports of corruption associated with eradication in the 2005/06 growing season. This must be largely attributable to the almost complete absence of any crop destruction in the province that year.²³

In all the other provinces eradication was largely seen as a selective process influenced by the interests of local powerbrokers. For example, in the district of Anderab in Baghlan province, it was claimed that district officials and subsequently the provincial authorities colluded against an effective eradication campaign. Respondents suggested that initial efforts at eradication were to be undertaken by Afghan National Police and an eradication force from Kabul. However, this force was subsequently fired at whilst in their camp at night (some even suggest that the district woliswal had instigated these attacks). The Governor of the province is reported to have travelled to Anderab to mediate. During this visit it is alleged that a number of commitments were made including that eradication would be conducted by the local, not national, authorities and it would be targeted only at those fields by the roadside 'just for the photos'. It was also claimed that the district security commander of Anderab demanded a payment of 1,000 to 5,000 Afs (US\$ 20 to US\$

²³ It was reported that there were attempts to eradicate opium poppy in Angharan in Chaghcharan in 2006, but the incidence of crop failure across the area resulted in the campaign being halted. Mansfield, David (2006) Opium poppy cultivation in the provinces of Nangarhar and Ghor' A report for AREU's Applied Thematic Research into Water Management, Livestock and the Opium Economy. AREU, Kabul. December.

100) from each household that wished their crop to escape eradication and that much of the eradication that took place was conducted after the harvest.

In each of the districts in Badakhshan covered by this Study there were consistent reports of the initial eradication campaign managed by the local authorities focusing on those areas near the roadside. It was claimed that typically only one or two biswa (the equivalent of 200 metres square) of opium poppy were destroyed and, for the wealthy, much of the crop was left intact. In Jurm district there were claims that eradication was used as a means of targeting the poor and stripping them of their assets and that it was just part of a wider process by which local powerbrokers vied for economic and political power.²⁴

'All of the poppy fields of the Baloch were destroyed by the security commander. For the rest of the district only a few had their crop destroyed and mainly those near the road'. Kishim district, Badakhshan

In the district of Kishim there were complaints about the partisan way that some respondents felt the eradication campaign was pursued. There were reports that Baloch villages were targeted for more comprehensive eradication than the villages of other ethnic groups. It was claimed that the district security commander, an Uzbek, was responsible for this policy and that Tajik and Uzbek villages only lost some of their crop or even had their crop eradicated after the harvest had finished. The veracity of these claims is unclear.

It was reported that attempts to conduct a more comprehensive eradication campaign in Jurm district in June 2006 were thwarted by protests that culminated in the death of one villager and the injury of four others. It was claimed that, after this incident, the eradication team subsequently withdrew back to Faizabad and were jeered en route.

In the province of Farah, the picture was more mixed. In the districts of Pusht Rud and Farah there was the perception that, whilst eradication was typically restricted to more accessible areas near the roadside, it was more systematic. However, in Bala Bulok eradication was seen more of a process of negotiation where the authorities and communities agreed on the field was to be destroyed and the villages compensated those who had lost their crop.

In this district there was an overall perception that the authorities were too weak to impose their will due to the level of insecurity that prevailed. Some respondents in the districts of Farah and Pusht Rud complained that the local authorities had the strength to coerce the population not to plant, to destroy their opium poppy and to demand bribes on the trade in legal goods, but that it did not have the capacity to deliver the economic growth that would deliver viable alternatives to opium production. One respondent even lamented for the levels of insecurity that Gulistan

²⁴ In the 2006/07 growing season, eradication started early and was already being conducted during the course of fieldwork for this Study. It was undertaken by the Afghan Eradication Force, a specialised unit within the Ministry of Interior, almost one month after the beginning of planting season. The remains of germinated opium poppy plants could be seen in parts of the district of Baharak en route to the district of Jurm. Mansfield, David (2007) 'Governance, Security and Economic Growth: The Determinants of Opium Poppy Cultivation in the Districts of Jurm and Baharak in Badakhshan' A report for the Aga Khan Development Network. February.

and Bala Bulok experienced in his district of Pusht Rud so that he could return to opium poppy cultivation.

In Chemtal, (Balkh province), there were reports of widespread corruption. It was claimed that, early on in the 2005/06 growing season, the district woliswal and security commander received payments of 1,000 to 2,000 Afs (US\$ 20 to US\$ 40) to allow people to cultivate opium poppy. Respondents reported that when this came to the attention of the Governor, following the arrest and subsequent complaints by tribal elders, the security commander and woliswal were sacked and replaced. In the districts of Balkh and Chahar Bolak it was reported that eradication was more systematic but concentrated largely on more accessible areas near the roadside.²⁵

Reports of corruption were also widespread in the provinces of Helmand and Kandahar. Respondents alleged payments of up to 30,000 Afs (US\$ 600) for eradication teams to leave crops untouched. However, in Nangarhar, eradication seems to have been conducted in a more consensual way during the 2005/06 growing season and there were no reports of bribes being paid to eradication teams. This is largely due to the fact that, where cultivation did take place in Nangarhar last year, it was typically in areas in which households had limited landholdings, high-population densities and agricultural commodity and labour markets did not function well. These are relatively remote areas in which there is a degree of homogeneity in tribes and government presence has always been limited. It was anticipated by respondents in these areas that a more comprehensive approach to eradication was likely to provoke a hostile response.

In these areas the authorities are reported to have had allocated a specific number of jeribs that needed to be eradicated in each village. The village was then given the task of deciding which fields would have their crop destroyed and on which criteria they would be selected. In the districts of Shinwar and Achin, villagers compensated those farmers who lost their crop. Given the incidence of late planting in parts of these districts in the 2005/06 growing season and subsequent low yields, some households fared relatively well by offering their crop for eradication (see Box ?) Similar incidences of community based compensation were cited in Farah and Helmand.

These kind of cooperative arrangements did not only operate for those whose crop was eradicated. For example, it was reported that in the district of Achin in March 2006, two people were injured in a confrontation with the police who had entered the area to begin eradication. It was reported that their fellow villagers met the cost of their treatment and 8,000 PR (US\$ 133) was collected for each of the injured men.

'The crop of my neighbour was not good. He didn't have water and would not have got a good yield. Perhaps he would have got two kilogrammes. When his crop was eradicated the rest of the people in the village collected opium for him and gave him five kilogrammes'.
Shinwar district, Nangarhar.

Such collective responses to eradication serve to reduce the costs (and thereby the risks) that individuals associate with eradication. It also reflects a more cohesive

²⁵ See Adam Pain. Cultivation in Kunduz and Balkh Provinces: a scoping study. A report for AREU's Applied Thematic Research into Water Management, Livestock and the Opium Economy May, 2006

community response to eradication than individual households paying bribes. It remains unclear why some communities have adopted a more organised reaction to eradication whilst others have been content to see a more selective process in which the crops of some members of the community are more vulnerable to eradication than others. It also remains to be seen whether communities that share the costs of eradication are more likely to organise more direct collective action against eradication efforts.

6.3 Eradication: Its Impact On The Political Consensus

Eradication is undoubtedly a sensitive issue in many parts of rural Afghanistan. Fieldwork in opium poppy growing areas in which eradication has occurred often elicits robust and sometimes hostile comments. Respondents often express their frustrations at those they perceive to be the architects of eradication (typically foreigners and the central government) and question the integrity of those implementing the campaign (typically the provincial and district authorities). The veracity of these claims is difficult to verify. However, when they are cited by a number of respondents across a relatively wide geographic area there is a likelihood that these claims have been assigned a legitimacy within the rural community regardless of whether they are in fact true.

What has become particularly notable in the last twelve months is the shift in the narrative of the rural population in some areas when talking about eradication. The most hostile comments came from respondents in the provinces of Nangarhar, Helmand and Kandahar. In the two southern provinces hostility to the government and opium poppy eradication seemed to increasingly come hand in hand. Indeed, a number of respondents commented on the position the Taliban had adopted in response to the Government of Afghanistan's prohibition of opium poppy, suggesting that the Taliban saw itself as opposite to the government and therefore supported farmers in their decision to cultivate opium poppy. It was reported that the Taliban had informed the rural population in both provinces that they would protect their crops were they at risk of eradication. In Nawa Barakzai (Helmand) one respondent claimed: '*Farmers are happy with the decision of the Taliban*'. Others claimed that they had been encouraged to cultivate more opium poppy by the Taliban, although admitted that they had prospered from the result.

'I have twelve jeribs of land. Last year [2005/06] I was going to cultivate six jeribs of poppy and six jeribs of wheat. The Taliban came and said why do you not grow all your land with poppy? I didn't have money for the labour and tractor but the Taliban pushed me to cultivate all my land so I did. I had to pay 30,000 Afs to the eradication team not to destroy my poppy fields. This year I have cultivated all twelve jeribs of poppy on my land and I want to cultivate a further six jeribs as a sharecropper. Last year I got twenty-five maund of opium from my twelve jeribs. Life is good because of last year.' **Nawa District, Helmand.**

It is worth noting that fieldwork was undertaken at a time when the Government of Afghanistan was still discussing the potential for using herbicides to destroy opium poppy. Whilst disseminating herbicides using planes was not under discussion and

the focus was on ground-based spraying using backpacks or via booms mounted on All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), on the whole respondents did not differentiate.

Those who expressed views on spraying believed that it would result in crop failures and sickness and perhaps the death of livestock and people. Discussions on this issue with key informants, some of them agronomists and agriculturalists who also believed 'soils would be contaminated for up to seven years' illustrated how deeply entrenched these views are. In the districts of Khogiani, Shinwar and Achin, in Nangarhar, respondents gave examples of children becoming ill and repeated crop failure on land that they believe was sprayed in the 2003/04 growing season. It would seem that the veracity of these claims matter little when they are so widely perceived to be true.

Responses to using herbicides to eradicate opium poppy were hostile and typically threatened direct action against the government: *'If they spray we will fight the government'* or siding with Anti Government Elements: *'We will cooperate with the Taliban if they [the government] spray'*; *'If the government spray there is only one way and that is to join the Taliban'*; *'If the government spray by plane we can't fight them when they do it but we will go to Pakistan and join the opposition, but if they try and destroy our crop from the land we will fight against them'*. Spraying was typically perceived as an act of hostility against the population and not solely targeted at the plants. The most hostile comments came from respondents in the provinces of Helmand, Kandahar and Nangarhar, who seemed more aware of the potential for spraying following announcements in the local media and the pronouncements of provincial officials and others.

'We have a small piece of land. I have one jerib. If I cultivate poppy I get seven kilogrammes and I can solve my economic problems. If I cultivate wheat I have nothing' **Khogiani District, Nangarhar.**

In the province of Nangarhar, eradication was seen as a particularly sensitive issue this planting season. There was an overall consensus in the districts of Chapahar, Shinwar and Khogiani that aggressive eradication by the authorities would provoke a reaction. *'If they eradicate our poppy again we will be like the people of Helmand and arm ourselves with guns'* and that the population, having experienced two consecutive years of low levels of opium poppy cultivation, would not be willing to endure a third. *'If they [the government] destroy my poppy they are killing me. It is better I fight them so that they kill me'*.

Part of the narrative in Chapahar, Shinwar, Achin and Khogiani was one in which respondents argued that they could not meet their basic needs without recourse to opium poppy cultivation. Most argued that their socio-economic position and/or geographic location meant they did not have a choice of crops or off-farm and non-farm incomes that they could simply take up as an alternative to opium poppy. Other fieldwork in Nangarhar has illustrated the cumulative impact of two years of negligible levels of opium poppy cultivation on the livelihood strategies of those most dependent on the crop, and shows that many have bottomed-out economically.²⁶

²⁶ Mansfield, David (2006) *Opium poppy cultivation in the provinces of Nangarhar and Ghor* A report for AREU's Applied Thematic Research into Water Management, Livestock and the Opium Economy. AREU, Kabul. December.

Table 12: Incidence and level of accumulated debt amongst respondents, disaggregated by province

	Proportion of households with accumulated debt (%)	Average debt (US\$)	Average debt amongst borrowers (US\$)
All	32	395	1206
Badakhshan	24	327	1336
Baghlan	15	111	742
Balkh	7	59	680
Farah	46	466	1026
Ghor	41	203	501
Helmand	14	92	657
Laghman	57	906	1594
Nangarhar	61	983	1599
Kandahar	18	99	554

cultivated land amongst those interviewed in Helmand, 0.7 persons per jerib in Laghman, 1 person per jerib in Balkh and 1.25 persons per jerib amongst respondents in Badakhshan.

The incidence of accumulated debt and its level in Nangarhar is also considerably higher than any other province except Laghman (see Table 12). Again, when the data is disaggregated at the district level even higher levels of accumulated debt can be seen in Khogiani, Achin, Shinwar and Chapahar (see Table 13). As has been discussed before, respondents in these four districts also showed low rates of crop diversification, typically cultivating vegetable crops for household consumption and not for sale. Opium poppy has typically replaced by wheat.

It is reported that much of the debt in these districts in Nangarhar is in the form of Jawzai. This loan mechanism does not require households to pay back their loans in actual opium but it does impose considerable premiums on borrowers. In the 2005/06 growing season, lenders typically gave one seer of opium to the lender worth 14,000 to 15,000 PR (US\$ 250) at the time of the loan and demanded a payment of 20,000 Afs (US\$ 400) per seer at the time of harvest. Four fifths of those interviewed in Nangarhar anticipated paying back their accumulated loans by growing opium poppy this year. This compares to half of those interviewed in the provinces of Farah and Helmand and one third of respondents in Badakhshan.

Table 13: Incidence and level of accumulated debt amongst respondents in selected districts in Nangarhar

	Proportion of households with accumulated debts (%)	Average debt (US\$)	Average debt amongst borrowers (US\$)
Achin	61	909	1515
Chapahar	66	1603	2404
Khogiani	71	1361	1906
Shinwar	53	613	1150
Surkhrud	53	414	725

It is certainly the case that the data for this study suggests Nangarhar has some of the highest population densities per unit of cultivated land, at an average of 1.9 persons per jerib, for the all of those interviewed in the province. This is all the more acute in the districts of Achin, Shinwar and Khogiani, where there were 2.5, 2.1 and 1.8 persons per jerib of cultivated land respectively. This compares to 0.6 persons per jerib of

There would appear to be the potential for an increase in political tension in Nangarhar should the local authorities look to enforce the ban for a third year. Many households have experienced two years with significant shortfalls in income due to the ban on opium poppy. Where they have not been able to offset this fall in income with the sale of agricultural commodities, labour or other assets, there has been a rise in accumulated debts. Compound this with a growing perception that somehow the population has been singled out for drug control efforts whilst the inhabitants of other provinces are allowed to continue cultivation unabated, and there would appear to be all the ingredients for growing political discontent and violence. There is a need to tread carefully if a rural population that many consider to be vacillating in its support for the Government of Afghanistan is not to side with Anti Government Elements.

However, where viable alternatives do exist, like in the districts of Surkhrud (Nangarhar province) and Mehtarlam, Qarghai and Alishing (Laghman), this antagonism towards the Government of Afghanistan has not yet materialised despite relatively high accumulated debt and what will be a third year of negligible levels of cultivation. In these areas over a third of the cultivated land of those interviewed was dedicated to horticulture and fodder crops in 2006/07. As we have learned, in these areas vegetable traders are also mimicking many of the advantages of the opium trade, purchasing crop in advance, buying at the farmgate (and thereby bearing the costs of transportation and rent seeking behaviour) as well as, in some cases, providing improved seed. Wage labour opportunities are also more readily allowing households to further diversify their income sources and better insure themselves against crop or market failure.

In this environment the threat of eradication of the standing crop may play a catalytic role in pushing farmers to both diversify their cropping patterns and off-farm and non-farm income streams. For example, respondents in the district of Dand, adjacent to Kandahar city, seem to have adapted quickly to eradication in 2006. They have allocated much of the land that was cultivated with opium poppy in 2005/06 to high-value vegetable production and not simply substituting opium poppy for wheat cultivation.

The nature of the change in livelihood strategies is far less clear in the province of Balkh this year. Opium poppy has typically occupied a small proportion of total agricultural land compared to a more opium entrenched province like Nangarhar. Indeed, even its peak year of cultivation in 2005, UNODC estimate Balkh produced only 10,837 ha of opium poppy, a third of what was cultivated in Nangarhar province when it was at its most prolific in 2004. Relatively large landholdings, the cultivation of high-value horticultural crops, low population densities, low incidence and levels of accumulated debt, and a limited history of opium denominated loans may suggest that the impact of the ban on the rural population of Balkh will be less dramatic than it has been in Nangarhar. However, there are bound to be areas where a dramatic reduction in cultivation will have a more dramatic effect. Much will depend on the other livelihood opportunities that are in place.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Patterns of cultivation in Afghanistan not only differ from province to province but from district to district. The results of fieldwork for this report show increases in the provinces of Nangarhar in the eastern region as well as in Helmand and Kandahar in the south. It looks likely that these increases will be partly offset by reductions in cultivation in the northern provinces of Badakhshan, Baghlan and Balkh where the returns on opium production are looking increasingly unattractive this growing season. In the central province of Ghor crop failure in the 2005/06 growing season combined with the food requirements of both household members and livestock are deterring an expansion in opium poppy cultivation in 2007. However, within each of these provinces there are districts where divergent and often contrasting patterns of opium poppy cultivation are being displayed. In some districts cultivation continues to increase unabated whilst in others, perhaps neighbouring them, levels of opium production are falling.

It is clear there is much to learn from the nature of change in rural livelihood strategies in Nangarhar during the imposition of the ban in 2005 and 2006. Simply replacing opium poppy with wheat is not a sustainable shift in livelihood strategies. Experience in much of Nangarhar is showing that those households whose access to labour and agricultural commodity markets is constrained are returning to opium poppy cultivation in 2006/07. In the absence of opium production, farmers in these areas have largely replaced opium poppy with wheat. This has proven unsustainable. The size of landholdings and the prevailing population densities mean that few can be self sufficient even in wheat flour alone. They need to sell crops or labour to meet their basic needs. However, there is little evidence of an expansion in high-value vegetable production beyond those districts in close proximity to the provincial centre. Access to labour markets has also been constrained by skills, distance, social networks and the availability of sufficient males of working age.

The result has been the sale of long-term productive assets and an increase in the incidence and levels of accumulated debt. Consequently, in 2006/07, households see few alternatives but to cultivate opium poppy as a means of repaying these outstanding loans and recouping some of the losses in income they have incurred over the last two years. The result is a dramatic increase in the amount of land allocated to opium poppy, almost exponential in some districts. Analysts and commentators need to be wary of those that laud drug control success based simply on quantitative measures of hectareage but do not document the qualitative change in rural livelihood strategies.

Where a more fundamental change has taken place there has been a diversification of on-farm, off-farm and non-farm income opportunities. It has been largely market led and has resulted in vegetable traders mimicking many of the advantages of the opium trade, such as buying crops in advance, purchasing crops at the farmgate and, in some cases, providing improved seed on loan. These initiatives have reduced the risks that

farmers associate with legal crops by reducing their costs (such as transportation and 'rent seekers'), smoothing incomes (particularly for those crops with multiple harvests) and improving net returns. Changes in cropping patterns and a shift to less labour intensive crops than opium poppy has freed up labour to work in construction and trade in the local market or even further away.

In those areas of Nangarhar and other provinces where we see this kind of qualitative change in livelihood strategies there is the potential for the current negligible levels of opium poppy cultivation to be sustained. The same pattern of change can be seen around the provincial centres of many other parts of Afghanistan, although it is notable that in those regions where there are high levels of insecurity the physical area where these changes are taking place is rather limited. In provinces as diverse as Balkh, Baghlan, Badakhshan, Helmand, Kandahar and Laghman all have areas near the provincial centre where farmers are drawing on a broader range of assets and income streams and where levels of opium poppy cultivation are low.

Each of these provinces also has areas where household dependency on opium poppy cultivation is high. In some of these provinces these areas are not too far from the provincial centre. Insecurity clearly does not support the growth of agricultural commodity and labour markets. Traders of legal agricultural goods with a marked increase in the potential for crop losses due to delays caused by roadblocks or fighting are unlikely to purchase at the farmgate or provide advances. Insecurity deters travel due to the increase in transportation costs it imposes, and also due to genuine concerns over physical security. In such an environment opium production comes to its fore offering a high-value, low-weight commodity which traders are still willing to purchase at the farmgate and, if the security situation worsens, provides a liquid asset that can be easily transported by a fleeing family.

Indeed, there are clearly signs of a deterioration in the security situation in many of the areas of the country covered by this Study. This is at its most acute in the south where there seems to be a growing perception amongst the rural population that the Government of Afghanistan will not prevail. The situation in Nangarhar also looks fragile; there is a growing perception that the authorities are weak and unable to impose their will. The unity within the tribes in Nangarhar and their potential to act collectively if pushed should not be underestimated. It should not be forgotten that the Shinwari played a critical role in the successful implementation of the Taliban prohibition of 2001 in the eastern region.

However, it is important to recognise that hostility to eradication does not necessarily manifest immediately in a violent attack against those destroying the crop. Force protection, the degree of negotiation that often accompanies eradication and the tendency to avoid the most insecure areas, mitigates against the threat of direct conflict. The relatively low number of direct attacks against eradication teams to date should not be taken as consent. People have always complained about eradication, however, there is a discernible shift in the narrative this year. Respondents in many areas are growing increasingly vocal in their criticism of the Government of Afghanistan and, in some provinces, the threat of violence against eradication is becoming the norm even if it is not realised in practice. There is a prevailing view

that levels of corruption are at an unprecedented level. It would appear to be increasingly difficult for many farmers to accept their crop being destroyed by local and provincial authorities that they believe to be corrupt or involved in the opium trade itself.

The relationship between Anti Government Elements and opium poppy cultivation remains unclear. There is a sense that the Taliban see opium poppy cultivation as a rallying cry and a way of soliciting the support of the rural population. There is the very real possibility that their strategy of encouraging opium poppy cultivation is aimed at provoking the Government of Afghanistan to adopt a more robust eradication strategy that would drive a wedge between the population, the Government of Afghanistan and the International Community.

ANNEX 1

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