

Afghanistan's Citizens' Charter and Inclusive Development: Afghanistan's Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Kuchi Population in the Citizens' Charter

Afghanistan's nomadic and semi-nomadic populations are highly vulnerable and are generally excluded from development interventions. The Citizens' Charter aims to work with this population to provide key services. This brief sets out key areas that must be considered in the design of a pastoralist program. These include assessing nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists' economic potential, their vulnerabilities, pasture access regimes, socioeconomic differentiation, social and political organization, gender relations, and existing models of services provision. Each section draws on the available literature and points to next steps, and the brief concludes by summarizing the work ahead.

KEY POINTS

- Afghanistan's nomadic and semi-nomadic populations are vital to the country's economy, ecology, and cultural heritage but are often excluded from development interventions.
- Program staff and ministries will need to gather more – and more recent – data and work with pastoral communities to develop community profiles to inform program design.
- The Citizens' Charter's analytic tools and other institutional processes and systems – such as CDCs, scorecards, grievance mechanisms and monitoring – will need to be field tested and revised to adapt to the Kuchi situation.
- Key services, such as drinking water and energy, should be provided at the Kuchi summer camps without encouraging overgrazing.
- Schooling for children and basic health services should be delivered by trained staff from within the Kuchi community.

References:

1. By Brigitta Bode, *Social and Participatory Development Consultant*. August 2018.

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INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan's nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists (generally referred to as "Kuchi") are a unique population that is hard to reach and, as a result, are generally impoverished and excluded from mainstream development interventions and services. Socioeconomic data on nomadic Kuchi elucidates their exclusion and marginalization. National Risk and Vulnerability Assessments (2007-08, 2011-12, 2016-17) put the poverty headcount of the Kuchi population at 53.9 percent, 53.8 percent, and 58.5 percent respectively; compared to a poverty head count among the wider population of 36.9 percent, 37.7 percent, and 58.5 percent, respectively.

The Kuchi are also disadvantaged when it comes to service access: given the movements of pastoral nomads, children cannot continuously attend schools, with net attendance ratios at primary schools of 6.6 percent and at secondary schools at 1.8 percent. This is compared to Afghanistan's attendance rates of 54 percent for primary schools and 31.7 percent for secondary schools in rural areas (and 74.3 percent for primary schools in and for secondary school 51.6 percent in urban areas). It is not surprising, then, that as at 2016-17 the overall adult literacy rate among Kuchi was 5.8 percent, compared to 29.6 percent of the rural and 53.7 percent of the urban population.

When it comes to health services, the situation is equally dismal: 18.5 percent of Kuchi women have access to antenatal care, compared to 46 percent of rural women. Similarly, only 35.8 percent of Kuchi households have access to improved drinking water, compared to 56.6 percent of

rural households and 91.5 percent of urban households in Afghanistan.

PASTORALISTS OF AFGHANISTAN

Pastoral nomadism is a livelihood strategy practiced by 100-200 million people in arid and semi-arid areas of the globe where the ecology is such that agriculture and animal husbandry need spatial segregation. Grazing of livestock shapes the fertility, distribution and diversity of plants, while the vegetation that is maintained sequesters carbon, reduces erosion, and maintains soils and their water holding capacity. In fact, scholars and scientists increasingly recognize that pastoralism contributes greatly to conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and domestic biodiversity. Pastoralists raise locally adapted livestock breeds (e.g. the fat-tailed sheep (Turki) and Persian Lambs (Qarakul) in Afghanistan that resist disease and droughts, and are capable of walking long distances. Pastoralist's indigenous knowledge, developed over generations, is used to feed, breed, and manage livestock.

In the late 1970s, Afghanistan's livestock sector accounted for 40 percent of the nation's exports, with 80 percent of the sheep and goat herds owned and raised by the nation's pastoral population. But as a result of decades of conflict and a prolonged drought, the Kuchi population has suffered tremendously: by 2002, Afghanistan's livestock population had reduced by 75 percent, with 60 percent of pastoral nomads losing their herds entirely. This devastation has contributed to a considerable sedentarization of the Kuchi population, though their numbers are largely unknown.

These are predominantly households that could no longer

References:

2. Central Statistics Office. Afghanistan Living Condition Survey, Kabul, CSO, 2009; 2014; 2018.
3. This section is based on Central Statistics Office. Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2016-2017. Kabul, CSO, 2018: pp. v-x. See http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/ALCS/ALCS%202016-17%20Analysis%20report%20-%20Full%20report23%20_09%202018-ilovepdf-compressed.pdf
4. See the 2016 'The Cancun Statement' on Conserving Biodiversity of Rangelands and Grasslands; also see the 2002 'DANA Declaration on Mobile Peoples and Conservation'.
5. Kelly, A.T. Rebuilding Afghanistan's Agricultural Sector. Manila: Asian Development Bank, 2003.
6. See de Beurs, K.M. and G.M. Henebry. "War, Drought, and Phenology: Changes in the Land Surface Phenology of Afghanistan since 1982" in *Journal of Land Use Science*, 2008, 3(2-3): 95-111; de Weijer, F. Pastoral Vulnerability Study. Kabul: AFSU/VAM Unit of the World Food Program, 2002.
7. The use of the term "Kuchi" (Persian: to migrate) to include sedentary people speaks to the importance of its meaning as a cultural identity, besides lifestyle (migratory) and a production mode (livestock dependent). See De Weijer, F. National multi-sectoral assessment on Kuchi. Kabul: Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, 2004.

pursue nomadic pastoralism as a livelihood strategy because they lost their flocks or part of their flocks. There are also some better-off Kuchi who have become sedentary, using their capital and profits to purchase land and practice agriculture and animal husbandry.

The last nomad census was completed in 1978. It distinguished between full nomads and semi-nomads. Full nomads are households/groups that practice nomadism year-round, moving with and living in their tents. Semi-nomads are households/groups who practice nomadism seasonally and generally spend the winters in villages and the summer in pastures. In some cases, they leave some members behind, in others they do not. The census highlighted that full nomads were prevalent in the south and west, in Paktya in the east, and in Faryab in the north. Semi-nomads, meanwhile, were more prevalent in the northeast, from Jauzjan all the way to Nangarhar.

NOMADIC AND SEMI-NOMADIC KUCHI'S ACCESS TO PASTURELAND

Afghanistan has vast pasture and grazing areas, estimated to be more than triple the agricultural areas. Kuchi households and groups spend the winter in lower-elevation areas. In the spring, they move to the mountain pastures of the Hindu Kush range, or in the northeast, to the Pamir range. When summer ends, they return to lower elevations. The nomadic lifestyle and production system depend on nomads' access

and use rights to pasture and grazing land.

Access and use rights to pasture and grazing areas in Afghanistan are not uniform. During the late 19th century and up until the 1970s, some notable Kuchi groups and families were provided with land grants (*firman*s) to summer pasture and grazing areas. *Firman*s were largely issued for lands in central, north, and northeast Afghanistan. Meanwhile, many Kuchi (regardless of ethnicity) in other areas of Afghanistan do not have such "royal" land grants.

Nor are nomad herding units stable entities. Instead, the search for individual annual pasture rights causes the reorganization of nomad groups. The influencing factors include the high inter-annual precipitation variability and with it, pasture productivity and carrying capacity, changes in wealth status (caused by bride-price transactions, sale of livestock to cover exceptional expenses, etc.) of individual households, and quarrels and disagreements among camp residents. Further, summer camp residents may not share the same winter camps or even spend winter in the same province. Summer camps appear to be more stable, with more dispersed settlement patterns than winter camps, but this does not mean they are cohesive. Services – primarily vaccinations and sheep dipping – can also be provided in key assembly areas, which are large camps, where nomads from different camps come together prior to moving to higher pastures.

In designing the institutional dimension of the Citizens' Charter – that is, the Community Development Council and its subcommittees – the program will have to be flexible and

References:

8. See section 3, where we discuss the "types" of Kuchi, reflecting workshops with Kuchi representatives from Afghanistan's 26 provinces.
9. Grotzbach, E. Afghanistan. Wissenschaftliche Landerkunden, Band 37. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990.
10. Barfield, T.J. Nomadic Pastoralism in Afghanistan: Reconstructing the Pastoral Economy. Washington DC: Bank Information Center, 2004.
11. The most productive pastures lie in the north and east of the country. These are areas of highest average annual rainfall. Research conducted during the 1970s indicates that pasture productivity ranges from 0.5 tons dry matter per hectare to 5 tons per hectare. DeBeurs, K.M. and G.M. Henebry. "War, Drought, and Phenology: Changes in the Land Surface Phenology of Afghanistan since 1982" in *Journal of Land Use Science*, 2008, 3(2-3): 95-111.
12. While the livestock obtains much of its nutrition from pasture lands, this is supplemented with grazing stubble from crop fields and sometimes by irrigated fodder (e.g. alfalfa).
13. Barfield, 2004.

consider the different contexts in which pastoral nomads operate. Questions that need to be answered include:

- What constitutes a community amongst nomadic and semi-nomadic Kuchi?
- Will notions of community vary among nomadic and semi-nomadic Kuchi across Afghanistan?
- What are the implications of this variance for the community-driven development work?

Further, existing methods currently used by Citizen's Charter used in settled communities, such as resources, social maps, and seasonal calendars, will have to be adapted to capture the unique situations of nomadic pastoralists.

The various land policies have created conflict among nomads, and between nomads and settled populations that have had wide-reaching consequences. The granting of land rights to some nomad groups, but not others, and the disruption to the agro-pastoral system of mountain populations as a result of the *firman*s have created conflict. While these conflicts have often played out in "ethnic" dynamics, the underlying reasons are property rights. Conflict over pastures continues to be a major issue and resolving this will require the coordination of several government ministries. Tensions and resentments between different groups continue to prevail, and they will present challenges when establishing representative community institutions. But setting up Kuchi (CDCs) and subcommittees does also present an opportunity to open a dialogue, renegotiate terms of access and use, and overcome some of these tensions.

The land policies led to land-grabbing by commanders and warlords, and sometimes the expansion of rainfed agriculture in pastures. The policy of declaring pastures "government land or public land" and the lack of enforcement for sustainable use has created a "free-for-all". Warlords and commanders – especially in the north – are limiting legitimate resource users' access to pastureland as well as converting pastureland to farm land. In other areas, communities created settlements for in-migrants and extended cultivation into pasture.

References:

14. Barfield, 2004:3, writes that it takes 40 sheep to support a family and those that fall below this that cannot maintain a nomadic lifestyle.

15. Grotzbach, 1990.

In April 2017, President Ghani approved a new Land Management Law (LML). Already passed by the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House), the LML is now awaiting passage by the Meshrano Jirga (Upper House). The 2017 LML grants "access and use rights" of public pastures to "those citizens of the country whose job is livestock." It prohibits buying, selling, endowing, dividing, or renting pastureland. It is important that the LML answer questions of pasture management – that is, who is responsible for ensuring sustainable use of the resource? This will require defining an access regime that explains who can use the land, a management strategy, and the means for enforcement. Will this be the responsibility of the villagers who live near the pasture? What will be the role of nomads in the management of summer and winter pasture and grazing lands? What will the role of the state be? Unless these questions are answered, there is a likelihood that some pastures will be treated as "open access" by competing groups, with the possible outcome of overgrazing.

These institutional issues and questions will have to be worked out over the long-term between the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), which provides the nation's technical lead on Natural Resources Management (NRM), and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), which is the "community development" lead ministry in rural areas.

SOCIOECONOMIC DIFFERENTIATION AMONGST THE KUCHI

The marginalization and impoverishment of the Kuchi coincides with the decline of pastoral nomadism that began in the early part of the 20th century and has culminated in the current situation. The reasons for this decline are multiple: the loss of pasture to cultivation; the closing of the border with Pakistan, and with it, the reduction of accessible winter pastures; the various droughts (1971/72; 1995-2002/3; and 2008) that led to herd losses; and, during the past few decades, sustained conflict, which affects nomads' movements.

Not all Kuchi are poor; in fact, there are nomadic and semi-

nomadic Kuchi who have invested in land and business (often transport) and are well-off. There are also sedentary Kuchi who have used their profits to buy farmland and settle down. Some are fully settled but have maintained their herds and hired shepherds to go to summer pastures. But compared with rural and urban populations, the prevalence of poverty amongst Kuchi households is considerably higher.

There is virtually no socioeconomic data that disaggregates nomad and semi-nomad groups, although discussions with Kuchi representatives have provided the following impressionistic picture:

- Sedentary: 30-40 percent of the pastoral population own no livestock and no land and eke out a living through the sale of daily wage labor.
- Semi-nomadic: 30-40 percent are semi-sedentary, move seasonally with their herds and leaving family members behind or live in villages in the winter and move to pastures only in the summer.
- Nomadic: 20-40 percent are groups/families that have retained their nomadic lifestyle (regional variation).

As with the sedentary population, Afghanistan's pastoral families practice some social customs that are detrimental to families' economic well-being. These include high bride-prices (in Paktika, as high as AFA 600,000, or \$748, and for pastoralists in Helmand, as high as 100 sheep), as well as prohibitive wedding and funereal costs. These expenditures drive families to take out loans, creating a cycle of debt from which it is difficult to extricate oneself and this contributes to nomads settling down and giving up animal husbandry.

The Citizens' Charter program will need to understand the composition of nomad and semi-nomad incomes, as well as the relationships among these people and groups. For example, are there patron-client relations? Is there indebtedness? Finally, ministries will also work closely with MRRD, responsible for the Citizens' Charter, providing

References:

16. Barfield, 2004.
17. Glatzer, 1996, Grotzbach, 1990.
18. Note: Afghan Nomads and semi-nomads largely hold sheep (generally 90 percent of their flock) as they are more profitable and easier to herd. They may also keep some goats (to make their tents from goat hair) and pack animals.

Balikci, A. 1981.

data to the MAIL on pastoralists camps, movements, and coordination in terms of establishing and building capacity of NRM committees from an institutional perspective. MAIL will need to provide the technical support (pasture management, livestock health, etc.) and support in terms of mapping the value chains of various key products and understanding the existing market opportunities.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Nomad and semi-nomad Kuchi, just as sedentary populations, have local leaders. Of importance, are leaders called Sarkhels. One of the duties of the Sarkhel is to host visitors and speak for the group to the outside world. Decisions, however, such as when and where to migrate, are reached by consensus.

There appears to be considerable variation as to how pastoral groups organize their activities – although flock size is a key factor. Flocks are generally individually owned (unless they are owned in an extended family) and may vary in size from 50 to 500 sheep. A smaller flock moves too fast and a larger flock is difficult to control by one shepherd. Flock size fluctuates, based on various factors: disease, cold, inheritance, bride-price, break-up of the family (e.g. a son who wants to establish his own household), and the managerial ability of the flock owner. Most groups (generally close or distant relatives) operate between 400-600 sheep on migratory routes and combine their flocks.

Our understanding of Kuchi's social organization is limited and more has to be learned. The empirical work on Kuchis is largely from the 1960s through the 1990s; there is little knowledge as to their current practices and social organization and how they have adapted to the conflict environment. Further, we need to learn more about how summer camps are organized and the variation that exists so that CDCs and their subcommittees can be organized in a way that reflects the realities on the ground.

GENDER RELATIONS

Nomad Kuchi women, just as their sedentary counterparts, are predominantly responsible for reproductive activities – that is, child rearing, cooking, serving food, cleaning, washing clothes and utensils, sewing, building clay ovens, weaving and repairing tents. However, the gendered division of labor among Kuchi is more flexible than that within sedentary populations. Men, when needed, provide support with childcare, cooking, fetching water, and are generally responsible for collecting fuel wood – all tasks that men in sedentary communities rarely if ever carry out. Kuchi women are also engaged in productive activities: milking, processing milk, knotting carpets, assistance in lambing, and migrating, which points to their pivotal role in maintaining the nomad lifestyle. Activities, such as herding, which require movement outside the camp onto the pasture, are largely undertaken by men, though occasionally women may also participate. As Tapper has noted, among Pashtun pastoral nomads there appear to be few “... specific taboos prohibiting the participation of either sex.”

When it comes to control over household resources, products, and wealth, however, Kuchi women tend to be as disadvantaged as sedentary women, with men controlling productive resources. Thus, pastoral women are entirely dependent on their husbands with virtually no chance of converting their labor power in productive activities into income that they may access and have control over. Similarly, women’s decision-making powers are limited. However, women may influence decisions in terms of alliances, something which largely has to do with the need to seek pasture near areas where women may have relatives.

Just as the Citizens’ Charter’s community development work explores women’s mobility, work, and wages in settled communities, there is a need to further explore Kuchi women’s freedom of movement and their roles in productive activities among different nomad groups and their compensation. Further, given women’s huge workload

References:

20. Rao, A. 1986. “Roles, Status, and Niches: A Comparison of Peripatetic and Pastoral Women in Afghanistan” in *Nomadic Peoples*, 21/22.
21. Tapper, N. 1980. *Matrons and Mistresses. Women and Boundaries in Two Middle Eastern Societies*. *Archives Europeennes De Sociologie*, XXI(1): 59-79.
22. Rao, A. 1986: 164.
23. Grotzbach, 1990; Glatzer, 1981.

in camps, CDC and subcommittee activities should be carefully considered in terms of timing, so as not to further overburden women.

PROVIDING SERVICES TO SEMI-NOMADIC AND NOMADIC PASTORALISTS

Arrangements to provide development services will have to consider the “camps” in which nomadic and semi-nomadic groups reside for the longest period of the year – the summer camp and along migratory routes. As Kuchi groups tend to disperse and move to different winter camps, CDCs may have to be flexible and be reconstituted each year at the summer camp. In all likelihood, a certain percentage of CDC members will change. It is proposed that CDCs and their subcommittees are, as Barfield suggests, organized along geographic lines: all households that use a summer camp. This may include different tribes, sub-tribes, and ethnic groups. If the number of households exceeds 200 and/or if the distances between different summer camps in the same grazing lands are too far, MRRD may consider establishing more than one CDC, but should cluster them, so that key activities like pasture management can be coordinated among all resource users, including local populations.

Pasture assessment, with the support of MAIL, and subsequent management strategies to increase the productivity of the pastureland, must include the resource users (both nomad and local populations). Creating common NRM subcommittees among nomads and the sedentary local populations is key, particularly in areas, where relationships may be fraught.

Unlike in the Citizens’ Charter, in which there are Minimum Services Standards and drinking water for all, plus one of three additional services (transport, irrigation, or energy), MRRD might consider a basic block grant model, with a negative menu. Key services that Kuchi representatives in the various meetings have highlighted include drinking

water, solar panels to generate electricity, education for children and access to basic health services, basic services for livestock, and economic development support to improve their goods and market them. A key investment will be drinking water (for humans and livestock) in summer camps. However, care should be taken so that overgrazing is not encouraged; it is the water limitation in summer pastures that often limits the number of livestock and reduces the chances of overgrazing.

Other services requested by the Kuchi representatives are fodder storage in winter camps and along migratory routes, mobile schools and clinics, voting centers, rehabilitation of the roads that constitute key migratory routes, and access to national identity cards. Some of these services – voting centers, access to identity cards, livestock services (vaccinations), and sheep dipping stations to control disease, could be provided at key mountain passes, bridges, river fords and assembly areas, where nomads concentrate during migration. Repair of roads and bridges of key migratory routes should also be considered because this can greatly aid nomad access to pasture areas.

It is also proposed that Kuchi groups along their migratory routes are linked with CDCs from villages they cross or are nearby to assist with their immediate needs: drinking water for humans and livestock, purchase of fodder or access to stubble in crop lands. This is not to say that nomad groups have not already established such contacts, but that a more systematized approach through which CDCs and local populations are sensitized to the situation of the nomad Kuchi, their vulnerability and their importance to the nation's economy, ecology, and cultural heritage. Finally, teachers, social organizers, midwives, and nurses from among the Kuchi *population should be trained to work in the summer camps, where they also reside, so that women can access key services and girls can attend school. This will ensure that the initiative is sustainable, once the subprogram ends.*

CONCLUSION

The work ahead will need to build on existing knowledge to explore how, over the past few decades, Afghanistan's pastoral population has adapted to a state of conflict. This

will require an understanding of pastoralists' movements. Program staff will need to work with pastoral communities to develop maps that show winter and summer pastures (as well as assembly areas), camp compositions, the social and political organization of their "communities," and gender relations – and how these vary across nomad groups. Maps of migratory routes should identify infrastructure that needs repair (such as bridges or roads) and resources should be mobilized for other ministries responsible for transport infrastructure to take on the work. The program should work with other ministries to consider "one-stop-shops" in nomad assembly areas to provide identity cards, and register voters, etc.

Key services at the summer camps, such as drinking water and renewable energy, should be planned for through innovative, sustainable, and ecologically friendly ways. All engineers should be trained in terms of water management in high pasture areas to ensure that water provision does not lead to overgrazing. Schooling for children and basic health services should be delivered by trained staff from within the Kuchi community. Coordination and cooperation among different line ministries will be crucial. For instance, the MRRD staff should work with Arazi (the Land Authority) to understand the new Land Management Law and with MAIL to determine sustainable management arrangements of grazing and pasture lands and to flesh out a more detailed role for NRM subcommittees in terms of pastureland.

Just as with the data that is collected for the settled population, the program must develop community profiles to capture this data. All of Citizens' Charter's analytic tools have to be adapted, field-tested, and revised, and all other processes (scorecards, grievances, social audit, and various monitoring formats) will have to be adapted to the Kuchi situation.

Finally, there should be a means to sensitize CDCs and their communities that lie near migration routes or pasture areas and work with them to consider how they might help ease the hardships that nomads face during migration.

References:

24. Barfield: 2004: 7.
25. Barfield, 2004: 6.