



**Helmand Annual Review 2010**



12 March 2011

## HELMAND PLAN ANNUAL REVIEW 2010

Over the course of 2010, security, governance, and socio-economic development have improved significantly in Helmand. This report, jointly prepared by the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team, Regional Command (South West) and the Regional Platform (South West), provides a broad overview and assessment of activities in Helmand Province over the past year. In 2010, the focus throughout Helmand Province was on driving the insurgents from population centres and helping the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan restore legitimate government structures. In 2011, the improved security will allow a deepening of GIROA governance and improved delivery of services. We acknowledge that the challenges in Helmand remain substantial and will continue to coordinate our efforts.

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## Introduction

This report provides a broad overview and assessment of activities in Helmand Province in 2010. It highlights actions by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and support provided by the international community. It is intended to inform government officials of the coalition partners: Afghanistan, Denmark, Estonia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The report has been jointly prepared by the civilian-led Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team (which is staffed by military and civilian representatives from each of the coalition partners), the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Regional Command (South West) and the Regional Platform (South West) of the U.S. Mission to Afghanistan.

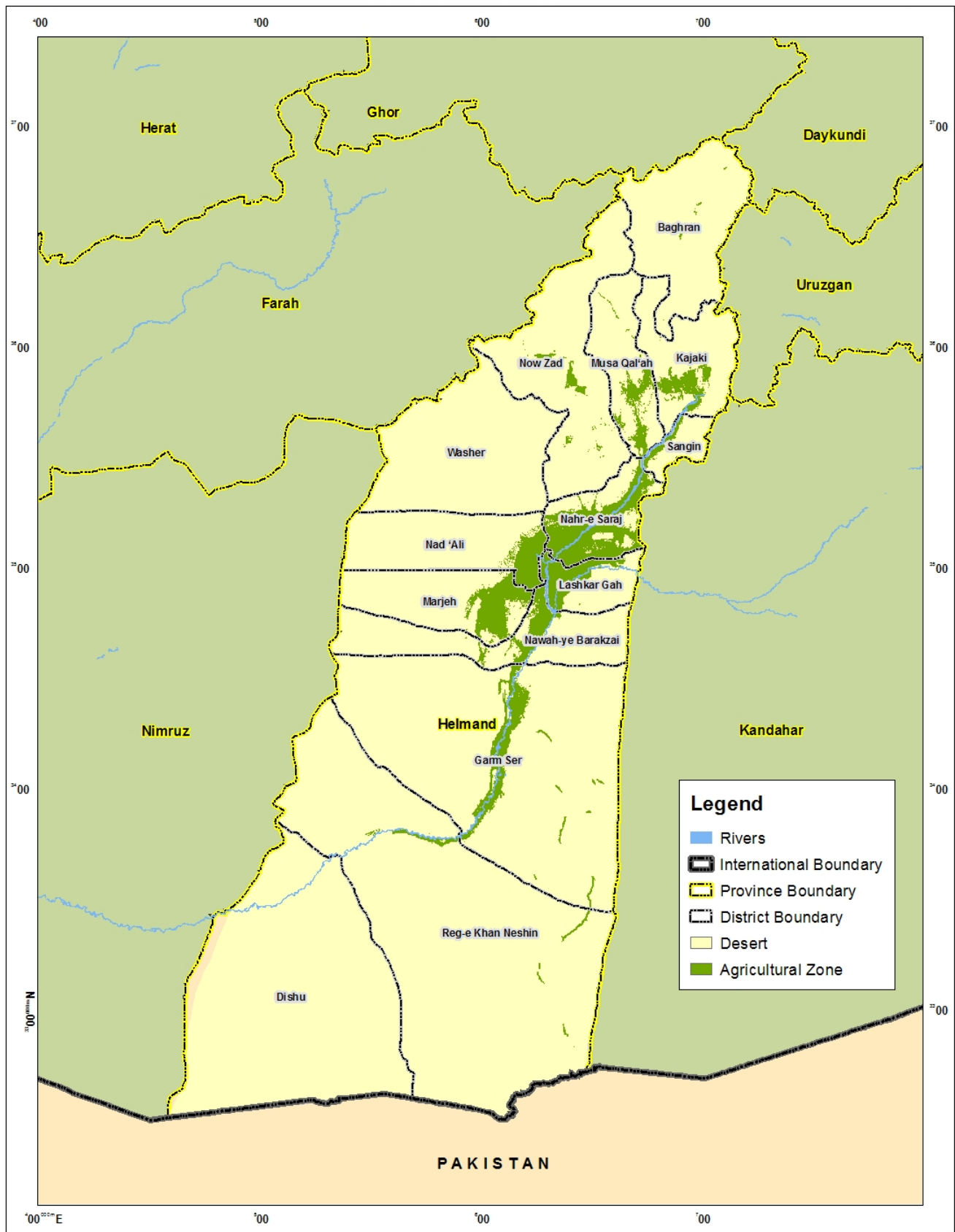
Data and statistics come from the Helmand Monitoring and Evaluation Programme (HMEP) surveys unless otherwise noted. This polling data was augmented with information from the NATO-ISAF Afghan Nationwide Quarterly Assessment Research (ANQAR) surveys and other independent surveys, notably by the Asia Foundation, as well as information from Regional Command (South West) and the PRT District Support Teams across the province.

This assessment focuses on progress against the 2010 Helmand Plan. The Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team, in consultation with GIROA and the Regional Command, produced the 2010 Helmand Plan to align the international community's efforts with GIROA's aims. The plan's overarching goal is:

**Helmand's population increasingly rejects the insurgency and supports the Afghan government.**

To achieve this goal, the international community's efforts have been focused on the following shared objectives:

- a) The central districts in Helmand, Lashkar Gah, Narh-e Saraj (Gereshk), Garm Ser, Nawah-ye Barakzai, Nad 'Ali and Marjeh, are secure and increasingly under full Afghan government control.
- b) Outlying districts do not serve as staging areas for insurgent activity across the region and deliver an acceptable level of security.
- c) There is freedom of movement in, around and through these districts to outside centres of economic opportunity and to regional centres.
- d) A critical mass of the population accepts the legitimacy of the institutions of state in Helmand and rejects unlawful alternatives.
- e) GIROA rule of law structures are seen as more legitimate than shadow justice and preferred by a majority of the population.
- f) The opium trade's significance to Helmand's governance, economy, and security is reduced.
- g) Conditions are being set for the future emergence of a Helmand Economic Corridor as a driver of overall development.



Province & District Boundaries  
This map has been produced using the  
AGCHD 2010 Province & District Boundary  
displaying 34 Provinces & 322 Districts.

## Executive Summary

Over the course of 2010, security has improved significantly across the Central Helmand River Valley as a result of the increased International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) presence, the increasing capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and the weakening of the insurgency. In 2010, the focus throughout Helmand Province was on driving the insurgents from population centres and helping GIRoA restore legitimate government structures. In 2011, the improved security will allow a deepening of GIRoA governance and improved delivery of services in central Helmand.

In past years, residents of Helmand saw ISAF troops clear areas and then not have sufficient forces to hold them. The substantially increased number of ISAF forces in Helmand, improved logistics and support, and the increasingly capable ANSF have cleared and can now hold the Central Helmand River Valley. Targeted operations against insurgent commanders and supply routes further weakened the insurgency, and by the end of 2010, troops pushed into northern and southern Helmand. In the north, the security agreement with tribal elders in Sangin, a culmination of efforts throughout 2010, offers prospects of further marginalising the insurgents. It also enabled improvement of the road through Sangin toward the Kajaki Dam, a critical requirement for transporting materials required to repair and expand the hydroelectric station at the dam and increase the electricity available in Kandahar City.

As a result of the enhanced security, once isolated district centres are now connected. Commerce and district bazaars are growing. GIRoA governance, once primarily visible in the provincial capital, is expanding to the districts. Government officials can and do travel by car within the central districts and hold public outreach meetings. Four districts in the Central Helmand River Valley and Musa Qala have elected representative district community councils. These councils work with communities to develop prioritised district delivery plans. Districts will receive GIRoA funding for their plans through the District Development Programme, a multi-donor fund that is managed by the Ministry of Finance in Kabul. It started funding projects in Nad 'Ali during 2010 and will gradually replace direct investments by the international community. Surveys have confirmed an increasingly positive perception of government and an increasing confidence that GIRoA is committed to providing social and economic development.

In the central districts, the brutal Taleban justice system no longer holds sway. Community-based dispute resolution systems through tribal elders and mullahs are re-emerging and are the preferred sources of justice for the vast majority of people. A fledgling statutory justice system is developing at the district level, as judges, prosecutors, and civil dispute mediators (*huquqs*) are able to be safely posted to district centres. Although the statutory justice system has resolved few cases as yet, trust in the system is growing, and it has the prospect of providing a viable option for dispute resolution.

Poppy cultivation has declined from its peak in 2008, through a combination of GIRoA and internationally sponsored programs that encourage licit crops. Due to the improved security, the provincial governor's Governor-Led Eradication programme is able to credibly enforce the government's anti-poppy laws over a wider area than in previous years.

Numerous health and education facilities were built or refurbished in 2010, although these services remain very poor by international standards and suffer from a severe shortage of trained staff.

Challenges remain, and the situation is still fragile. With ISAF and ANSF working together, security forces have sufficient numbers and capabilities to prevent the insurgents from destabilising the central Helmand districts, but a small number of insurgents can exercise a disproportionate influence on the public through intimidation and assassination.

Furthermore, sustaining the gains in security as ISAF troops begin to adopt a support role requires that the ANSF—and in particular the Afghan National Army (ANA)—have the capacity to assume greater responsibility. The ANA are increasingly leading operations, despite significant challenges with respect to recruitment, logistics, developing leaders, and building specialist capabilities. They will require substantial support and training in 2011 and beyond to ensure they are capable of assuming their increased responsibilities as Helmand begins the transition to ANSF-led security.

Police training and professionalism has noticeably increased, although the police remain challenged by allegations of corruption and abuse. Low levels of literacy within the police—less than 10 percent—hinder the police's transition from a paramilitary force into a police service that supports law enforcement. Local communities are increasingly taking responsibility for their own protection through participation in armed 'neighbourhood watch' programmes. Although controversial, because of the risks of creating local militias, the ISAF-funded Interim Security for Critical Infrastructure (ISCI) program was a decisive component in securing the hold on Marjeh.

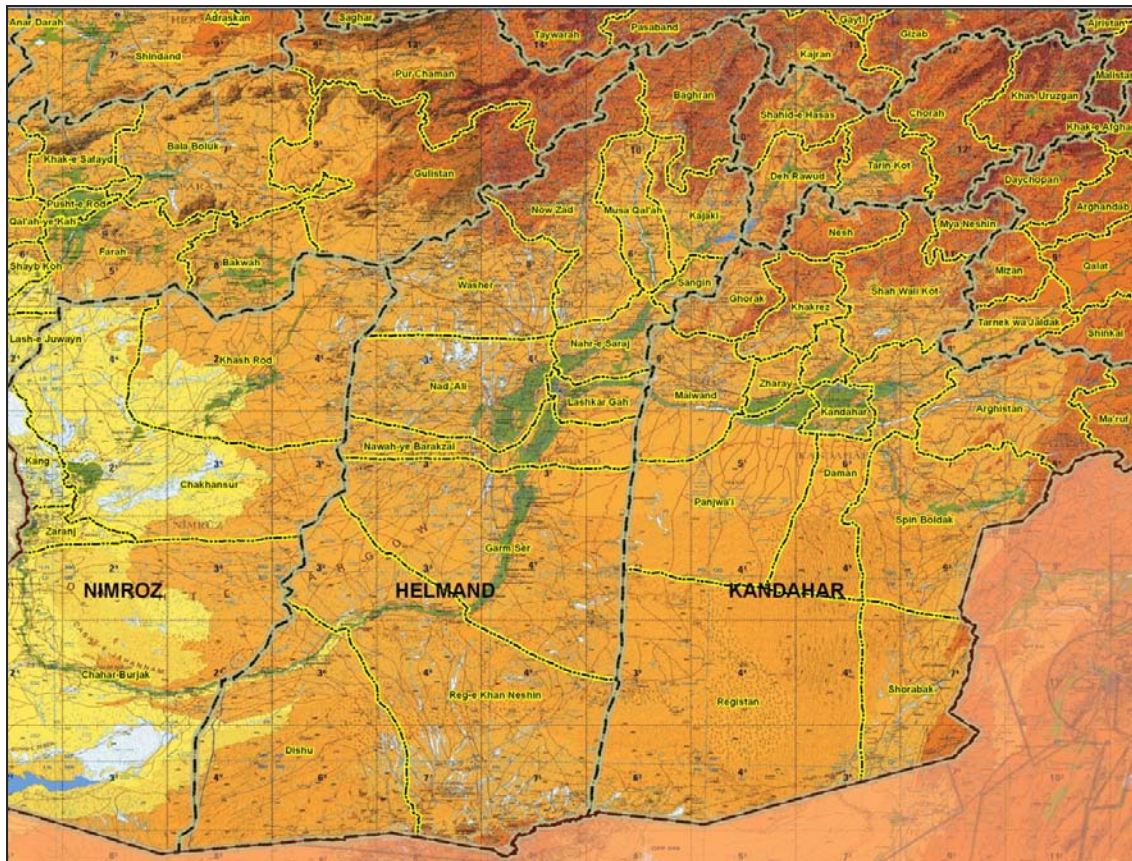
The layer of competent GIRoA and ANSF personnel is very thin, and the loss of a few key people could have destabilising short-term effects. Building depth within institutions is important to building public confidence that GIRoA governance is sustainable.

As security improves and government presence is established, communities are increasingly looking for qualitative improvements in their lives. Responding to these demands is crucial to promoting GIRoA's legitimacy but aspirations need to be calibrated with the finite availability of financial resources and the severe constraints to human capital. Managing expectations will be critical to prevent disillusionment with the government and the international community. Corruption remains a considerable problem. Outlying districts may also start questioning why development efforts are so heavily invested in the central districts and begin agitating for more assistance.

The lessons from 2010 are being incorporated into the Helmand Plan 1390 – 1393 (calendar years 2011 – 2014), which will guide support from the international community and help take Helmand Province through the Transition process. Failure to exploit the gains in 2010 could put this Transition at risk. The withdrawal of ISAF combat forces depends upon institutionalising an adequate level of governance, public services, and security forces that GIRoA can sustain in the longer term. Based on progress in 2010, Transition is achievable but remains a substantial challenge requiring continued coordinated efforts.

Negotiations over a political settlement are taking place on a national level and will have clear implications for Helmand. Whether long-term peace and security will be achieved in Helmand depends on attaining a national-level political settlement and a balance of power amongst the Pashtun tribes in Helmand that allows all tribes to believe that their interests are adequately represented by the emerging institutions of government.

## Helmand Province



Helmand province is directly tied to the overall effort in Afghanistan. Historically, the area has been relatively prosperous and dominated by agriculture, with strong political and economic ties to neighbouring Kandahar.

Geographically, the province is divided into three regions: the mountainous north where the peaks reach 3000 meters (10,000 feet) above sea level, the central region where farms depend on irrigation, and the sparsely populated desert in the south. The bulk of the population lives in the green zone along the rivers. The Helmand River flows from northern Helmand through the Central Helmand River Valley, and then flows west through Nimroz Province into Iran. Helmand is linked to Kandahar by the Arghandab River that flows through Kandahar City before merging with the Helmand River near Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital of Helmand.

In June 2010, the increase in troops enabled ISAF to organise operations in southern Afghanistan into two Regional Commands, with the Regional Command (South West) assuming control of the efforts in Helmand and Nimroz. In the latter half of 2010, ISAF Joint Command's focus shifted to Kandahar City, the most important urban area in southern Afghanistan. Although this constrains the ISAF resources allocated to Helmand, Regional Command (South West) maintains its focus on Helmand because the insurgency in the Central and Upper Helmand River Valleys must be addressed in support of the campaign for Kandahar.

## Security: The Military Campaign

**Objective:** The central districts in Helmand of Lashkar Gah, Nahr-e Sarraj, Garm Ser, Nawah-ye Barakzai, Nad 'Ali and Marjeh are secure and increasingly under full government control. Outlying districts do not serve as staging areas for insurgent activity across the region and deliver an acceptable level of security.

**Assessment:**

- Central districts have been secured. In 2010, ISAF and ANSF had sufficient numbers and capability to clear and hold them.
- In 2010, the focus throughout Helmand was on driving the insurgents from population centres and helping GIRoA restore legitimate government structures. In 2011, the improved security will allow a deepening of GIRoA governance and improved delivery of services in central Helmand.
- In northern Helmand, security gains are not yet solidified—they remain fragile and require further investment with governance and stabilisation.
- Insurgent staging areas have been disrupted in areas surrounding the Helmand River Valley and pushed to increasingly more remote areas.
- Insurgents may increase their intimidation and assassination campaigns in 2011 in an effort to undermine the security in the central districts.

**Overview.** The fight has noticeably changed in 2010. In prior years, residents of Helmand experienced a vicious cycle in which ISAF troops cleared areas but did not have sufficient forces to hold them, allowing the insurgents to return. At the start of 2010, ISAF forces were overextended, unable to hold ground or disrupt insurgent activity much beyond their bases. The boost in forces overwhelmed the insurgency, demonstrated ISAF and the ANSF's commitment to the area, and is beginning to convince the population that GIRoA will provide lasting security. Regional Command (South West) has also aggressively pursued insurgent smuggling networks throughout Helmand, reducing the availability of IED components, weapons, and the insurgents' revenue streams. The targeting of insurgent leaders has removed many mid-level commanders, and many others have left Helmand, seeking sanctuary in other areas.

**Central Helmand.** By mid-2010, the focus of military action had shifted from clearing out insurgents to holding the central districts (see text box on Operation Moshtarak). Both residents and military commanders have noticed the improved security: in December 2010, residents of the central districts listed education as their top priority for government investment, rather than security. The municipal

*76% of respondents in central Helmand believe security has improved in the past 6 months.*

centre of Lashkar Gah has been relatively peaceful all year and is now controlled by the ANSF. The ANSF are also tentatively taking control of small areas within the rest of central Helmand, with on-going ISAF mentoring and support.

### **Operation Moshtarak (Together)**

Built on an extensive irrigation system installed with American aid in the 1950s, Marjeh is an oasis in the desert and more a string of villages surrounded by farmland than a town. In 2010, Marjeh was critically important to the insurgency psychologically and financially. It was viewed as the centre of the insurgency within central Helmand, and it was a hub of drug production.

The coalition launched Operation Moshtarak on 13 February 2010. With more than 7,000 international and Afghan forces, the operation to clear the town of insurgents was the biggest operation since the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan. The initial kinetic operations lasted several weeks and were highly successful. Then the insurgents, unwilling to give up revenue from the spring poppy harvest, attempted to reassert influence through an intimidation campaign targeting the population and government officials. The much-promised immediate expansion of government services ('government in a box') did not materialize. Then-commander of the international forces, General Stanley McChrystal, dubbed Marjeh a "bleeding ulcer" last May.

By autumn, Marjeh had experienced a turnaround. Coalition Forces had made a tactical shift from defending the centre of Marjeh to aggressively chasing down insurgents on the outskirts of town. A more effective district governor, a new chief of police and an interim community council were appointed over the summer. The council began with representatives from central Marjeh, with members from outlying areas in northern and southern Marjeh starting to attend meetings as security improved. Elections for a District Community Council were held in March 2011.

The population is benefiting from the increased security. Thousands of Marjeh residents who fled to avoid the military offensive a year ago are returning to their homes. Ten bazaars have opened and economic activity has been resuscitated. Schools are starting to open after the Taleban closed them in 2008. Marjeh was part of the Governor's Food Zone Programme for the first time in 2010, and GIRoA distributed nearly 1500 tons of subsidised wheat seeds to 5400 farmers in Marjeh. Eleven polling centres were open in the 2010 parliamentary elections—compared to none for the 2009 presidential election.

The population now provides tips about insurgents' movements and the locations of homemade bombs buried in the ground. The most revealing indicator of progress is the population's willingness to participate in the armed 'neighbourhood watch' program called the Interim Security for Critical Infrastructure (ISCI) programme. This programme consists of about 800 townspeople who have volunteered to take a public stand against the insurgents by guarding their neighbourhoods against Taleban encroachment. In early 2011, plans to integrate the ISCI programme with the GIRoA-sponsored Afghan Local Police initiative were in progress.

**Northern Helmand.** The surge of additional forces in to the Upper Gereshk Valley and ongoing operations in Musa Qal'ah and Sangin have pushed insurgents from key staging grounds into Kajaki, Baghran, and neighbouring provinces, mostly into areas with no permanent ISAF presence. The insurgents used these areas to attack the central districts and to restrain expansion of ISAF and GIRoA influence into northern Helmand. The improvement in security across northern Helmand contributed to the agreement to allow road improvements in Sangin.

*70% of respondents in Sangin reported that security has increased over the past 6 months.*

### **Sangin Security Agreement**

On 1 January 2011, a tentative political and military accommodation was reached with grassroots leaders of the main tribe in the area, the Alikozai. This agreement enabled improvements of the road through Sangin toward the Kajaki Dam. Although the agreement remains fragile and it is clear that a permanent political settlement has not yet been reached, the accord enabled road construction in January and February 2011 at a pace that exceeded expectations.

Several factors led to this agreement. When the U.S. Marine Corps assumed responsibility for the area in October, they took an aggressive approach, pushing into insurgent strongholds. They reduced the number of fixed positions and increased the number of patrols conducted each day. A new district governor was appointed in November, and personal negotiations with Provincial Governor Mangal (among others) facilitated a slow confidence-building process.

The Sangin agreement remains vulnerable to pressure from insurgent groups that retain a strong link to senior Taleban leaders, to local narcotics and smuggling networks, and to a sense of uncertainty in the local community on the next steps. Much of the population remains on the fence, pragmatically assessing whether GIRoA or the insurgents are stronger and more resilient.

**Southern Helmand.** In the south, ISAF have displaced the main smuggling route from Pakistan, forcing insurgents to use more difficult routes to the east and west. After successfully conducting clearing operations in southern Garm Ser in December, ISAF now maintains a line of control along the Helmand River from Lashkar Gah to Reg-e Khan Neshin. The reduction in insurgent supplies reaching central Helmand has improved security across the province. In 2011, Regional Command (South West) is challenging other smuggling routes with operations in Nimroz to the west and in Maiwand district (Kandahar Province) to the east.

**Issues and Challenges:** The insurgency has been significantly weakened in 2010, but it has not been defeated. The increasing area under GIRoA control has caused the insurgents to change tactics. Mullah Omar, the head of the Taleban, released a paper in April 2010 telling followers to refrain from beheadings and kidnappings, in an effort to gain popular support. In December 2010, he revised his advice, stating that people working with GIRoA should be hanged. If insurgencies become more brutal as

they lose popular support and feel under threat, then a shift to more brutal tactics might indicate a weakened insurgency.

Insurgents must regain and maintain their momentum or they will lose their supporters. The 'spring fighting season' starts after the poppy harvest, at which time insurgents may increase their intimidation and assassination attempts in an effort to undermine security in the central districts. Intimidation or spectacular attacks by a few insurgents could have a disproportionate effect by reducing the public's confidence or the willingness of GIRoA officials to live outside the provincial capital.

ISAF and ANSF have sufficient numbers and resources to sustain security through 2011. The intensity of the insurgents' campaign in spring will enable an assessment of the insurgency's strength, resilience, and plans, and the extent to which 2010's security gains are sustainable by ANSF as ISAF transitions to a support role.

## Sustaining Security: ISAF and ANSF Development

### Key Points

- ISAF capability increased substantially, allowing ISAF to hold areas.
- ANA capabilities are improving, and they are increasingly leading operations.
- AUP training and professionalism has improved, from a low baseline, but further improvement is still required.
- The ability of the ANSF to take greater responsibility is critical to sustain transition.

**Increased ISAF Capability.** Over the course of 2010, ISAF troop numbers increased significantly. More importantly, the United States Marine Corps brought a variety of combat support units that have enhanced ISAF's capability in Helmand beyond what might be expected from the raw increase in numbers. The scale of intelligence collection and analysis has increased, dramatically improving ISAF's ability to target insurgent networks. Greater numbers of helicopters resupply and transport a force spread over a much larger portion of the province than in 2009. Ground forces are able to receive immediate fire support, when necessary, due to additional close air support helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. The tanks that arrived in December have further increased ISAF's attack capability and have had the psychological effect of demonstrating ISAF's power in highly contested areas. The Marine Logistics Group has provided a dedicated resupply capability throughout the province and enabled improvements to key infrastructure. These capabilities and, possibly more importantly, the sheer scale of ISAF's operations has built a positive momentum that increasingly reassures the population that GIRoA will prevail.

### ***Air Ground Task Force***

- *Regional Command (South West) is the only command that has direct control over its fixed wing close air support assets.*
- *UK and United States Marine Corps rotary wing assets are grouped together to provide enhanced flexibility to commanders.*
- *Integrated ground, air and logistics operations have greatly enhanced the effectiveness and reach of ISAF.*

**Afghan National Army.** Sustaining the gains in security as ISAF troops begin to pull back requires that the ANSF—and in particular the ANA—have the capacity to assume greater responsibility. The significant effort devoted to developing the Afghan National Army over the past several years is paying off. In 2010, ANA *kandaks* (battalions) are increasingly leading operations with less reliance upon their ISAF partners, and a few *tolais* (companies) are working independently in small areas. HMEP and national surveys consistently show the ANA to be the GIRoA institution Helmandis most trust to provide security. The ANA and Afghan Uniformed Police successfully provided security for the parliamentary elections in September 2010, demonstrating that the ANA and Afghan National Police can overcome the challenges of coordinating their efforts. The ANA man significantly more checkpoints and outposts than at the start of 2010, a crucial factor in improving the public's perception of security. Helmandis report that permanent and visible checkpoints make them feel more secure by deterring the insurgents from operating around the checkpoint.

### ***Afghans perceive the ANA as “helpful”***

- *The ANA can overrule local police actions (e.g., after a traffic accident when the police are demanding bribes from everyone involved).*
- *The ANA are seen as more active and better equipped than the police.*
- *The ANA are seen as less corrupt: they don’t take bribes or steal.*

*(source: HMEP focus groups Q4 2010)*

**Issues and challenges:** Whilst the ANA can conduct successful military operations, they suffer from a lack of leadership across the chain of command, poor literacy levels, slow construction of improved facilities, difficulties resupplying and maintaining equipment, and limited support capabilities, including aviation, intelligence, counter-IED, and medical facilities. ISAF-provided mentors, advisors, and support units will need to remain with the ANA throughout the Transition process to fill these gaps.

Few southern Pashtuns have joined the ANA. The many ANA from northern Afghanistan are viewed as foreigners, as they do not speak the same language or

share the same culture as the Helmandis—although surveys indicate that many Helmandis view the ANA as less corrupt and more professional than the local police.

The ANA is undermanned and has been continuously involved in fierce fighting. It does not have a unit rotation policy that provides units with dedicated time for vacation, individual training, or unit training. To help alleviate these issues, GIRoA increased the number of rifle companies in each of 215<sup>th</sup> Corps’ battalions from three to five and implemented a new ANA leave policy on 1 January 2011.

**Afghan Uniformed Police.** The police are improving more slowly than the ANA, as significantly less effort was spent developing the police force in previous years. In 2010, this discrepancy is starting to be rectified. With both the Helmand Police Training Centre (which opened in 2010) and the Joint Security Academy Shorab (open since early 2010) operating in Helmand, 2700 police were able to attend the 8-week basic police training course during the last 14 months. Police are being trained in basic military skills—important in the context of their current role in the province—as well as in criminal law and how to operate within the framework of the justice system. Given the level of threat within Helmand, the police are viewed primarily as a paramilitary force that mans checkpoints along main roads and in population centres. The new provincial chief of police, who arrived in May 2010, has improved performance and accountability at the provincial police headquarters, although he has limited ability to remove incompetent or corrupt district chiefs of police or checkpoint commanders. Although some police retain more loyalty to their checkpoint commander or tribal elder than to the district chief of police, the police force’s professionalism is increasing as more police attend basic training.

### ***Increasing perceptions of the police***

*Satisfaction with the police’s ability to provide security in central Helmand rose from 63% in Q3 to 84% in Q4.*

**Issues and challenges:** In 2010, the Helmand police force had only 10 officers who had graduated from the police training academy in Kabul. Although 130 academy graduates arrived in March 2011, the lack of trained officers and the poor literacy rate within the police inhibit the police’s transition from a

paramilitary force into a police service that supports law enforcement. Illiterate police cannot take down witness statements or fill out evidence chain of custody forms. The police's role in law enforcement and its relationship with the rule of law institutions will become increasingly important as the statutory justice system expands in Helmand. As the police mentors increasingly move away from advising on basic administration and solving logistical problems to tackling core policing activities, additional civilian law enforcement advisors will be necessary. The legacy of abusive and corrupt police hinders efforts to improve the population's perception of the police, although the HMEP survey noted a rise in public confidence in the police in the last quarter of 2010.

#### ***Female police in Helmand***

*The provincial police headquarters provides training and support to the 16 female police officers in Helmand.*

**Afghan Local Police.** Local communities are increasingly taking responsibility for their own protection through participation in 'neighbourhood watch' programmes. The ISAF-funded Interim Security for Critical Infrastructure (ISCI) program was a decisive component of tightening the hold on Marjeh, and has been extended into Garm Ser, Musa Qal'ah, Nad 'Ali, and Sangin. These programs force communities off the fence, by demanding that local people take a public stand against the insurgency.

**Issues and challenges:** Helmand is notorious for having abusive local militia. To mitigate this risk, it is envisaged that ISCI recruits will be absorbed into the GIRoA-sponsored Afghan Local Police programme, which GIRoA validated in early 2011. This programme should provide a formal link between the local police and the district chief of police. As of March 2011, however, the process of setting up Afghan Local Police sites was moving slowly and suffering from funding and equipment shortages. Political will for the Afghan Local Police programme may also falter at the national level, which would jeopardise efforts to regularise the ISCI guards.

## Progress in Expanding Governance and Delivery of Basic Services

### Key points:

- Security improvements have enabled Afghan government officials, civilians, and goods to travel more safely through the Central Helmand River valley, improving access to government services and markets.
- The ability to travel safely within districts has increasingly allowed districts in central Helmand to elect district community councils with representatives from across the district.
- Freedom from insurgent intimidation and control has enabled access to trusted dispute resolution systems, primarily community-based dispute resolution; the fledgling statutory justice system started functioning at the district level in 2010.
- Although opium production remains substantial, the provincial government's sustained counter narcotics programmes have delivered steady reductions in poppy cultivation since 2008.
- The network of paved roads has been expanded, increasing local commerce and stimulating business confidence.
- Health and education infrastructure has been largely restored to pre-Taleban levels.

## Improved Freedom of Movement

**Objective:** There is freedom of movement in, around, and through the districts of Lashkar Gah, Narh-e Saraj, Nawah-ye Barakzai, Nad 'Ali, and Marjeh.

**Assessment:** Freedom of movement has enabled the expansion of governance and delivery of services, setting the stage for an economic corridor in Helmand.

Improved security has enabled upgrades to the road networks and made travel safer in and between districts, making enhanced freedom of movement one of the most visible indicators of progress. Formerly isolated districts and district centres have been linked as security operations have cleared insurgents from more densely populated areas. In November 2010, the provincial governor judged that the roads were sufficiently safe that he decreed government officials should travel by cars throughout the central Helmand districts of Lashkar Gah, Marjeh, Nad 'Ali, Nawah-ye Barakzai, and Nahr-e Saraj. Increased ability to travel has allowed district officials to travel more often within their districts to hold public meetings (*shuras*) and undertake outreach activities. The resulting freedom of movement has enabled farmers to get crops to larger markets and stimulated business confidence and investment, especially in Lashkar Gah.

### ***People feel safer on the roads***

- *In early 2010, the percentage of people who felt unsafe travelling on the roads within their districts was around three times higher in Helmand than the national average.*
- *Over the last quarter, the proportion of Helmandis stating this dropped from 70% to 40%, which is just above the national average. (ANQAR survey)*

## Expansion of Governance

**Objective:** A critical mass of the population accepts the legitimacy of the institutions of state in Helmand and rejects unlawful alternatives. The capability, accountability, and responsiveness of state institutions improve for the benefit of Afghans in Helmand, relevant to their daily lives.

**Assessment:**

- At the local level—the level where most Helmandis experience government—district governors have increasingly reached out to the public with public meetings. Civil servants and line ministry representatives moved to the central districts.
- Four central Helmand districts and Musa Qala elected district community councils in 2010.
- The new district delivery plan process set up the institutional framework for GIRA to finance development projects on budget through government channels.
- The provincial government’s authority has deepened, but remains highly centralised.
- The September 2010 elections were conducted successfully, although turnout was low.
- GIRA has set the foundation for the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme.

**Overview:** Capable governance, that is able to deliver services to Helmandis, is essential if support, or tolerance, of the insurgency is to be reduced to level that can be managed by the ANSF alone. As the immediate security threat from the insurgency subsides in the central districts, the population is seeking greater quality in service provision. This demand will be challenging to fulfil, given that governance structures remain weak and Helmand has neither effective systems nor an institutional culture of public service. The number of civil servants working in Helmand increased in 2010, although few of them are trained and effective. The province continues to suffer critical shortages of specialist staff such as teachers, medical personnel, and legal professionals.

**Government Representation Increased at District Level.** The number of civil servants and line ministry representatives working at the district level in Helmand is now relatively high in comparison with other provinces. The central districts have benefited most from this increase, although several northern Helmand districts have also gained a GIRA presence. By the end of 2010, the central districts had sufficient numbers of civil servants to support an incremental improvement in key

### ***Increasing connection between district governments and the public***

- *Public consultations by the district governors increased from 71 in Q1 to 203 in Q4.*
- *The percent of heads of household who state that they have not had any contact with district government over the past three months dropped from 48% in Q3 to just 4% in Q4.*
- *Coincides with an increase in the proportion of heads of household in the central districts saying the district government listens and acts on behalf of the people (from 43% in Q3 to 63% in Q4).*

government services. For example, the central districts all had three of the most essential line ministry representatives, including a Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) officer, a district health officer, and an education director. Musa Qal'ah and Sangin had two and Kajaki had one of these positions filled.

**Issues and Challenges:** The civil servants and line ministry representatives at the district level are considered relatively ineffective. District governance remains shallow and centralised: it is limited to a few key players in each district. In 2011, the focus will shift from getting GIRoA officials to the districts to improving their quality. Effective governance structures and systems that empower local officials while also providing appropriate oversight and linkages to the provincial and national levels must also be developed.

**District Community Councils Established.** During 2010, district community councils (DCCs) were established in the five most populous districts in Helmand: Nad 'Ali, Nahr-e Sarraj, Garm Ser, Nawah-ye-Barakzai, and Musa Qal'ah. A sixth DCC was elected in Marjeh in March 2011. DCCs are representative bodies elected from local constituencies that provide a political forum for the district, giving each tribe and geographical areas representation in the district centre.

One of the DCC's main roles in 2010 has been working with local communities and district administrations to develop district delivery plans that define the community's priorities for government services and development. (See box on the DCC in Nad 'Ali, next page.) DCCs also assist with dispute resolution through their justice sub-committees, and provide a limited check on the behaviour of ANSF by demanding accountability of people detained in the districts. Although mainly an advisory body today, it is envisaged that DCCs will provide representative accountability of the district governor and overall district government.

With the increased security, local leaders are also beginning to form community development committees at village level to engage with the DCCs to articulate the community's priorities.

**Issues and Challenges:** The introduction of local democracy changes the local power dynamics between traditional elders and the elected representatives, government officials, ANSF, and ISAF. For example, some DCC members maintain ties with the insurgents and may act as political spoilers. Community representatives face intimidation from the insurgency. Although GIRoA officials proved resilient to widespread threats and several assassinations in 2010, the insurgency is likely to increase intimidation during 2011 to try to reverse GIRoA's gains in 2010. Ensuring that sufficient resources flow from

***Public perceptions of governance are improving***

- *72% of heads of household in the Central Helmand River valley consider that the district community councils are run by people who represent the interests of their community, an increase of 5% since September 2010.*
- *Heads of households increasingly believe that district councils do a good job in keeping their districts secure: 83% in December 2010 against 70% in September 2010.*
- *Information from other sources (ANQAR, staff working in Districts) confirms that the positive perception of government is increasing.*

national to provincial government to deliver public goods and services and implement DDPs is also essential—the DCCs cannot depend on bilateral, off-budget finance if they are to be sustained. Systems to increase transparency and manage corruption must be implemented, as corruption is a key concern of communities that threatens to undermine the positive perception of GIRoA. The DCC model must also be extended to new districts, such as Sangin and Now Zad, when security and freedom of movement allows.

### **Governance in Nad ‘Ali: From insurgent control to GIRoA-sponsored development**

In operations between February 2009 and February 2010, ISAF and ANSF cleared Nad ‘Ali of insurgents. The international community provided immediate stabilisation support to restore damage caused during the fighting and to meet the priority needs of the district governor.

In early 2010, the district governor held outreach activities and public meetings (*shuras*) to engage with local communities, nurturing support for establishing a district community council. The Afghan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP) provided technical advice and logistical support for this process. District community council elections were held in May 2010. Over 600 elders from across the district represented their villages or communities in the elections, which were considered fair and free of fraud.

ASOP then sponsored a series of workshops to help the DCC create a district delivery plan. In consultation with communities, the DCC assessed the status of the district’s education, health, and government facilities, agricultural production, and infrastructure. It then prepared a prioritised list of development projects—the District Delivery Plan—to meet key needs.

The plan was endorsed by the district governor, the provincial government and the Independent Directorate of Local Government (IDLG) in Kabul. ASOP provided initial finance to implement components of the plan in 2010, whilst the IDLG secured finance from the national Ministry of Finance for 2011. These funds are from the District Development Programme, a national programme supported by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) that provides on-budget financial support for provincial governments. In 2011, the provincial government will receive \$9 million to implement Nad ‘Ali’s district delivery plan.

**District Government Centres are Under Construction.** Construction is underway throughout the central Helmand districts to build meeting halls for district community councils, district government offices, police precincts, and judicial centres. These buildings will provide suitable workspaces to government officials and a tangible demonstration of government presence to the public.

**Issues and Challenges:** Skilled contractors are in short supply. Quality assurance and oversight is crucial to avoid problems such as the meeting hall in Nawah-ye-Barakzai where the roof collapsed.

**Provincial Governor's Positive Influence Expanded.** The authority of Provincial Governor Mangal and his administration has deepened during 2010. Governor Mangal continues to play a positive and increasingly active role in the leadership of the province, including: increased management of district governor posts, leadership of provincial administrative bodies, direction of resources in accordance with community requests, coordination of election activity, direction to the ANSF, and active support to conflict resolution within Sangin.

**Issues and Challenges:** Power remains centralized around the governor and his inner circle of political appointees at the expense of the formal provincial line ministries and administrative bodies.

**Provincial Government Executive Strengthened.** Building the capacity of the provincial government to manage and utilise resources effectively, through planning, budgeting and managing implementation of provincial priorities, is an essential task as more development money flows through on-budget channels, and the international community stops direct project implementation. In 2010, the provincial government demonstrated a nascent capacity to perform core functions effectively, particularly with respect to financial management, budgeting and auditing. With the PRT's support, the government is preparing provincial development plans and securing finance from the national government to implement them. The provincial government will also manage the finances for implementing the district delivery plan process discussed above.

**Issues and Challenges:** Sufficient, regular and predictable financial flows from central government are critical to sustaining and building upon progress in this area. This is a priority for the major development agencies and bilateral donors in Kabul, who are expected to provide substantial budgetary support to provinces through the national budget. This will ensure that provincial and district governments are not dependent upon the declining budgets of coalition forces and PRTs for operational finance and is a necessary step toward normalising Afghanistan's economic relations with the international community.

**Parliamentary Elections Conducted Successfully.** Compared to the 2005 elections to the Wolesi Jirga (lower house of parliament) and the 2009 presidential elections, the 2010 parliamentary elections saw a marked increase in the organisational capacity of the Independent Election Commission and in cooperation between the ANSF and provincial officials. These improvements, combined with increased security and freedom of movement, facilitated the opening of 120 of 129 polling stations, compared to 107 during the 2009 presidential elections. Improved fraud detection and fraud mitigation mechanisms were implemented and evidence suggests that the Helmand population view the elections as having been well conducted and reasonably fair. Despite predictions of violence on election day, there were no significant incidents at the polling centres in Helmand. Although there was a spike in kinetic activity on election day, the majority of the attacks were ineffective and focused on rural ISAF outposts, rather than polling centres or population centres. Marjeh had 11 open polling centres, in contrast to 2009 when no polling centres opened in that Taliban-controlled area. However, the conduct of the elections must be tempered against a disappointingly low turnout, with 36,162 votes counted, compared to 68,055 in the 2009 presidential elections.

**Issues and challenges:** The reasons for the low turnout highlight the challenges to developing a representative political environment in Helmand: fears of insecurity on election day, a limited understanding of the role of parliament, a well-founded belief that parliament has little bearing on citizens' day-to-day lives, limited understanding of the election process, distrust in democratic elections, and disgust for the actions of some members of parliament.

**Foundation for Reintegration Programme Established.** President Karzai publicly announced his commitment to a national reintegration strategy in January, and the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) guidelines emerged mid-year. In December, Governor Mangal formally instituted a province-wide reintegration programme.

Although implementation of the programme has been slow, GIRoA and the international community have gained understanding of how the reintegration process should function. Understanding gained in Helmand was used to inform national policy and to ensure that Helmand was ready to make progress when the authorisation was given by Kabul. In Nad 'Ali, for example, a workable district-based reintegration model for low-level insurgents was developed, which has started reintegrating small numbers of insurgents in early 2011.

**Issues and Challenges:** The successful implementation of the programme is dependent upon continuing political commitment at provincial and national levels and a willingness to devolve authority to district governors. The pace of programme implementation continues to be slow in 2011.

## Expansion of the Rule of Law

**Objective:** GIRA rule of law structures are seen as more legitimate than shadow justice and preferred by a majority of the population. Improved capability, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of justice and police institutions in Helmand.

**Assessment:**

- Fledgling, sparsely staffed, statutory justice system structures are in place in the Central Helmand River Valley.
- Statutory justice is perceived positively by communities, despite low throughput of cases to date.
- Tribal elders and mullahs (community-based justice systems) are the preferred sources of dispute resolution for 95% of population.
- Taleban justice is not trusted.

**Overview:** Through 2010 there has been increasing trust in the formal institutions of justice in Helmand, but the systems are fledgling. Prosecutors and judges have only been present for a few months in most districts and have dealt with few cases.

**Preference for Community-Based Justice Systems:** Whilst trust in formal institutions has increased over 2010, the community-based justice system is by far the preferred mechanism for dispute resolution. This preference for community-based justice is not surprising. Formal justice has been remote from communities and people have little experience with state courts. At the beginning of 2010 there were only one judge and two prosecutors outside of the provincial capital, Lashkar Gah. By the end of 2010, as security improved, judges, prosecutors and *huquqs* (civil mediators) were all present in Nawah-ye Barakzai, Garm Ser, Narh-e Saraj, and Nad 'Ali. Marjeh and Musa Qal'ah each had a prosecutor.

Many disputes are currently solved with a pragmatic and locally acceptable combination of the community-based and statutory justice systems: a dispute taken to elders or mullahs initially may then be taken to the police, judge, or justice subcommittee of the district community council for resolution.

Community and statutory justice systems are preferred over Taleban shadow courts. Most people will only use the Taleban justice system when there is no other alternative, which generally correlates to areas with limited security. People who live in secure areas are free to use community-based or statutory

***Community-based justice systems are preferred for dispute resolution***

- *95% of heads of household said tribal elders and mullahs are the most trusted arbitrators.*
- *The belief that statutory justice mechanisms are effective at delivering justice rose from 56% at the end of September 2010 to 68% at the end of December.*
- *Taleban justice is least preferred, with support decreasing through 2010: 24% of respondents expressed trust in Taleban justice in September, compared to 15% in December.*

***Support for statutory justice system increasing as the system is in place longer***

- *The formal system is most trusted Lashkar Gah (71%) and Narh-e Saraj (65%) where courts have been staffed and functioning the longest.*
- *In Nawah-ye Barakzai only 32% of heads of household trusted the statutory authorities to resolve disputes fairly.*
- *Courts in Lashkar Gah decided 144 cases in the last quarter of 2010.*
- *Nawah-ye Barakzai courts decided 5.*

systems as they see fit.

The number of cases being decided by the district statutory courts is small, but gradually increasing: 18 during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2010 rising to 27 during the final quarter. Land disputes are increasingly being taken to *huquqs* (civil mediators), so that land owners can get formal title to their land.

**Construction of Justice Centres:** Judges and judicial officers face tangible security risks in carrying out their duties. Secure accommodations and respectable workspaces are essential to retaining justice officials in the districts—inappropriate accommodations are one of a number of reasons that Kabul-recruited justice

officials use to leave Helmand. Five justice centres are being constructed in the major district centres in the Central Helmand River Valley.

**Construction of Lashkar Gah prison:** The new prison will provide a secure facility for 750 prisoners. A temporary facility for women prisoners, where they can be with their children, is being established pending construction of a permanent women's facility and a temporary juvenile facility.

**Issues and Challenges:** The task of establishing a credible and trusted statutory justice system that provides a viable option for dispute resolution will take time. The statutory justice system remains constrained by severe shortages of qualified judges, prosecutors and legal staff. Sufficient trained and credible personnel, including legal representation for the accused, are required to ensure the system functions effectively. The PRT and ISAF have started supporting the district prosecutors and judges with rule of law mentors and are providing focused training for prosecutors and paralegal staff.

The formal system is also slow and tainted by allegations of corruption and nepotism. Community-based dispute resolution is in many cases more responsive to people's needs and more affordable. Improvements to case management need to be implemented to improve the speed of the formal system. With regard to criminal justice, ensuring that the statutory justice system is able to prosecute cases, rather than having criminals simply 'caught and released' will reduce public perceptions of corruption.

Civil law is likely to become increasingly important as improved security facilitates economic activity. Credible and lasting resolution to land tenure issues is a prerequisite for construction of new facilities and businesses. Although *huquqs* can resolve local issues about private land claimed by multiple people, disputes about use of government land require a national land policy.

## Counter Narcotics

**Objective:** The opium trade's significance to Helmand's governance, economy, and security is reduced. Improved capability, accountability, and responsiveness of relevant state institutions can sustain a shift to licit livelihoods across Helmand.

### Assessment:

- Although the acreage under poppy remains substantial, poppy cultivation declined slightly in Helmand during 2010. Nationally, the acreage under poppy did not fall in 2010.
- Helmand has seen a 37% reduction in acreage under poppy cultivation since 2008, despite increases in opium prices.
- The provincial governor's counter narcotics strategy takes a comprehensive approach, providing a tangible enforcement strategy and support to farmers' migration to licit crops.
- Increased freedom of movement improved access to the alternate livelihood programmes' seed distributions and made the threat of Governor-Led Eradication more credible.

**Overview.** Helmand province remains the major producer of opium in Afghanistan, responsible for 50% of national production. Satellite imagery and field surveys suggest considerable reductions in poppy cultivation in the Central Helmand River Valley in 2010: in September 62% of farming households said they were growing poppy, by December this figure had dropped to 42%. Premium land is now used for production of licit crops, with poppy being pushed out to more marginal land.

This reduction in poppy cultivation in central Helmand is likely to be sustained as long as GIRA remains committed to eradication. Rising prices, however, are making poppy an increasingly attractive cash crop. Compared to 2009, the yield from poppy decreased in 2010, which may be attributed to drought and blight in the spring. Thus, even though the acreage under poppy cultivation in central Helmand has reduced, poppy yields may increase in 2011 if farming conditions are more favourable than in 2010.

**Governor's Counter Narcotics Programme:** The provincial governor's counter narcotics programme provides subsidised wheat seed, fertiliser and technical advice to farmers who agree not to plant poppy. In 2010, some 2000 tons of seed and 11,500 tons of fertiliser were distributed to 46,454 farmers. The PRT provided \$14 million towards the \$18 million cost of the programme. This programme is targeted at farmers who live within the governor's dedicated Food Zone area in the Central Helmand River Valley.

### ***Poppy cultivation in Helmand***

- *Poppy is the main crop for 15% of households in central Helmand districts, and 24% of households in outlying districts (Sangin, Musa Qal'ah, Now Zad, and Reg-e Khan Neshin).*
- *Poppy contributed to the livelihoods of 139,040 households in 2010, up from 126,800 in 2009.*

### ***Reductions in poppy and opium***

- *The area under poppy decreased from 69,833 to 65,045 hectares between January and December 2010—a 7% reduction over a period with no drop at the national level and high poppy prices.*
- *Opium production, by weight, decreased 53%, from 4,085 tons in 2009 to 1,933 tons in 2010.*

**Issues and Challenges:** Communities have expressed concern that the programme's seed and fertiliser distribution is not transparent and some farmers are denied access. These issues need to be addressed to prevent the programme from negatively affecting perceptions of government.

**Governor-Led Eradication:** The provincial governor's eradication campaign has been pursued in central Helmand over the last three years and is now a sustained and predictable disruption programme. The governor announces areas where the poppy cultivation law will be

enforced, and a counter narcotics force in tractors visits those areas in the spring and destroys any poppy found. The PRT provides resources for the maintenance of tractors, and wages of their drivers. The ANSF provide security for the tractors and drivers. The increasing security situation and the rising capability of the ANSF have made this programme a credible threat to poppy growers.

The programme also has a public information component, which includes public outreach meetings at which mullahs and community elders work with communities to discourage poppy cultivation, stressing how it is against Islamic *Sharia* law and local custom. The message is getting out: In December 2010, 78% of households considered that the government is committed to reducing the size of the poppy economy, up from 70% in September. According to focus groups, the government's ability to commit to and sustain the counter narcotics campaign has strengthened positive perceptions of the government's performance in Helmand.

**Issues and Challenges:** The Governor-Led Eradication programme has limited resources and minimal impact outside the designated Food Zone in the Central Helmand River Valley. While this programme destroys relatively few poppy fields—it reaches only 2% of the land under poppy—it is intended more as a deterrent than a comprehensive eradication plan.

**Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA):** The Helmand CNPA received training and better intelligence gathering capabilities. It realigned its targeting strategy from the heavy bias on opium interdiction, which led to a five-fold increase in the disruption of heroin production and distribution.

**Issues and Challenges:** The CNPA is substantially understaffed. CNPA personnel are distributed throughout the country based on population, not the scale of the narcotics trade. Thus, despite producing over half the country's opium, Helmand has just 2% of the CNPA (67 personnel—and only 40 were present for duty at the end of 2010). Work is ongoing to persuade the Ministry of Interior to address this imbalance.

### ***Drug seizures and prosecutions***

- *In 2010, the CNPA seized:*
  - *7,704 kg of opium*
  - *201 kg of heroin*
  - *2,106 litres of wet pre-cursor chemicals**(2009 figures are not available)*
- *In 2010, the Helmand CNPA brought 124 cases to the special counter narcotics court in Kabul (60% of the court's total cases) and had a 95% conviction rate.*

## Economic Development

**Objective:** Conditions are being set for the future emergence of a Helmand Economic Corridor as a driver for overall development.

**Assessment:**

- The network of paved roads has been expanded, increasing local commerce and stimulating business confidence.
- Helmandi entrepreneurs are looking to invest locally rather than send funds abroad.
- Business associations are emerging, with support from GIRoA, to help drive development in the region.

**Overview.** Improved security has set the stage for private sector development within the Central Helmand River Valley. In 2010, economic infrastructure development in Helmand Province focused on road improvements, rehabilitation of the formal irrigation system, energy production, expanding banking and telephone services, and designing physical improvements to Bost Agricultural-Industrial Park. With key conditions for economic growth beginning to emerge, popular perceptions of GIRoA have improved. Afghans are concerned however, about the quality of the infrastructure projects being implemented.

**Irrigation system:** The extensive network of formal irrigation canals within Helmand Province is vital to maintaining and expanding agricultural production in the region. In 2010, donor efforts focused on cleaning canal channels and repair of critical regulator and sluice gates. The international community's understanding of the dynamics of the system has dramatically increased through ground and aerial reconnaissance efforts and a strong relationship with the Helmand Arghandab Valley Authority (HAVA) which monitors water use throughout Helmand. More than half of all respondents in the Central Helmand River Valley – where 90% of farmed land is irrigated – consider that GIRoA has improved irrigation services in 2010.

### ***Improving public perception of the economy***

- *Two thirds of respondents reported that GIRoA was going in the right direction with the local economy.*
- *In the central districts, 56% of respondents reported that they believed GIRoA had improved employment in the last quarter, an increase from 41% in Q3.*
- *Two-thirds of farming households say their farm, or the one they work, has received advice or support from GIRoA—and of those who received support, 83% said they were satisfied.*

**Issues and Challenges:** The lack of sufficient water resources for agrarian use is a source of economic and political instability in the region. HAVA currently lacks the capacity to operate and manage the system independent of donor support. Building HAVA's organisational capacity and local water governance structures is key to sustaining agricultural production and mitigating against social crises.

Irrigation projects and well construction need to be balanced against the hydrologic system to avoid lowering the water table and reducing the amount of water available downstream.

**Expanding Road Infrastructure:** Asphalt roads have been constructed linking Lashkar Gah, Gereshk, and Highway One. Aggregate roads now connect the key terrain districts of the Central Helmand River Valley to Lashkar Gar, including Garm Ser, Nad 'Ali, Narh-e Saraj, Nawah-ye-Barakzai and Marjeh. As a result, Helmandis are able to travel freely and commerce is expanding.

**Issues and Challenges:** Helmand lacks a GIROA-owned, provincial road building and maintenance strategy. Aggregate roads have a lifespan of only 3-6 months without proper maintenance. Developing the capacity of the relevant line ministries to fund and maintain improved roads is critical to establishing a sustainable transportation network. Additionally, the lack of contractor capacity to build roads to proper standards must be addressed.

#### ***Increased freedom of movement***

- *In the third quarter of the year, 65% of the households in central districts reported travel to another district centre in the preceding three months.*
- *By the end of the fourth quarter 90% reported travelling to another district centre. Even in outlying districts (Musa Qal'ah, Now Zad, Sangin, and Reg), 89% of the households reported that they travelled to another district in the prior three months.*
- *62% of the people travelling between districts are doing so to buy or sell services and goods, or to work.*

**Power:** In 2010, a range of studies and projects have focused on assessing the supply and demand for power in Helmand, and on the suitability of renewable energy alternatives including mini- and micro-hydropower, biofuels, and solar power. In the long term, the Kajaki Hydroelectric Dam has the potential to provide more power to the electric grid. The road improvements through the Upper Gereskh Valley to Kajaki are setting the stage for transporting materials required to repair and expand the dam.

**Issues and Challenges:** The lack of reliable, inexpensive power contributes to the stunted economic development in Helmand. Without power, farmers do not have the option of putting goods into cold storage in order to sell them at higher prices after the main harvest. Southern Helmand does not have an electrical grid: most of the electricity from the Kajaki dam goes to Kandahar City and the power lines in Helmand reach only as far south as Lashkar Gah. Improving northern Helmand's electrical generation and distribution system poses a challenge due to costs, aging infrastructure, and security issues. Off-grid solutions can expand electricity into rural areas, although the community's ability to pay operating costs (such as purchasing generator fuel) and the maintainability of small-scale energy projects must be taken into account.

**Local Bazaars:** As freedom of movement has improved, more shops and bazaars have reopened throughout the Central Helmand River Valley. More than three quarters of survey respondents in central Helmand reported that GIROA has improved their local bazaar.

**Business Confidence, Investment and Development:** Business confidence has grown. Surveys of Helmandi entrepreneurs suggest many are looking to invest locally rather than send funds abroad. More than 40 local businessmen have submitted proposals to build new ventures at the Bost Agri-Business Park in Lashkar Gah when it opens later this year. The proposals cover a range of value-added business activities such as facilities for juicing, milling flour, and packaging food products.

Business associations are emerging, with support from GIRoA. Over one hundred registered businesses in Lashkar Gah have formed the Helmand Business Association, including companies involved in construction, agriculture and gravel production. Entrepreneurs in Gereshk have formed a similar business association in their district. Smaller traders in the bazaars of Musa Qal'ah and Sangin reportedly see no need for business associations; their main concern is that the road to the provincial markets in Lashkar Gah remains open.

**Issues and Challenges:** The economy of Helmand remains heavily dependent on agriculture and requires outside support. Eighty percent of Helmand's population is dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods, and this sector will be the basis for economic growth for the foreseeable future.

Many Helmandis remain concerned about the lack of off-farm employment in the region. Donor investment in the agriculture sector continues to be overwhelmingly focused on inputs to increase production and cash-for-work schemes. Relatively little support has focused on activities further up the agricultural value-chain that would create longer-term, off-farm employment, although a number of pilot projects are currently being developed to address this shortfall.

The lack of an educated and skilled workforce limits the potential for economic growth. Only 10% of the population is literate and few have any professional or trade skills. The international community has sponsored numerous adult literacy and vocational training courses. However, each vocational course can provide training for only a relatively small number of people—otherwise the area would become overloaded with motorcycle repairmen or electricians.

Credit lines are also not sufficient to support business expansion and licit trade within Helmand. A regional trading network will ultimately be needed to sustain growth in the Helmand Economic Corridor.

## Human Development

**Objective:** Support GIRoA's ability to deliver effective primary health care in central districts, thereby increasing popular support of GIRoA. More prefer and participate in educational opportunities by GIRoA at the expense of shadow alternatives.

**Assessment:**

- Health and education infrastructure has been largely restored to pre-Taleban levels.
- Standards and quality remain some of the lowest in the world.
- Severe shortages of teachers and medical personnel are impeding improvements.

**Health Care:** All three district hospitals, all 15 community health centres, and 28 of the 38 smaller clinics in Helmand have been refurbished or rebuilt. With the physical infrastructure of the health care system largely in place, the focus is now on training. In 2010, nearly 9,000 Helmandis received health care training, including increasing percentages of women.

**Issues and Challenges:** The quality and scarcity of health care personnel remain the key constraints to improved health care services. The dearth of female doctors and staff prevents women from accessing health-care services and contributes to high infant and maternal mortality. In Helmand, there are 8% fewer visits to health clinics by women than men; in most of the world women have higher rates of healthcare utilisation.

***Healthcare is increasingly available***

- *85% of households reported that a government-run health centre was available to them in December, up from 50% in October.*
- *Over 70% said that GIRoA had improved healthcare services over the last quarter of 2010.*

***Education improvements:***

- *The number of GIRoA schools rose from 77 to 117 (Q1 to Q4).*
- *Enrolment increased from 77,759 to 92,499 (Q3 to Q4).*
- *Respondents stating it was unsafe for their children to attend school fell from 60% to 36% (Q3 to Q4).*
- *63% of respondents in Q3 thought GIRoA's education services had improved over the last 12 months.*

**Education:** By the end of 2010, education infrastructure had been largely restored to pre-Taleban levels. Enrolment increased throughout the year as security and freedom of movement improved. This is a GIRoA success story. The government provides a strong lead in this sector and 90% of international support to education is now on budget.

**Issues and Challenges:** In the outlying districts, the unmet demand for schools remains enormous. Only 16 of GIRoA's schools are outside the central Helmand River Valley. Expanding education to the outer districts and ensuring that these schools can be sustained with GIRoA resources will be a challenge. Innovative approaches that mobilise community resources alongside government finance need to be explored—there are functioning models for this approach. As with health, a shortage of qualified personnel is the major constraint to expansion.

## Next Steps

Momentum must be maintained. Afghans have seen forces come and go several times over the past 30 years and they will not commit to GIRoA until they believe it will be able to sustain security and offer governance and services worth defending.

However, ambitions must be realistic. The deficit in infrastructure and services is enormous in Helmand. On Transition, Afghanistan will remain one of the very poorest countries in the world, with appalling health and development indicators. The international coalition has the capacity to deliver substantial improvements, but this investment will be fruitless and counter-productive unless the government of Afghanistan can maintain the infrastructure and provide qualified staff, especially teachers and medical personnel. The HMEP survey shows that communities are beginning to demand quality of investment, not just activities. The coalition will need to calibrate the pace of implementation so that the provincial government's management and capacity can keep pace. Developing a communication strategy to manage the expectations of the government and local communities will be a crucial part of future work.

Managing corruption will be critical, as public perceptions are already negative. The enormous resources flowing into Helmand from the international community and increasingly through the Afghan budget will generate opportunities for corruption, as will the provincial government's increased capacity to oversee development expenditures and contracts. A strategy to limit and manage corruption is a priority component of future plans. It will be essential, and difficult, to get political will to tackle corruption.

The international coalition and GIRoA are focusing upon successful Transition, when a more capable ANSF is able to control the insurgency, with ISAF forces in an advisory and support role. As security and provincial government capacity improve, the focus will shift from stabilisation to traditional development assistance, delivered through major development organisations such as the World Bank, United Nations, and Asian Development Bank, with the support of bilateral donors. Coordination and engagement between the international community and GIRoA are critical going forward.

The PRT, alongside Regional Command (South West) and the Regional Platform are working with the provincial government on the Helmand Plan 1390 – 1393 (calendar years 2011 – 2014) to provide a framework for investments. This plan, which will be linked to the government's Provincial Development Plan, envisages that the international coalition will spend less on stabilisation and counter-insurgency activities. These resources will be replaced by increased resources from development agencies through on-budget development assistance, ensuring that critical investments are financed and sustained.

The economy of Helmand is overwhelmingly rural and will stay that way for the foreseeable future. Development will be driven by improved linkages between farmers, district markets, the provincial centres, and investors. As Helmand does not have a major urban industrial centre, economic linkages need to be built to Kandahar and Herat. In sum, Helmand is not an island. The ultimate success of the coalition campaign to deliver security and development in Helmand depends on the political settlement negotiated across Afghanistan.