

**Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
Case Study Series**

**Afghanistan Livelihood
Trajectories
Evidence from Kandahar**



Adam Pain

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Abbreviations

Afs	Afghani, unit of currency
ALT	Afghanistan Livelihood Trajectories
MC	Mercy Corps
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NGO	nongovernmental organisation
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
Rs	Pakistani rupees

Glossary

<i>dalika</i>	tenancy arrangement whereby private wasteland is leased; the hirer pays all the costs of making the land good for cultivation and receives 75% of the harvest with the landlord receiving 25%
<i>haj</i>	annual pilgrimage to Mecca
<i>haji</i>	someone who has been on <i>haj</i>
<i>karez</i>	a traditional system of tapping water from the water table through underground canals
<i>kharwars</i>	unit of weight; 1 Kandahar <i>kharwar</i> = 352 kg
<i>khan</i>	traditional landed village leader
<i>jat</i>	gypsy
<i>jerib</i>	unit of land measurement; 1 <i>jerib</i> is approximately one-fifth of a hectare
<i>jirga</i>	tribal council
<i>malik</i>	traditional village leader
<i>man</i>	unit of weight; equivalent to 4.4 kg; 80 Kandahar <i>mans</i> are equivalent to 1 Kandahar <i>kharwar</i>
<i>qarz-i-hasana</i>	interest-free credit
<i>ser</i>	unit of weight; 1 <i>ser</i> is approximately 7 kilograms
Sharia	Islamic system of law
<i>shufa</i>	aspect of Sharia law that requires the agreement of neighbours before land can be sold
<i>shura</i>	village council or group of elders
<i>wasita</i>	“connection”; a relationship to someone in a position of power or influence
<i>zaranj</i>	three-wheel scooter taxi

Executive Summary

This report explores the livelihood pathways of sixteen households in two villages outside Kandahar City from 2002-3 to 2008-9. It is part of a larger study looking at livelihood change in four provinces in Afghanistan which returns to households from an earlier study in 2002-03.

Kandahar City and the immediately surrounding districts (in which the study villages are located) are at the heart of the political struggles that characterise Afghanistan. The area is both a locus of support for President Karzai and of opposition to him and the international forces arraigned against insurgency. In Kandahar, there is a war against insurgency muddled with a campaign against opium poppy cultivation. There is a dynamic urban reconstruction economy, confounded with a war economy and a black economy. Underlying all this, there is a playing out of old and new struggles for power between tribes and individuals who draw on a culture of patronage, including connections to the government in Kabul and international actors. This is resourced through both brutal and strategic use of a turbulent economy where the boundaries between formal and informal, licit and illicit, legitimate and illegitimate have long ceased to have any meaning.

The evidence from the study households points to three very distinct trajectories. The first comprises households with land and inherited social position that have greatly prospered through a combination of: agricultural assets; deployment of these assets into other income sources; a shift into non-farm income; and the securitisation of employment through *wasita* (connections to the politically powerful). These households show little concern for their respective village's welfare and few dare hold them accountable. Thus not only are old social structures still in place, but the capacity for collective action to change them and to enhance public good availability remains limited. The economic security of these households is not in doubt, although their physical security, in part, depends on a continuation of the current political arrangements.

The second group of households are from poor beginnings and without the land resources or the patronage networks of the first group. Nevertheless, they have also benefited from the dynamic urban economy although not nearly to the same degree. Building a degree of economic security has been a slow process and the means of doing so variable. In part this is due to a combination of skills, being less risk averse, hard work, and critically, access to informal credit outside dependent relations with a landlord, obtained largely through supportive relations. Most are working in the less remunerative parts of the economy and balance a portfolio of diverse labour-demanding activities. But the urban economy provides a sufficient living, particularly if a household commands enough male labour resources.

The third group are those households struggling to survive. They are largely still living in dependent relations with a landlord, particularly for credit. What characterises this group is the occurrence of household specific or idiosyncratic factors such as death or illness which makes it difficult to escape the relations in which the landlords are keen to keep.

1. Introduction

In 2002-2004, in partnership with seven nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) implemented an 18-month European Commission-funded research project to monitor the livelihoods of 390 households across 21 villages in seven districts in seven provinces in Afghanistan.¹ The selected provinces and districts reflected a variety of agro-ecology and economic circumstances. The aim of the research was to build an understanding of rural livelihoods in Afghanistan on the grounds that much of policy and programming practice was largely based on preconceptions of what people in rural areas do, and that it focused on delivery of programmes and paid little attention to understanding the contexts within which people lived.

The construction of identifiable household data sets made it possible to return later to these same households to find out what had happened to them. In 2008, AREU secured new research funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) of the United Kingdom² to revisit a selection of the sites and households to investigate how their circumstances had changed and to consider what factors might have brought these changes about. The new research explored livelihood trajectories³ and poverty outcomes under variable but continuing insecurity in Afghanistan.

Four major questions have structured this research:

- What have been the livelihood trajectories and welfare outcomes of the Afghan study households throughout the years? How are these differentiated by gender, socioeconomic position, community and context?
- What practices have households, under diverse contexts of conflict, implemented in relation to market choices and use of social and human capital to cope with insecurity? To what extent have these practices mitigated or reproduced insecurity and contributed to or undermined resilience? How has insecurity affected household strategies and welfare outcomes?
- What do these livelihood trajectories tell us about the meaning of local formal and informal structures and how households and contrasting communities have adapted to and engaged with state absence? What does this tell us about the nature of resilience, its scope, reach, and the inclusiveness of its mechanisms?
- To what extent do trajectories of change reflect path dependency⁴ or the capacity of individuals or communities to bring about changes through collective action? If there have been shifts, where, for whom and how have they been possible?

Five of the original seven provinces were selected for the restudy: Badakhshan, Faryab, Kandahar, Herat and Sar-i-Pul. Ghazni and Laghman were dropped at the design stage because of high insecurity. Herat was abandoned after the restudy commenced because of insecurity in the Hari Rud Valley. In Faryab, the research was modified also because of security issues. This report reviews the evidence on household livelihood trajectories

1 The provinces were Badakhshan, Faryab, Ghazni, Herat, Kandahar, Laghman and Sar-i-Pul. See Jo Grace and Adam Pain, *Rethinking Rural Livelihoods in Afghanistan* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2004).

2 “Development in the Raw: Afghanistan Livelihood Trajectories,” Grant RES-167-25-0285, Economic and Social Research Council.

3 A livelihood trajectory may be defined as “the consequences of the changing way in which individuals construct a livelihood over time” (Bagchi et al 1998: 457).

4 Path dependency is the idea that previous events and existing structures predetermine subsequent possibilities.

and discusses what might be learned with respect to two of the original three study villages in Kandahar.⁵

In contrast to the other three study provinces (Badakhshan, Faryab and Sar-i-Pul) located in the north of Afghanistan, the context for this particular report is the south, in Kandahar—a location at the heart of the political struggles that characterise Afghanistan. The province is the locus of support for President Karzai, an area of concentrated international military presence, as well as a centre of opposition to both. It is a context where a war against an insurgency is muddled with a campaign against opium poppy cultivation as well as one in which the dynamics of an urban reconstruction economy is confounded with a war economy and a black economy. Underlying all this, there is a scene of old and new struggles for power between tribes and individuals who draws on a culture of patronage, including *wasita* (connections) to the government in Kabul, and international actors. This is resourced through both brutal and strategic use of a turbulent economy where the boundaries between formal and informal, licit and illicit, legitimate and illegitimate have long ceased to have any meaning.

The evidence strongly points to a number of themes. First is the persistence of a social, largely landed, elite who through informal means captured formal resources almost exclusively for their own advantage and thus prospered greatly. They have largely interpreted the collective welfare of their villages as subject to their own. There is no developmental perspective to be found here. Second, there is a group of poor households who are essentially dependent on these social elite for the means to live, including access to credit, and who are not in a position to break the bonds that tie them. Third, there is an intermediate group who have found a niche in the margins of the Kandahar and agrarian economy and with luck, hard work and skills have been slowly improving their circumstances and detaching themselves from the landlords. Access to informal credit through supportive networks of relations and others have been crucial to their progress.

The report first summarises the research methods used (Section 2) before going on to set the context of the study (Section 3). Sections 4 and 5 investigate the trajectories of the study households in the two villages. Section 6 explores the internal dynamics of households, their composition, the building of joint households and the critical role of arranging marriages and its consequences for household individuals. Finally, Section 7 returns to and responds to the four aforementioned research questions.

5 The third village from the original study could not be revisited because of insecurity.

2. Methodology

This section has two parts. The first presents the data collection methods centred on the household interviews. The second section provides summary information on the two villages and the eight households interviewed within each. The more general research approach of the study is described in the first of the ALT (Afghanistan Livelihood Trajectories) case study reports.⁶ The fieldwork was undertaken by a research team working under the auspices of Mercy Corps (MC), the partner in the original study. AREU provided guidance through formal training, support through debriefing of the interview teams and feedback on interview transcripts.

The study in the two villages posed particular challenges, on account of insecurity due to Taliban insurgency activities and ISAF operations. While the MC research teams were able to operate and visit the villages with relative freedom due to their relations through their programmes in the district, the AREU team were not able to move outside Kandahar City. However, a few focus group discussions and key informant interviews with people from the village were arranged within MC offices while AREU was present. Further, the author of this report was only able to make one visit to Kandahar during the course of the research, although he has made previous visits to the province in the last 10 years. Accordingly, he has drawn primarily on the interview transcripts, a focus group discussion in Kandahar, and the debriefing of the AREU research team that worked with Mercy Corps.

2.1 Interview procedure

Mercy Corps recruited two household interview teams consisting of one married couple and a father-daughter pair to undertake the fieldwork. The interview procedure followed a six-stage process, described in detail in the first case study⁷ and briefly summarised as follows:

- *Household profile*: Using the 2002 household data, a household profile was prepared for each of the originally interviewed households. The profile summarised basic data on household composition and economy in 2002-03.
- *Introductory (or preliminary) interviews*: The interview teams (working as a pair of men and a pair of women) were introduced to the village by MC staff, who then conducted a series of introductory discussions with all the original interview households that could be found. These interviews explored changes that had happened in the household (in household composition, economy, etc.) and looked for evidence on changing household fortunes (improving, stationary or declining).
- *Household selection*: Based on the preliminary interview evidence, a sub-sample of eight households, proportional to the number of households in each wealth group in the original 20-household sample, were selected for further interviews.
- *Household interview guides*: Based on the selections, detailed interview guides were prepared for each household. The interview guides identified key themes and issues to be followed up over the four interviews held with each household—two with men and two with women in the household. Each guide had eight common themes: household composition and structure, household history, home and services, land and agricultural production, income generating work, credit and savings, links with

⁶ Adam Pain, *Afghanistan Livelihood Trajectories: Evidence from Badakhshan* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2010).

⁷ Pain, *Afghanistan Livelihood Trajectories: Evidence from Badakhshan*, 5.

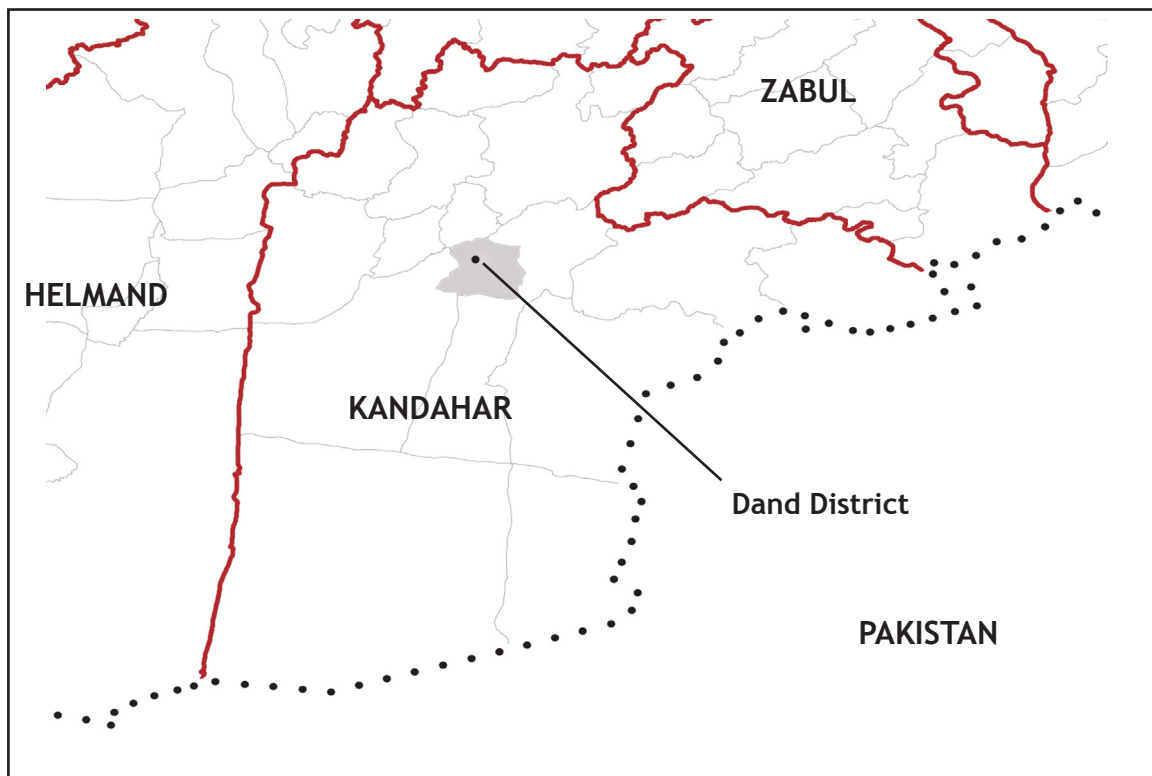
government and informal systems, and the wider context. But each interview was shaped to the individual household, drawing on specific changes reported by the household in the introductory interview and key events over the five years. The interview guides were prepared by the AREU support team and translated into local languages by the MC field team and its translator. In the second village, the guides were structured to provide separate thematic material for the first and second interviews. This led to more detailed questioning and probing in the interviews.

- *Household interviews:* Household interviews were carried out by the interview teams usually with the head of the household and the oldest woman. This was not always the case and sometimes sons or daughters or daughters-in-law (in joint-households) were interviewed when the head of the household was away or the informant was sick. The transcripts were typed and translated into English and e-mailed for comment and feedback.
- *Debriefing:* Debriefing sessions were held between the AREU and MC teams after the first and second rounds of interviews to draw more information about each village's context and its dynamics.

2.2 Characteristics of study villages and households

Figure 1 locates Dand District, immediately south of Kandahar City, in which the two study villages are situated.⁸ Village A is home to about 1,000 families, including 600 families of *jats* (gypsies) that have settled there. It has 1,500 *jeribs* of irrigated land and 2,000 *jeribs* of rainfed land. Village B is smaller with 412 families and 3,000 *jeribs* of irrigated land, but is more agricultural with more trees and greenery.

Figure 1. Location of Dand District



8 Source: Mercy Corps data sources and interview team members.

Table 1 lists the codes of the eight sampled households by village and wealth group, with wealth group I being the best off. It should be emphasised that these wealth groups are relative within a specific village, and thus are not absolute measures. Further the wealth groupings in the original study were not always consistent with the data provided in the household interviews in the second round; accordingly, to facilitate discussion of differences and similarities between them, the households were re-grouped by wealth group based on the evidence in the second round interview transcripts. Information on family size and whether the household was joint or single is also indicated.

Table 1. Summary of household codes with size and composition by village and wealth group

Wealth group	Village A households	Village B households
I	A10 (28, J)	B40 (31, J)
II	A05 (18, J)	B42 (16, J)
		B48 (14, J)
		B57 (15, J)
III	A01 (16, J)	B46 (10, J)
	A03 (8, S)	B50 (19, J)
	A16 (14, J)	B56 (4, S)
	A19 (11, J)	B58 (8, J)
IV	A00 (7, S)	
	A12 (9, J)	

J = joint, S = single

3. Kandahar Province and the Study Villages

3.1 Introduction

The southern province of Kandahar is one of the largest in Afghanistan. Located on the Arghandab River, Kandahar City (largely Pashtun and the second largest city in the country with an estimated population of about 0.5 million people⁹) has been central to the political history of Afghanistan. In the distant past, it had a population of Hindu traders reflecting the historically central position of the city and the province in inter-country trade. An agriculturally-rich province due to its irrigation resources, Kandahar is a hub for horticulture and famous for its raisins and pomegranates.

Central to the understanding of the politics of Kandahar is the Pashtun tribal structure and its configuration within the province. As summarised by Antonio Giustozzi and Noor Ullah,¹⁰ the dominant tribal alliance in Kandahar has been the Zirak Durrani, comprising five tribes (Popalzai, Barakzai, Achekzai, Mohammadzai and Alakozai). The Popalzai and Barakzai are the most significant for the discussion that follows. There has also been a subordinate grouping of the Panjpai Durrani of whom the most significant have been the Noorzai and Alizai tribes.

These two tribal alliances have been characterised by internal division and rivalry, as well as cross-alliance competition, although the Panjpai Durrani's key role was primarily to keep the minority Ghilzai tribes in the region under control.¹¹ The power play between the Popalzai and the Barakzai has been central to the politics of post-2001 Kandahar. This section explores the political and economic changes from 1978 to 2001 and continues to consider the legacy of this period on post-2001 developments in Kandahar City and the immediately surrounding districts.

3.2 Kandahar 1978-2001

Prior to 1978, the position of the traditional village and tribal leaders in Pashtun society—the *maliks* and the *khans*—has been described in two ways.¹² In the first (see Barth¹³), tribal structures were seen as egalitarian and traditional leaders were held accountable through *jirgas* (tribal councils). The second describes a much more hierarchical social structure with strong patron-client relations, characteristic of the Durrani living close to cities and linked to the monarchy, like those of Kandahar. Powerful landlords had power and established essentially semi-feudal relations, keeping their tenants and others dependent. These features are what characterise the social structures of the two study villages, settled mainly by members of the Popalzai tribe.

1978-1992

The revolution of 1978 fractured the existing order and led to a reconfiguration of the old tribal social hierarchy. The conflict with the communist government and the Soviets resulted in the formation of new social alliances and the emergence of new tribal leaders. The two study villages were subjected to considerable fighting and destruction,

9 Population estimates by the Central Statistics Organisation, 2006.

10 Antonio Giustozzi and Noor Ullah, "The Inverted Circle: Kabul and the Strongmen's Competition for Control over Kandahar, 2001 - 2006" *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 2 (2007), 167-184.

11 Giustozzi and Ullah, "The Inverted Circle."

12 Antonio Giustozzi and Noor Ullah, "*Tribes*" and *Warlords in Southern Afghanistan, 1980-2005* (London: Crisis States Research Centre / London School of Economics Development Studies Institute, 2006).

13 Frederick Barth, *Political Leadership among Swat Pathans* (New York: Humanities Press, 1959).

not least because of their location on the front line close to the airport, a target for the mujahiddin.

In Village B, in reference to a discussion on girls' education, there were memories of an incident when a governor attempted to conscript girls into school and the opposition this generated. The governor subsequently killed a number of the village elders, justifying the continued absence of a girls' school:

No, we don't have a girls' school in this village. Salih Mohammad from Kulchabad in the time of Hafizullah Amin hurled Eng. Zarif out by a sandal when he suggested a girls' school for the villagers. Then Eng. Zarif killed 60 or 70 elders of this village but these villagers still didn't accept his suggestion. Finally, the government didn't let our villagers go to the bazaar so they had to travel to the city by other roads. The Government came after Salih Mohammad with their tanks but when they arrested him their tanks were not allowed to move. Then the officials let Salih Mohammad go. The next day a helicopter landed near to Salih Mohammads home and took him and until now he is lost. So no one accepts girls' schools in this village.¹⁴

The mujahiddin war led to two specific outcomes. The first was that different tribes aligned with different mujahiddin parties. The Popalzai and Barakzai sided with the royalist opposition while the Alakozai tended to support the *Jamiat-i-Islami* opposed to the monarchy. The Panjpai tribes were split between support for the royalists and its opposition while the Ghilzai sided with the more radical Islamists, notably the *Hizb-i-Islami*.

The second effect was the migration of households to escape the fighting. A number of the study households spent the 1980s in Kandahar City. More commonly, households went to Pakistan where they lived for over a decade. The experience of migration to Pakistan was mixed, with some households living as absentee landlords drawing on their income from Kandahar, others finding new opportunities, while a further group experienced hardship.

1992-2001

After the departure of the Soviets and the subsequent fall of President Najibullah in 1992, new strongmen—none of whom came from the traditional *khan* elite—seized or gained control of their respective tribes.¹⁵ The mujahiddin movement's loss of external funding left the factions with limited resources, so none gained absolute power. This led to conflict, an emerging anarchy and generated the conditions for the emergence of the Taliban. The leadership of the Alakozai sided with the Taliban but most of the other power holders, notably those who had been aligned with the royalist parties, went into exile or disappeared off the scene.

The security regime that the Taliban established led many to return from Pakistan, resettle and in some cases rebuild their bomb-destroyed houses. The period between 1994 and 1998 before the drought took hold, was one of relative prosperity and security and few remembered economic hardship during this time. It also saw the rise of opium poppy cultivation in Kandahar. Although Dand District's contribution to the provincial opium area was modest, the employment opportunities that opium poppy generated were considerable. Some of the landed in both study villages were able to acquire substantial areas of land left by the Hindu traders of Kandahar who had fled. These were either acquired at distressed sale prices or simply taken over.

¹⁴ Interview with Household B42 Head.

¹⁵ Giustozzi and Ullah, "The Inverted Circle," 171.

The drought badly hit Kandahar's agrarian economy and the Arghandab irrigation system effectively dried up. For Dand District, on the margins of the irrigation system's reach, the effects of reduced water supply were severe and grape gardens and orchards reportedly dried up.

3.3 Kandahar 2001-2009

The fall of the Taliban in 2001, the location of Kandahar as their power centre, and the US military presence in its campaign against al Qaeda and the Taliban leadership meant that access to external patronage played an increasingly critical role in local power politics:

This time, support from beyond Kandahar proved even more important than even in the 1980s in determining the outcome of rivalry among the strongmen, not least because creating a base of support for intervention in Kandahar had been identified as a key strategic requirement. Kandahar had been a stronghold of the Taliban and therefore one of the potential trouble spots. Between 2001 and 2002 the main beneficiary of the evolving environment was Gul Agha Sherzai, who had successfully positioned himself as the "man who could help" American intervention in the south.¹⁶

The US support for Gul Agha Sherzai the Barakzai tribe's leader was relatively short-lived but he was able to gain control of key sources of revenue¹⁷ through the Spin Boldaq border post, monopolies of various business centres and local taxation of businessmen. Thus he secured sufficient resources to provide patronage to maintain political support. Part of this was achieved through promoting his tribal followers; as a result Barakzais gained control of the provincial administration. According to one source:¹⁸

In 2003, among 60 heads of the civil departments of the province, only eight were from other tribes, but the Popalzai predominated in the district administration, where they accounted for six governors out of 17.

Corruption and administrative incompetence undermined the governor's support. One informant commented on the occasion when she was offered a job:¹⁹

Five years ago someone in Kabul offered me work but he told me, "You have to introduce yourself as a Barakzai tribe" because at that time the Barakzai were powerful in Kandahar... I refused to do this because for me it is very difficult to change my identity and I knew one day they will know that I am not Barakzai.

Ahmad Wali Karzai, President Karzai's brother, gradually and skilfully built his political position. This led to Gul Agha Sherzai being transferred out in 2003, first to Kabul and finally to the governorship of Nangarhar, although he briefly regained his position in Kandahar in 2005. His departure heralded Ahmad Wali Karzai's rise to presidency of the Provincial Council with an ally appointed as governor. The Popalzai gained ascendancy in the provincial administration:

By October 2006... the number of Popalzais among the district governors had risen to 8 out of 17 and several of the remaining ones were also close to Ahmad Wali. All the new appointments were Popalzais or individuals linked to the Karzai.²⁰

16 Giustozzi and Ullah, "The Inverted Circle," 172.

17 Giustozzi and Ullah, "The Inverted Circle," 173-4.

18 Giustozzi and Ullah, "The Inverted Circle," 175.

19 Interview with government official, February 2009.

20 Giustozzi and Ullah, "The Inverted Circle," 179.

However the reallocation of jobs between tribes did little to change perceptions that the political system operated entirely in self-interest and self-enrichment:²¹

Members of the Provincial Council are interfering in different departments of government for their own benefits and introduce their relatives to departments in order to get jobs or contracts of projects. They are not doing their jobs but are doing business.

In sum, the evidence points to the increasing influence of external patronage on the interplay of tribal dynamics in Kandahar, influenced both by Kabul and the perceived interests of international players. As Giustozzi and Ullah see it:

During the 1980s, a transition began which by the beginning of the 21st century saw Afghanistan's internal political dynamics themselves affected by forms of international patronage, contributing to destroy the traditional internal sources of political legitimisation. Not only Kabul's, but also local politicians were therefore becoming increasingly dependent on foreign support and vulnerable to its suspension.²²

Kandahar's location as a key trading centre and proximity to the Spin Boldaq border with Pakistan meant that there has been a dynamic urban economy since 2001. Part of this has undoubtedly been due to the opium trade and profits being invested. This was reinforced by a reconstruction economy to which a heavy international presence contributed. Kandahar Province remains a significant centre of opium cultivation (Table 2) recording about 10% of the national area in 2008 but the cultivation, although it is important to note that cultivation has increasingly become marginalised to the more insecure districts away from Kandahar City.

Table 2. The percentage contribution of the core opium poppy producing provinces and non-core provinces (others) to national area of opium poppy cultivation

Province	1994	1996	1998	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Nangarhar	40.9	27.4	27.8	24.1	2.7	26.7	23.6	21.5	1.0	2.9	9.7	0
Badakhshan	2.4	5.7	4.4	3.0	79.3	11.1	15.9	11.9	7.1	7.9	1.9	0.01
Balkh	0	1.9	1.6	3.2	0	0.3	1.4	1.9	10.4	4.4	0	0
Helmand	41.7	43.7	47.9	52.2	0	40.5	19.2	22.4	25.5	42.2	53.2	66.0
Kandahar	5.1	5.4	8.2	3.7	0	5.4	3.8	3.8	12.5	7.6	8.6	9.3
Uruzgan	8.8	13.8	7.3	5.8	0	6.9	8.9	8.4	1.9	5.9	4.7	6.3
Farah	0	1.1	0.3	1.7	0	0.7	2.1	1.7	9.8	4.7	7.7	9.5
Others	1.0	1.0	2.5	9.4	17.9	8.4	24.9	28.2	31.7	24.5	14.1	8.9
Total '000 ha	71	57	64	82	8	74	80	131	104	165	193	157

Source: UNODC and Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2004, 2006, 2007, 2008)

The growth of the city economy, and particularly of the construction industry, had a significant influence on employment in the two study villages which are discussed in more detail next.

3.4 The two study villages

Both of the study villages are located in Dand District, which lies directly south of Kandahar City on agricultural plains with few distinctive physical features. Dand is one of the two "unofficial"²³ districts in Kandahar. It was created around 2001 and is closely tied to powerful political figures in the Provincial Council. Its proximity to the city has

21 Interview with Government Official, February 2009

22 Giustozzi and Ullah, "The Inverted Circle," 182.

23 Not officially gazetted but informally recognised.

given the villagers access to jobs and labour opportunities in the urban and peri-urban economy, a significant factor in explaining the importance of non-farm income in the income portfolios of many of the study households. Both villages are within 10-15 km of the city although Village A is closer. Compared to Arghandab and Panjwai districts also adjacent to Kandahar City, various informants saw Dand as agriculturally poorer without the assured irrigation and the greater area of fruit gardens and orchards that the other two districts had. They reported that in the past, but not now, they used to labour in the fruit gardens of Arghandab.²⁴ Dand has also never been one of the prime opium cultivation districts. According to UNODC,²⁵ between 1994 and 2002 it cultivated on average 200 hectares.

One of the reasons that less labour goes now to Arghandab is physical insecurity because of a significant Taliban presence there. A key feature of Dand District is its relative security on account of its proximity to the city and the fact that this is primarily Popalzai territory, contains the birth village of President Karzai and so is closely aligned to the present government. Dand and a few other districts have attracted the bulk of the development funds. An official of the MRRD noted that although they had funds for 16 districts, they were only able to work in 9 of them, an indication of how insecurity in Kandahar had led to the favouring of some districts over others.²⁶

Village A

In the villages of Dand, you will not find such a village where the whole land belongs to three families...In other villages it is the *malik* system but in our village [the main landowner] is the landlord and head of *shura*. There is another village...and they have also a powerful head of village. He also solves the problem of people and is very powerful in the village. But [he] is not the only landowner in [the other village] like [our landowner].²⁷

This comment from a group of village elders says much about the social structure of the village. Although there are two halves to this village (with another significant landlord in the other half), in the main half, the *malik* of the village holds absolute power. There are a number of dimensions and sources to this power, all mutually reinforcing. First he appears to be the only landowner in this half of the village with an estimated total land area of about 500 *jeribs*. He reportedly did not inherit the land but bought it during the 1990s from Hindus. In addition, the Islamic *shufa* system, which forbids neighbours from selling their land without the adjacent landowner's permission, worked in his favour in acquiring more land. As he put it, "my land is attached to many other neighbours who cannot sell land without my permission."²⁸

Second, all the land is cultivated by sharecroppers, the majority of whom are also either living in houses that he owns or have built their houses on his land. Over the last decade, more than 200 families have migrated to the village, many of them drawn by the opportunity to sharecrop on the *malik's* land or to buy plots of land sold by the *malik* on which they built houses. The *malik* also brought a group of *jats* to settle on his land, as well. The third dimension of his power is his *wasita*, ranging from key members of the Provincial Council all the way up to the top of the government in Kabul.

The *malik* is also the head of the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) *shura*, a fact that

24 Focus group discussion, January 2009.

25 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Ministry of Counter Narcotics, *Opium Survey* (Vienna and Kabul: UNODC and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004).

26 Key informant interview, January 2009.

27 Focus group discussion, February 2009.

28 Key informant interview, January 2009.

is not possible in the view of one MRRD official who considered that all the NSP *shuras* in the districts had been elected:²⁹

NSP *shuras* have been selected by village elections and they have 10 to 15 members including the head of *shura*, the assistant and the finance officer. After the elections we only trust the *shura*. *Maliks* and commanders have no role and we don't have any connection with *maliks* or commanders in the village... in the villages we don't work for individuals like *maliks*, *khans*, mullahs and commanders.

The evidence from Villages A and B does not support this view. In the *malik's* own view, he was elected by request from the village:

As head of the NSP, (we) constructed a road, which was very beneficial for village... that is why the people of our area again requested me to become head of the NSP *shura*.

While all the respondents from the village agreed that the *malik* was the head of the NSP *shura*, they had a different view of how he became head. The son of Household A19 spoke for most:

I really don't have information about it, but people say that people came to organise the villagers to elect *shura* members, but there wasn't any voting process because the *malik* elected himself and *haji* for the *shura*.

When asked why they had not elected other people, he responded:

Do not ask this question elsewhere. If he hears this, he will kill you. He doesn't want others to be elected for the *shura*. I know that you people are just asking, but if he hears this, he will think something else about this question. We can't do [anything] against powerful people. When an organisation comes, it gives help to the *maliks* and elders. Only the government can change the way it works. The government should remove his soldiers and should not allow him do whatever he wants.³⁰

Further when asked about the benefit of the road, he commented:

This road was only gravelled for his cars. We are far from that road and don't have access to that road. We want the road on which we move to the city to be gravelled.

Others were equally cautious in their reply. The head of Household A03 commented:

He is a rich person and he has power. I am a poor person. I am afraid he will hear that I have talked about him. If you want to get information about him, then ask those organisations that had projects in this village. First see their project budget and then come to village and see how much was spent. Only the road in this village is repaired but I don't know how much was spent for this useless road. I have heard that he got 200,000 USD from the NSP *shura* but he repaired just one road. I think this type of repairing only costs 500,000 Afs.³¹

It should be noted that others had reason to be grateful to the *malik* for the shelter and protection that he provided for them (as explored in Section 4), but this protection was far from secure.

29 Key informant interview, January 2009.

30 This is probably both a warning against asking the specific question as well as more general questioning about the *malik*.

31 Interview with Household A03 Head.

The *malik* apparently travels with armed escorts, a mixture of people in police uniform and personal guards without uniform.³² His connections both to Kabul and to the Provincial Council make him a target for the Taliban, and at least three of his relations had been killed in the last few years. One informant from Household A01 suggested that the *malik's* sharecroppers were a key part of his security and narrated the following story:

A few months ago, someone tried to bomb him but one of our villagers saw that person. That villager went and informed the *malik*, who told the police to dispose the bomb. Before this event, others tried to find occasions to fire at him, but another villager saw those people and then informed the *malik*. Those people are still in custody.

When asked if he would also inform the *malik* if he saw a similar action, he replied:

What do you mean? If we don't inform him, then one day he will find out and then he won't leave us alone and will say that we had links with insurgents. He is a very smart person because he searches for farmers who don't have any income, are very weak, and can't do other work. He searches for a person who will always accept what he says.

For those who are economically dependent on the *malik*, life can be fairly uncertain since they can easily lose their sharecropped land. But those households who have established independent income sources—through non-farm work in the city—can lead their life fairly independently.

Thus while there is some sense of physical security in the village, for many it is largely dependent on association with the *malik*. With respect to other public goods, there is no school within the village, which some attribute to the *malik's* lack of interest in education. One source suggested that the reason was tied to the preservation of the *malik* system:³³

People believe in their tribes and the *malik* system; if a tribal leader or *malik* joins a party or group maybe the community will also join the party because they are uneducated and blindly follow their *maliks* or tribe leader. It is clear to me that *maliks* and tribal leaders will not join parties and will never try to support democracy because they know that if they support democracy, people will become educated and will have more awareness about their rights and then these *maliks* and leaders won't be able to rule over them.

Indeed the reported levels of literacy and school attendance in both villages (see Table 3) were low, with few literate adults (and certainly no women either of school age or above). In Village A, however, the proximity to the city allowed those who could afford the transport to send their sons to school.

32 Observations from field team.

33 Interview with government official, February 2009

Table 3. Case study household contrasts by village on literacy rates¹ and attendance at school by age and sex

	Village A	Village B
Literate male head	0	2
Literate female head	0	1
Males 18 and older: total number	31	38
Males 18 and older: percent literate	3	15.8
Females 18 and older: total number	23	23
Females 18 and older: percent literate	0	4
Males 5-17: total number	16	19
Males 5-17: percent at school	56	21
Females 5-17: total number	19	14
Females 5-17: percent at school	0	0

¹ It is unclear if members of the household were functionally literate. Often it was indicated that they had attended a madrassa; whether this led to literacy unclear. This table only records the positive data, i.e. when it is indicated that they are literate or where children are at school. It may therefore underestimate actual literacy rates.

Village B

Village B is 15 km from Kandahar City. It has an estimated 2000-3000 *jeribs* of irrigated land, much of which in the past was also owned by Hindus but came under the control of key landlords during the mujahiddin time when many Hindus left. Several informants indicated that these lands were taken and the deeds of transfer and land ownership forged. Prior to the drought in 1998 the village had two irrigation sources: a canal system connected to the Arghandab River and a *karez* system which irrigated a smaller area of land. During the drought, the *karez* dried up and has not recovered; this land is now being used for brick-making.

As with Village A, this is primarily a Popalzai village (80% of the population) although with limited in-migration. During the Soviet period, given the proximity of the village to the airport, households suffered bombardment and most moved to Pakistan for a decade. A second migration occurred during the drought in the late 1990s but fewer households left and those that did largely moved to Kandahar City.

The social hierarchy of the village is structured around six *maliks*. There is a “head” *malik* for the whole village (whose father was a *malik* before him), an assistant to this *malik* and four sub-*maliks*, each of whom has part of the village under his jurisdiction. According to Mercy Corps informants, the *shura* is made up of these six *maliks* and four other villagers but the decision-making and the power lies with the former. One of the informants, a non-*malik* member of the *shura*, was clear that it existed for the benefit of the *maliks*:

I am a poor person. However, villagers selected me for the *shura*. The story is that villagers were supposed to select one person from every mosque and the villagers selected me. I attend meetings in the *shura* sometimes but nobody accepts my idea. [He turned his face to one of the interviewers.] You have seen me in the *shura*, so you know that nobody asks my idea... No, this *shura* is only of *maliks*. *Maliks* are only involved in these *shuras*. Whatever comes to the *shura* for villagers is distributed among *maliks*. We didn't see anything yet. When the head of the *shura* gives a cow to his son who works (abroad) but not to a poor person of the village, what will be the benefit of the *shura* to people?

A non-member of the *shura* agreed:

Connection with the *shura* is beneficial for those who are members and the *shura* is one of their income sources...whatever they receive through the *shura*, they take to help their pocket, home and relatives. They distribute all help among themselves. I have seen such people like the *malik* who received fertilised seeds, but instead of planting fertilised seeds he planted poppy in his lands and sold seeds to farmers. I am not the only one who says this, many villagers know this reality.³⁴

As with Village A, the *maliks* are well-connected into provincial and central political structures. The assistant head *malik* was reported to be a relation of a key official in the Provincial Council. This connection into political structures has provided employment for relatives of the *maliks* as bodyguards for key political figures in Kabul. The *malik* himself described his authority:

As a *malik* in this village, I make the solutions and agreements for people. I used to do the agreements only for Afghans but later also for Pakistanis. Once a Pakistani came to me and wanted me to find the solution of his problem. It was a death dispute, and I got 20,000 Rs from him. My rate is not specific and differs according to the problem. Once a daughter of the head of (a government) department had failed in a board examination, and her father came to me to pass his daughter. I, that girl and her father went to [name] and told him to enroll that girl in the Medical Faculty and he did.

This is a village that reportedly has a history of opium cultivation prior to 1973 although it was primarily for domestic use. Cultivation increased during the Taliban times and continued at least until 2004. However, in contrast to Village A, household interviews indicate that access to land, as well as sources of non-farm income, was key to building economic security since 2002-3.

The proximity to the airport and also to the city appears to have given this village a degree of physical security—there was reported to be only one mine incident since 2002-3. Basic public infrastructure increased through road construction and electricity. Many households now have latrines and bathrooms. With respect to education, the position is similar to that of Village A. Not a single person was reported to have graduated from high school during the time of the Zai Shah. Partly due to the influence of the mullahs, parents were not keen on sending their children to school. Although there is now a primary school in the village, the data in Table 3 shows only a minority of boys and no girls are enrolled. The lack of attendance can partly be attributed to the school's failure to function. For example, the teachers were not attending school but were nevertheless drawing salary. The head of Household B57 commented:

All those children who attended school told us that they didn't have a teacher... [the teachers] have connections with Ahmad Wali Karzai... they take advantage of Ahmad Wali Karzai. Ahmad Wali Karzai might have told them not to attend school.³⁵

Social norms are also a reason why girls are not being sent to school; in part this is reflected in the young age at which they get married—14 to 16 is common—but also in their role in the production and selling of handicrafts embroidery which is seen as preferable for them over education. A literacy school for girls was established in one of the informant's houses. Household B57 explained what happened, again indicating the power of the head *malik*:

34 Interview with Household B58 Head.

35 Another factor may have been the various reports and rumours of night letters from the Taliban warning people against sending their children to school.

We had a literacy class in our house funded from [an NGO]; my wife was teaching the girls of the village, her salary was 50 USD. She was teaching from 1st grade until 3rd grade; she had 30 students. After a year, the *malik* came to me and asked me why I decided to provide a school. When I couldn't argue any longer, I told him to take the class to his home...I couldn't do anything against him. Everyone knows that the *malik* and his wife are not educated but he took over the class for profit. However, my wives didn't let the girls go to his house. That course was in his house for one year but finally failed. When the NGO learned that the *malik's* wife was not educated, they closed the class.

3.5 Discussion

What characterises these two villages—although in different ways—is the presence of a strong social hierarchy which, from the evidence presented so far, displays little more than self-interest. These are also socially conservative villages in which access to education has been limited for men and absent for women. However the connections of the social elite to key provincial and national political figures and proximity to Kandahar City provides, under the present political arrangements, both a relative degree of physical security and—for the village elite—access to patronage. The proximity to Kandahar City has also offered economic opportunities from which the social elite, as will become evident, has disproportionately benefited. But even some of those lower in the social hierarchy have been able to achieve a degree of economic independence from the agrarian village economy. The extent to which individual households have been able to escape the social structure is explored in the household evidence.

4. Village A: Household Trajectories

4.1 Introduction

This section explores the economic trajectories of the study households in Village A. This village is characterised by strong inequalities in land ownership, deep social hierarchies and an immigrant population, the latter in part an outcome of its close proximity to Kandahar City. A number of themes emerge. First, the evidence from the two poorest households reveals their complete dependence and subservient status to a powerful landlord—a relationship that could be terminated to their detriment at any time. Second, the middle group of households, although landless, have built (to varying degrees) a livelihood independent of the agrarian and village economy. Nevertheless relationships with the local social hierarchy must be carefully managed. The village’s closeness to the city has been a critical factor allowing this. Third, the two richest households have greatly prospered, one on the basis of inherited social position, the other not. Both have benefited but in different ways from *wasita*.

It is important to note that the currency units shift between Afs (Afghanis) and Rs (Pakistani rupees) in this and the following section. It is often unclear from the interview transcripts whether these units are used interchangeably or if they are in fact referring to two different currencies. In the latter case, 100 Afs is equivalent to 160 Rs.

4.2 Summary characteristics of the study households

Table 4 summarises the key features of each household for comparative purposes. Column 1 states the wealth group assigned to each household and Column 2 the household code. These are not the original wealth group codes from the 2002-3 village assessment because they were not consistent with the household data reported here.³⁶ Column 3 notes the sex of the head of household: two of the households are effectively female-headed, although the eldest son is nominally the head. Column 4 gives the age of the head of the household indicating that there are both older and younger households. Column 5 records whether the household is native to the village or immigrant. Columns 6 to 8 summarise the information on household composition and changes. Five of the households are joint households. None (see Table 3) of the household heads are reported as literate.

Table 4. Village A: Household characteristics

Wealth group	Household Code	Sex of household head	Household head age	Native or Immigrant	Number of married couples	Number of household members	Change since 2003			
							-D	-O	+B	+M
I	A10	M	70	N	4	28	0	2	7	0
II	A05	M	60	Im	4	18	1	2	3	1
III	A01	M	50	Im	3	16	0	0	2	0
	A03	M	45	N	1	8	0	1	2	0
	A16	M	35	Im	2	14	1	3	5	1
	A19	F	46	Im	1	11	0	0	3	0
IV	A00	M	45	Im	1	7	0	1	1	0
	A12	F	50	Im	2?	9	1	0	2	1

D = Death; O = member has married or moved out; B = birth; M = member has married in; N = native, Im = immigrant

³⁶ The degree to which the village elite who are the gatekeepers to the village influenced household selection and wealth group allocation in the first round is unknown, but their influence is likely.

Table 5 summarises the key assets of each household in terms of male household labour and house and land ownership. Livestock ownership in this village is not significant although in some cases sheep rearing is a source of income. The first group of households discussed are the two wealthiest, A10 and A05; the former is significantly richer than the latter. Both heads have been on *haj*. In the case of Household A10, whose head was born in the village, this is the only one of the eight households owning arable land but this is not the only source of income. The head of Household A05 owns no land, is an immigrant to the village, but has built up a substantial contracting business.

Table 5. Village A: Household assets of labour and land

Wealth group	Household	Male labour, 16 and older	House owner	Irrigated land (jeribs)	Fruit garden (jeribs)
I	A10	9	Yes	150	15 +
II	A05	6	Yes	0	0
III	A01	5	No	0	0
	A03	1	Yes	0	0
	A16	3	Yes	0	0
	A19	5	No	0	0
IV	A00	2	No	0	0
	A12	3	No	0	0

The second group of households have been allocated to wealth group III (Households A01, A03, A16 and A19). None own land, two own their own house or have acquired land on which to build their house, and all obtain most of their income from non-farm sources. The third group of households are in wealth group IV (Households A00 and A12). They have no land and the women in both households work as servants for a landowner (Landlord 1 or the *malik*). Both are living in houses that belong to him. The trajectories of households within each group are first discussed before comparisons are made between them.

4.3 Households contrasted

(a) Wealth groups I & II: Households A10 and A05

Household A10

Household A10 is the second big landowner (Landlord 2) in the village and lives in the “other” half of the village to Landlord 1. It is a large joint household of 28 people with the husband and wife, five married sons, their wives and children. The sixth and youngest son, also a *haji* like the head, moved out after a conflict with his father (discussed in detail in Section 6). A separate house was built for him but he continues to manage part of the household’s portfolio of assets. The father was an only son with two sisters. He inherited land from both his father and uncle. As with many households, this family moved to Pakistan during the 1980s but took advantage of the education there. The wife explained:

We stayed [in Pakistan] for 10 years. Then we returned back to Afghanistan. The reason that my children stayed uneducated is that my husband is not interested in education. My children used to come to this village for our lands; they used to collect the products.³⁷

37 Preliminary Interview with Household A10 Wife.

This household survived in exile as absentee landlords, receiving rent in cash or kind from their sharecroppers. They returned during the time of the mujahiddin, and two of the sons were killed. As with other landowners, they moved into opium cultivation during the 1990s for a number of years and drew considerable income from it. A son commented:

In the time of Taliban, we used to grow poppy. It had good income because poppy was very expensive at that time, but it was really difficult. We used to hire labour for milking poppy. We don't grow it now...the price also went down.³⁸

The household's land holdings are extensive. The reported figure of 150 *jeribs* of irrigated land and 15 *jeribs* of vineyards may not be a complete account. Land has been sold in the past; some vineyards were sold to cover the debts left by the head's father, but an unknown amount has been bought. The eldest son, who manages the lands, described their land assets as follows:

We have had four farmers in the last five years. They are from another village. They are not our relatives. They farm 150 *jeribs* of land: 6 *jeribs* of vegetable gardens and the rest is wheat land. They also farm 300 lines of vines. We have another vineyard which is 12 *jeribs*. This is our former vineyard. Our all farmers work for 1/5th of the products. Our first vineyard contains 3,500 vines and the second vineyard contains 200 vines.

All the land is sharecropped out, with the landlord receiving 80% of the share. According to one informant, the sharecropper provides the labour while the landlord provides land and inputs of seed, fertiliser (where used), and the draught power for tillage. This rate was reported by all households and is common to the village. The position of the sharecropper is insecure. When asked about contracts for sharecroppers, the eldest son replied: "If we don't like a farmer, then we let him go. We don't care for any contract."

The family is largely self-sufficient from its lands, as the wife noted:

We don't sell any of the products. We distribute some of the products to our relatives and the rest remain for our own consumption. We consume 12-13 *kharwars*³⁹ wheat [4.2 - 4.6 tons] per year. There are times that we harvested only 8 *kharwars* and then we bought more wheat.

The family secured its prosperity through land by drawing a windfall income from opium cultivation as well as an estimated one million Afs per year from its vineyards. In addition, over the last decade it leveraged these assets to diversify its income portfolio, drawing on the labour of its six sons. The diversification started with brick-making. When asked if they had inherited the brick kilns, a son replied:

The land was ours. Ten years ago, the Punjabi people came and leased in the land of the kiln. They built two kilns on it. The leased agreement was done for seven years: 350,000 Afs per kiln per year. After seven years, they went and the kilns were left for us. They went and we started the work ourselves. Since two years ago, we've managed the kilns.⁴⁰

These two kilns generate an estimated income of about 800,000 Afs per year. Two further enterprises were developed around 2003. First was the development of a cattle market on their land on the edge of Kandahar City, apparently leased to the city. The second and

38 Interview with Household A10 Son.

39 1 Kandahar *kharwar* is approximately 80 Kandahar *mans* which is approximately 352 kg; 1 Kandahar *man* is approximately 4.4 kg.

40 Interview with Household A10 Eldest Son.

linked to the market was the construction of a slaughterhouse, also on their land.

We opened the livestock market, then we needed to have a slaughterhouse in order to make facilities for people who wanted to buy livestock and slaughter right there. Before, the slaughterhouse was in the city. Then we requested the municipality to allow us to open a slaughterhouse near the livestock market and the municipality accepted our request.

The income generated through the livestock market and slaughterhouse was not provided, but is likely to be considerable. The household was paid 5 Afs per sheep and 50 Afs per cow sold in the market. Part of that income has been invested in agriculture, such as the drilling of additional bore wells to assure their irrigation supply. The wife described the allocation of male household labour to manage its affairs:

Six years ago my youngest son started work in the sheep and cow market. My husband has never been a property dealer. He is a head clerk. He has many clerks who note the sheep and cows which come...every merchant imports and keeps them in the market. As the market is our property, my husband receives rent from each merchant. Another son works in the slaughterhouse and on the lands. The [slaughter] charge is fixed and he gets money from sheep, cows or camels killed there. Our third son drives for [a local politician]. His salary is 6,000 Afs; he has done this work for eight years. [The politician] is my husband's close friend. Another son works with his father in the market. My fifth son works in our kiln; he is in charge of the labour. My sixth son also works in livestock market. He gets money from every driver who enters to the market. He used to work in a mechanics shop. My husband needed someone for the market so he left the shop and joined his father.

This is a well-connected family. A son is employed by a key local politician and uses that connection to ensure that contracts are honoured. The municipality had failed to pay the rent for the livestock market and a son noted:

The municipality has not paid us for the last two years. My brother went to the municipality but could not receive the money. Then he went to [the politician] and was told that the mayor would pay.⁴¹

In sum this is a family, initially rich in inherited assets, lucky in its male labour resources, that has benefited through deployment of these resources in the opium economy and reconstruction economy of Kandahar since 2001 to further build its wealth.

Household A05

Household A05 migrated to the village in the early 1990s. It has no land but has prospered over through non-farm income. Although not as rich as Household A10, it has accumulated wealth from more humble beginnings. The household is well-connected, although how this came about is unclear. It is a large joint household of 18 people with five adult sons, three of whom are married. A younger male had been brought into the household at the age of 11 or 12 by the head, got married (paid for by the head) but left the household to live separately. Like many families, it spent over a decade in Pakistan. The wife described how the husband started as a street trader selling plastic sandals and became connected to a shopkeeper:

My husband used to sell sandals in front of his shop, and then they knew each other. My husband asked him to find him a job. Then he told my husband, "I am going to take my mother to India for treatment, so do you want to run my shop till I return?" My husband agreed and worked very honestly in the

41 Interview with Household A10 Son.

shop when the shopkeeper was in India. When the shopkeeper returned from India, he hired my husband because of his honesty. My husband had a 2,000 Rs/month salary. After some time my husband had 60,000 Rs savings, and he told the shopkeeper that he wanted to work as a partner with the shopkeeper. The shopkeeper needed money because his wife had died. My husband paid the shopkeeper and then my husband became his partner.⁴²

When the family returned to Afghanistan, conditions were difficult. As the husband made clear:

I was very worried. I didn't have ability to farm lands. Then I used to work as a middleman. I could get as much income as I needed. After some time, I started to lease lands and hire farmers. This job also didn't have a good income. Then I started to get contracts. I used to get a contract for buildings; the lands, where people wanted to build houses or markets, were leased out. I hired labour on a daily wage labour basis. I had a bit income from that work and we survived from it. I continued and I got experience. Getting good income, I started to buy stones for apartments. In previous contracts, all the expenses or materials such as bricks and stones were on the landlord. When I got more experience I changed the contract. I started to buy stones and bricks for construction.

Although not directly stated it is clear that a connection with both Landlords 1 and 2 in the village has been important for the head of Household A05. Once he acted as an agricultural contractor for Landlord 1, leasing 200 *jeribs* of land and hiring farmers to work on it. In the case of Landlord 2, he commented:

I went to him and told him to help me in contract work. I told him that I would get contracts and he would give me bricks on credit and he accepted.⁴³

The head sits on the village *shura*, appointed according to all accounts, by Landlord 1. He was given the contract for the road gravelling project implemented under the NSP. Through such connections and the ability to command access to credit, he acquired a woodyard, a truck, and a tractor for the contracting work. The eldest of his four sons works in the woodyard with the youngest brother and the other two brothers are drivers of his truck and tractor. As the head noted,

My contacts motivated me to buy a truck; when I used to bring materials then I had to rent other's trucks, so I thought I would also buy a truck.

Two years later, he bought the tractor and both are now used for haulage work as well as servicing the construction works. The household had also built a house on land that was bought earlier. This house proved to be too small and was sold for about one million Afs. Part of the money from the sale was used to buy a tractor. They also purchased a larger plot for 800,000 Afs on which they planned to build a new house. They are living in rented accommodation until they have sufficient money, as the wife noted:

We have no plan because we don't have money. Our men will work and get income, and then we will make a plan. We're happy that we bought a bigger parcel of land.⁴⁴

A medical problem regarding one son's eyesight led to major expenditure: 60,000 Afs was reported for one operation. Money was borrowed for this but also quickly repaid. The head commented that he was now in a position where rather than taking credit he could provide it:

42 Interview with Household A05 Wife.

43 Interview with Household A05 Head.

44 Interview with Household A05 Woman.

Before I couldn't give credit but now I can, so it is a change... before I was very poor but now I have good income. I can give credit that I couldn't before.

While Household A10's inherited social position and assets have placed it to benefit from the politics and economy of post-2001 Kandahar, it would seem that Household A05 economic success supported by sufficient male labour has been built around developing the necessary connections with two key power holders in the village. How he managed to do this is unknown as is how far these connections extend beyond the village.

(b) Wealth group III: Households A03, A16, A19 and A01

Four households are discussed here—three for whom circumstances have gradually improved and one that is struggling. They have all, at some stage, been dependent on one of the village landlords.

Household A03

A03 is a household of eight with two sons matriculated at school in Kandahar City. The head was born in another village but his father died at an early age and his mother remarried. His uncle, working as a sharecropper in Village A, took him into his household. The head now runs a small shoe selling business selling “seconds” imported from a shoe factory in Pakistan. He fought with the mujahiddin where Landlord 1 was one of the commanders and was wounded. When he moved back into Village A in 1997, he sharecropped and lived on Landlord 1's land. First he cultivated the land himself but because of his injured legs he could not continue. Then he leased land from Landlord 1, brought in other farmers to do the cultivation, and achieved enough income to feed his family. As his shoe business (started in 2003) slowly grew, he stopped leasing land. He used to raise small livestock, fattening and selling them but this has declined as he has given up agriculture:

For many years we traded sheep. When we had lands, we could feed them and in that time we used to buy 10 or 12 sheep but now we buy 3 or 4.⁴⁵

However, he raised sufficient cash to buy land from the landlord and build a house; he will move into it in 2010. He is currently renting the house to pay for its construction and the costs of putting in electricity and a well. The family is about 100,000 Afis in debt, partly because of the land purchase and the house construction. But this does not worry the head. The wife confirmed that they had no problems meeting their consumption needs from income:

It is really difficult for you but very easy for us. We know how to repay our debts. When it's time to repay the debts, then I will borrow it from others and repay my old debts.⁴⁶

Part of the head's debt also came from the purchase of a motorised rickshaw. He initially had a bicycle to go to his shop in the city. Then he bought a motorbike, which he later sold and used part of the proceeds to purchase the rickshaw. A major factor in buying the rickshaw was so that he could take his two sons to school in the city. He was adamant about educating his sons:

I have seen many problems because of being uneducated which I don't want for them. If I was educated, I would have never been injured in wars. I did whatever others told me. If I was educated, I would know what is better and

45 Interview with Household A03 Head.

46 Interview with Household A03 Wife.

what is not.⁴⁷

There was no discussion on education for his daughters: his eldest is married and his second and third are working on embroidery at home. In the absence of a school in the village, there are no possibilities for education for them.

This is a household that has established itself through a gradual accumulation of resources, built a modest business, bought land and constructed a house.

Household A16

Household A16 has also gradually improved its circumstances. A joint household of three brothers, the household is headed by the eldest son who is married. Their mother lives with them, her husband having died in 2005. Originally from Helmand, they sold their land when they migrated to Pakistan. They moved into the village in 1997 through an elder relative who was a sharecropper with Landlord 1; they took over his lands, revealing the power of the landlord:

[Our relative] was the landlord's farmer but not anymore. When he left the landlord's lands, we got the lands. [He left]...because he was old and the landlord told him that he couldn't farm lands. He opened a shop for himself. My son asked the landlord to give us the lands of our relatives. Then the landlord gave us the land on which our relative used to work. Our relative felt nothing about it. It was the landlord who took away the land from him, not us. A farmer can't break a landlord's decision.⁴⁸

When they moved into the village, they did not have a house or land. The landlord gave them land on which they built a small house; the second son has been farming the lands since then. However, in time, they borrowed money from relatives and bought a separate plot of land on which they built a better house.

The landlord's house was not good. Unless he is compelled, he won't even keep animals in it. The rooms were all wet. So we decided to get land for rooms. The landlord used to sell his lands on credit so we could pay him over time. We had 100,000 Afs in savings. My father bought the land [300,000 Afs] from the landlord through our relative who requested it. We did the work by ourselves. We spent 80,000 Afs for the rooms which have iron beams and 50,000 Afs for rooms which have wooden beams. We drilled a bore well and spent 30,000 Afs. We had just 100,000 Afs but the rest was all borrowed from relatives. Most of the credits were from our uncle and sister's in-laws.⁴⁹

The uncle appears to have played a key role in supporting his brother's family. He also assisted over the funeral expenses of their father:

When my father was sick and died, my uncle met all expenses. After 5 days, he told me, "I have spent 40,000 Afs. Whenever you find money, then repay me." Then he left for Pakistan. After one year, we collected money for him. When my uncle came, we gave him the money. He bought two sheep for 10,000 Afs and slaughtered them for my father. He took 30,000 Afs with him. It is good to repay someone's debts after his death. We earned all 40,000 Afs in one year.⁵⁰

The sources of their income are diverse. One son makes bricks in the kilns (of Landlord 2)

47 Interview with Household A03 Head.

48 Interview with Household A16 Mother.

49 Interview with Household A16 Son.

50 Interview with Household A16 Son.

during the summer period, loads trucks during the winter, and works as a casual labourer for Landlord 1. The eldest son is ill and runs a small business selling perfumes in the city from which he makes 100-200 Afs per day. The third son works on the land and the household's share of the harvest (20%) feeds them for about 10 months in a year. The mother commented that due to irrigation from the bore wells, "drought does not affect the production." She also noted the good income they had from growing opium and the general effects on its decline.

[My son] has grown watermelon, barley, wheat, corn and vegetables. He even grew poppy before. Poppy had good income... wheat, even with less income, is better. The village became poorer [after stopping poppy] because their income got reduced.⁵¹

Three daughters have been married out and two sons have married. One daughter got married in 2007 to a relative for a bride price of 100,000 Afs which was reported to have been spent on the dowry. Her brother commented: "Sending out a daughter or any other family member is really hard and everyone in the family misses her. She used to make embroideries and we lost her income." This statement indicates the significance attached to the income generated from the embroidery work from the other two women in the household.

This young joint household has been able to handle the costs of their father's death. Through the work of the three sons in farming, labour and petty trading, they have gradually been able to secure their own home and through the management of debt gradually get married. The support of their uncle has clearly been essential to them but they remain dependent on Landlord 1 for sharecropping. They currently have total debts of 300,000 Afs but as one son commented, "The total is 300,000 Afs including bride price, but it does not mean we can't take more debts."

Household A19

The third of the wealth group III households, A19 with 12 people, is effectively headed by a widow. Her husband was a mullah in another village. His first wife died and there were stepsons from the first marriage who remain supportive of her. She has five sons, one who is married. When married, she migrated to Pakistan and then returned to her husband's village. After her husband's death, she moved to Village A and now lives in her brother's house.

The owner of this house is my brother. He lives in Grishk. We live here free of charge. It has been one year since we moved to this house. My brother is going to come in a few days and then we will see whether or not he will ask us to pay rent. We have been living in this village for 10 years. This house has 4 rooms; 3 rooms for us and 1 room for cows.⁵²

She talked of her husband's death and the changes in their circumstances:

He was praying and suddenly he fell down. He was in bed for 18 days and then he died. We didn't spend anything on his burial, villagers helped us with all the expenses. My husband was their *mullah*. They buried him and spent money for the funeral after his death. My life was not good when my husband was alive: my children were young, we didn't have much income. My present life is much better now than that time. They [her sons] bring bread for dinner. My eldest son was 12 years old when my husband died. We used to ask for charity and villagers used to help us. When we came here, my sons

51 Interview with Household A16 Mother.

52 Interview with Household A19 Widow.

started work and we stopped asking for charity.⁵³

It was a clear decision that she took to move to Village A where there would be more opportunities for her sons to work. Her father had been a sharecropper with Landlord 1 but she settled in the other half of the village. Her son commented:

Our life got worse after my father's death. There was no job in the [other] village and we didn't have any income. A villager had a house in this village and he told us to move to it, he gave us his house. The village is near Kandahar City and we can find a job easily.⁵⁴

Six months after the father's death, the household moved to the village. The second son was nine years old at the time and he started selling plastic bags in the bazaar while his mother made trouser strings. In time he worked his way up through connections to selling plasters in the city from a cart. All the sons started work between the ages of ten and twelve.

When I started selling plasters, life improved because my mother and I both had income. My mother made trousers' strings for income. We didn't make a living like rich people but we stopped asking for credit because we used to spend as much as we got in that day. Most of the time, we used to eat bread with tea. Before, we all used to wear others' old clothes and shoes. We used to cook once a month. We couldn't take our sick family members to a clinic if there was no free clinic. Now we can take our patients to private doctors. We can buy new clothes in Eid and cook more times than before.⁵⁵

All the brothers are working; one works in brick-making, one sells plaster and three others sell cloth in the city. The mother still sells trouser strings. Their economic circumstances have improved from before, helped by the maintenance of the joint household. All the evidence points to this joint household slowly establishing itself almost entirely through non-farm work. As will be discussed in Section 6, the first son was married on an exchange basis but two years later they could afford to raise a bride price for a second son.

Household A01

Household A01 settled in the village in 2000 on return from Pakistan where the husband had been a casual labourer. A household of 16 people, it contains one married son, his wife, his mother-in-law and sister along with the sister's husband, and several unmarried children, including two sons. The mother-in-law lives with the family because she was driven out of her home by her stepsons by her husband's first wife. When the family moved to the village, the head found work as a servant in Landlord 1's house and has since lived in a house provided by the landlord. He worked as a sharecropper but this appears not to be sufficient for the household. His brother-in-law commented:⁵⁶

When we first came we got a house from the landlord but no farming land and we just used to help him with housework. Later we thought that this work didn't have any benefit. We had to help him with housework because he had given us a house for living. Then we requested him to give us land. He accepted and gave us 20 *jeribs* of land. We have his lands which is our income source. During some years, we can get enough wheat for our consumption but sometimes we can't. Last year was a very bad year and we just harvested 12 *kharwars* of wheat from 20 *jeribs*. The landlord had given us another parcel

53 Interview with Household A19 Widow.

54 Interview with Household A19 Son.

55 Interview with Household A19 Son.

56 Interview with Household A01 Brother-in-law.

of land next to the main road. Because of the traffic and the dust the land didn't have good production. We just got 2.5 *kharwars* (20% of the harvest) of wheat.

The head provided an account of the activities of the male household members:

I am 50; I can't do heavy work. I made myself busy with farming and irrigation with my sons. I buy and sell straw. My wage from farming is 1/5th of the products. If I didn't do farming, then it would be really hard for us to survive. I get 1/5th of the products. I farm 19 *jeribs* of land and plant 90 *mans* (396 kg) of seeds. My first son is a *zaranj* (three-wheel scooter) driver and he has a bit of income from it. My second son has been a driver for two years. His wage is 7000 Rs/month. He found this work through other drivers. He is happy with his new work because it is easier than brick-making. My third son is a watchman in a market which is under construction. His salary is 6000 Rs/month. He was also brick-maker in the kiln before. A *haji* found him this work. My fourth son is a brick-maker.⁵⁷

Despite the amount of male labour and the multiple sources of income, this household is struggling with only one son, the guard, making a regular income; for the others, work is irregular. The father appears not to be well and the sons' income unreliable. There have been a series of petty business ventures that have failed and led to mounting debts, including the wood trade:

We used to buy the first load (of wood) on credit and then sell it. Then before buying the second load, we had to pay off the first credit. We didn't buy wood from one person. We used to buy wood first from one person, then from another person and like that. But we lost too much and our work was all on credit. We didn't have our own wealth to lose it. People stopped giving us credit then we faced loss. We are in debt of for 10,000 Afs from one Baloch, 15,000 Afs from a tractor driver, and 15,000 Afs from another Baloch. A Baloch came and asked us to repay. We told him our father is in Kabul and we don't have any money at all.⁵⁸

Then they bought a car to run as a taxi service and also lost money on that:⁵⁹

We bought it for 600,000 Rs from one of my father's friends. We paid 500,000 Rs first and then we agreed that we would pay 100,000 Rs in a month. We thought it would have good income. After two or three months, the car went off the road and flipped over. We didn't have money to repair it. Then we abandoned the car. After one month, my father's friend came and asked us to repay. After the 50,000 Rs repayment, we paid 60,000 Rs more. When a mullah asked us to repay, we gave the car to him.

Their father is now trading in straw to Kabul and struggling to make an income from this. The *zaranj* was bought on credit,⁶⁰ received based on the landlord's guarantee.

I bought the *zaranj* three months ago. I bought it on credit and have not paid yet. Its value in cash is 52,000 Rs but I bought it for 70,000 Rs on credit. The seller first asked for a guarantee because he was giving credit. Our guarantee was Landlord 1. They came and asked him about us. His nephew told them, "They farm our lands and we know them very well."

When asked how the repayment would be made the son hoped that there would be

57 Interview with Household A01 Head.

58 Interview with Household A01 Son.

59 Interview with Household A01 Son.

60 Interview with Household A01 Son.

enough harvest of wheat to repay the debt. The household reported debts totalling 4-500,000 Af\$ with increasing difficulty both in servicing these debts and getting more credit. The wife at one point said: "We take credit for a short time. When we don't have money to repay the debt, then it lasts one or two years." She cried and said, "[My husband] has left Kandahar because of too many debts that he couldn't repay." While the household did not provide any evidence of food rationing or reduced consumption, they did comment that they had not eaten rice for two weeks and have to make do with whatever income they have. As will be seen in Section 6, two sons have been contracted into an exchange marriage because of lack of income to pay a bride price.

In sum, three of these wealth group III households have managed to build a more economically secure life. For one (Household A03), with only one working male, this has involved a gradual separation from landlord dependence with independent assets built strategically over time and a long-term wish to educate his sons and so as to not deploy them as labour. Two of the households (A16 and A19) have had more labour resources to work with (although they started work at a very early age and had no education) and while A16 still works as a sharecropper the key support of a maternal uncle has helped build a degree of financial independence. The life of A19 headed by a widow has improved as young sons have entered the labour market, but she has also been helped by relatives. The least successful of the group, A01, is not short of male labour but through poor judgment and execution a series of failed, credit-based ventures have left them heavily in debt and dependent on the goodwill of the landlord to maintain access to land.

(c) Wealth group IV: Households A00 and A12

Household A00

Households A00 and A12 are the poorest of the study households. Both are dependent on Landlord 1 and the women work as servants in his house. Household A00 comprises 8 people, including a sick husband and son, and thus has little male labour. They were refugees in Pakistan where the husband collected wood and the wife made hats. They returned to their original village in the early 1990s but after 2001 it fell back under Taliban control. Then they moved to Village A to find work:

The village was full of the Taliban and they wanted my husband to join them to fight against the government and the US. We didn't want him to join the Taliban, so we left and came to this village. Our life in [the other] village was better because we had products from our lands. My husband was busy in lands there but here my husband doesn't have a job... We came to this village and lived for three years in the landlord's house (Landlord 1) and my husband farmed his lands for one year. Then he took his lands from us.⁶¹

Part of the reason why the husband lost his sharecropping position was because of leg injuries he incurred in the village from falling off a tractor. As a result, the landlord felt he was not able to work properly. Now he feels unwell and works as casual labourer when he can find the work. When the landlord ejected them from the house and lands, he introduced him to another landlord who gave him a house with poor living conditions. As the head commented:

This house was much destroyed, then I reconstructed it. I bought plastic for 500 Af\$, soil for 700 Af\$ and straw for 900 Af\$. [The house] doesn't have electricity or a well. We bring water from a mosque. Our house is under the shadow of high

61 Interview with Household A00 Woman.

apartments and until 2 pm, sunshine can't come into our compound and it causes much cold.⁶²

Despite the loss of the house, his wife continues to work as a servant for the original landlord's household:

She goes in the morning and comes in the afternoon. She also brings their leftover food. She serves the [landlord's] women with washing and cleaning. She doesn't have a wage. If we ask for one, they will fire us. Ten years she has worked there. I asked him for lands but he doesn't give me lands and he doesn't help me.⁶³

The one potential source of income had been from his son who worked in the medicine market as a labourer, carrying cartons of medicine with a wheel barrow which he had bought for 1,500 Rs. However someone stole the wheel barrow and he also became ill:

He had an appendicitis operation. We spent 2,000 Rs. The operation itself was free because he got the operation in Merwise Hospital. Recently he got pain in his wound and he went to Pakistan. We told him not to go to Pakistan but he didn't accept what we said. We had some saving money and he took 2,000 Rs with him.⁶⁴

The father had to borrow from several sources to pay for the medical care, indicating that the costs may have been more than indicated:

I went to the people with whom I used to work. I borrowed 5,000 Afs from one. Then I went to the landlord and he gave me 1,500 Afs. I borrowed 2,500 Afs from [one person], 3,000 Afs from [another] and 4,500 Afs from [a third]. In total, I borrowed 16,500 Afs and spent it all on my son.

The son's health remains uncertain and he is unable to do labouring jobs. He tried to set up a bicycle repairing shop but the rent became too high to afford. Part of their cash needs have been met through the marriage of their 16-year-old daughter in the last year to a 36-year-old man (the use of the bride price to meet consumption needs is discussed further in Section 6). This is a household struggling to survive that has been hit by a series of shocks; it is not able to escape from a dependency on a landlord. The wife described the effects of losing the land and ill health on the household economy:

It had many effects. First, we lost our house. Second, we lost (farm) products. Third, we lost livestock. Fourth, we felt very sad. Fifth, my son borrowed money for his treatment.

Household A12 is also dependent on Landlord 1. The effective head is a widow who works as a servant in landlord's household. She moved to Kandahar from her village after her husband's death in 1994. Through connections in the village, she found work with Landlord 1 as a servant; this also provided her with a house to live in. She has four sons, one of whom was asked to leave the household on account of his behaviour and addiction to hashish:

When women got income from their embroidery work, then he forced the women to pay him all their income for his hashish. When I sent him away, I thought that he was an addicted person and didn't know whether his wife or children are (as well).⁶⁵

This son works for the landlord as a security guard; he lives in separate housing nearby but may still be linked with the household. A second son is also married with children, and a married daughter has returned to the household after a conflict with her in-laws

62 Interview with Household A00 Head.

63 Interview with Household A00 Head.

64 Interview with Household A00 Head.

65 Interview with Household A12 Widow.

(see Section 6). Their continued residence in the house depends on the woman working in the landlord's household. The head described her work, its demands and the insecurity of employment:

I have worked at his home for 12 years. I had to move from this village twice and he hired another woman but no woman could work at his home because there was too much work. I bake 2 *mans* of flour (9 kg) in the morning and 2 *mans* of flour in the evening.⁶⁶

One son recently got land as a sharecropper with the landlord which brought some food security, although at a price. As he commented:

Having connection with the landlord is better because we got lands from him and my mother also works for them. We have to take care of the connection in order not to lose lands and work... We can't miss the landlord's housework at all. If my mother is sick, then my sister goes for work.⁶⁷

When asked if he worried about losing the work he replied as follows: "It's a proverb which says that one drop of rain is flood for an ant. So my mother's work is a big income for us." Questioned about the possibility of losing this work, he replied: "Yes, there is (a possibility). It's up to the landlord whether they will fire my mother or not."

The mother also commented:

What should we do? We're very poor people. I went to the landlord's home to wash but the landlord's women told me to bake their bread. I told them that I am really sick and can't bake bread but they said, "If you can't bake bread, then do not come to our home next time and we will hire another woman." I apologised to them and said that I just couldn't bake for that day. They said, "If you can't bake for today, then send your daughter-in-law." I told them, "My sons do not allow them to come here." They said, "If your sons do not allow your daughter in laws, then do not eat food."... Our life is very bad. I take this bucket everyday to the landlord's home in order to get something to eat. Sometimes, they give us soup, meat, rice, potatoes... I got two tablespoons of soup but I poured much water in it at home in order to feed all family members. We look forward to getting something from them, otherwise we don't have any other way. You should always pray and wish to not get poor. Life of poor people is like the life of dogs.

Two sons have found work brick-making which is separate from the landlord and this brings in some additional seasonal income. Their almost total dependence on the landlord is not only reflected in the employment of the eldest son as a guard, but also in credit from the landlord to meet the costs of a son's marriage. This is described further in Section 6, which also explores a very problematic exchange marriage into which this household entered. The son-in-law, a relative in another village, had a conflict with them over his wife's visit to a hospital, a matter made more complicated in that he is also a Talib. In summary, the household is well aware of their lack of independence and its consequences. The son noted:

There are... people in this village who have a comfortable life, they are not tied to one's work. They can always shift their work to a more profitable work but we can't. There are poorer people than us who don't have sons and a good income. We can't say whose life is better. Our life is almost better because we can take credit from rich people.⁶⁸

66 Interview with Household A12 Widow.

67 Interview with Household A12 Son.

68 Interview with Household A12 Son.

4.4 Key themes

A number of themes run through these household accounts. Table 6 provides an assessment of the overall direction of each household's trajectory and the likely causes or factors contributing to it. First is the importance of access to informal credit, all on a no-interest basis to meet consumption needs, investments in assets or business ventures and, as will be seen, marriage. For those with a reputation for repaying, access is secure. For those with few resources, then a guarantee from a landlord is an absolute requirement. The second theme is the significance of the non-agricultural economy in this village and the dynamics of post-2001 Kandahar City in providing opportunities for even some of the poorest families. The third is the value of having sufficient male labour, although as Household A03 shows, this is not an absolute requirement and nor, as Section 6 will make clear, should female income generation be underestimated. The fourth and universal theme is that of an environment dominated by relationships of patronage and inequality. Some, by virtue of social position, can use these relationships to their advantage and keep others subservient, some can manage to some degree to evade them, but others are kept subject to them.

Table 6. Village A: Household trajectories

Wealth group	Household	Overall	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Other issues
I	A10	Prospering	Land	Multiple other income sources	Six sons	Well-connected
II	A05	Prospering	Construction business	Well-connected	Four Sons	
III	A01	Struggling	Diverse but unreliable income	Various failed businesses on credit	Working sons but mostly casual work	Dependent on landlord
	A03	Slowly improving	Small business	Access to credit	Combination of activities	Only one male labour
	A16	Slowly improving	Diverse income sources in city	Three active brothers	Ready access to credit	
	A19	Slowly improving	Diverse income sources in city	Five active brothers	Access to credit	Supportive relatives
IV	A00	Struggling	Sick husband Sick son	Only one son	Wife servant of landlord	Dependent on landlord
	A12	Struggling	Widow works as servant to landlord	Two sons with seasonal work	Dependent on landlord	

5. Village B: Household Trajectories

5.1 Introduction

This section explores the economic trajectories of the study households in Village B. This village is also characterised by inequalities in land ownership. Although there are more landowners, evidence again shows a social hierarchy within a group of six *maliks* who largely run the village in their own interests. Although more distant from the city, non-farm income still plays a critical role in the overall economy. A number of themes emerge.

While the degree of dependence of the poor households on landlords is not as absolute as in Village A, it is nevertheless important. Further, although no one landlord is powerful to the extent of Landlord 1 in Village A, poor households invest in keeping relations with landlords in order to secure access to credit. Both the agricultural and urban economies are important for household survival. But perhaps the most striking issue evidenced by the interplay between the four related households, one of which is headed by the main *malik*, is the ruthlessness of powerful people even in their treatment of relatives.

5.2 Summary characteristics of the study households

Table 7 summarises the key household characteristics of each household. As with Village A, these are large households and six of them (the richest six) are joint households. Four of these households are related (B40, B56, B57 and B58) and three of them also are headed by *maliks* (B40, B42 and B48), which raises the possibility of the influence of the village leadership on the household selection in the first round, given the evidence already presented of their self-interested actions. Two of the households (B50 and B58) contain widows and although nominally head by an elder son, the role of the widow in household decision making was evident from the interviews. Table 8 summarises the assets held by each of these households; all except Household B56) own their own houses (in contrast to Village A) and all except one has more than three male labourers in the household. The wealthiest four households are also landowners.

Table 7. Village B: Household characteristics

Wealth group	Household	Household head sex	Household head age	Number of married couples	Number of household members	Change since 2003			
						-D	-O	+B	+M
I	B40	M	85	4	23	0	3	10	2
II	B42	M	71	2	16	1	0	2	1
	B48	M	48	3	15	0	0	2	0
	B57	M	46	3	15	0	4	1	0
III	B46	M	66	2	11	1	0	0	0
	B50	M	33	2	19	1	0	5	0
	B56	M	33	1	4	0	0	2	0
	B58	M	28	1	8	1	0	1	0

D = Death; O = member married or moved out; B = birth; M = member married in

Table 8. Village B: Household assets of labour and land

Wealth group	Household	Male labour, 16 and older	House owner	Irrigated land (<i>jeribs</i>)	Fruit garden (<i>jeribs</i>)
I	B40	12	Yes	50	15?*
II	B42	5	Yes	18	4
	B48	4	Yes	20	5
	B57	3	Yes	5?	0
III	B46	3	Yes	0	0
	B50	6	Yes	0	0
	B56	1	No	0	0
	B58	3	Yes	0	0

* Estimated

5.3 Households contrasted

Based on the asset data, the households are examined in two groups— first, the landowning households and second, those without land.

(a) Wealth groups I & II: Households B40, B42, B48 and B57

Household B40

Household B40 is a large joint household of 21, headed by a *haji* who is the head *malik*. He has had four wives, two of whom have died, one whom he divorced, and one who now lives with him. He has had a total of 17 children: three sons, their families, children from his fourth (and dead) wife, and an unrelated farmer who is a servant. One son lives in Dubai exporting vehicles. This is a wealthy household with multiple sources of income from six working sons,⁶⁹ four who have non-farm income sources. There is also significant farm income. The head reported that he inherited 10 *jeribs* of land but he now owns about 50 *jeribs*, including 15 *jeribs* of fruit (including vineyards): 35 of wheat and 5 of pomegranates, and 10 are uncultivated because of lack of water. These were irrigated once from a *karez* but now there is an irrigation canal through the lands, supplemented with 4 bore wells. The additional 40 *jeribs* were bought from Hindus who owned the land during the 1970s. The basis on which they were bought is unclear and there were suggestions from other sources that they had been illicitly acquired. The household had more livestock in the past but now only have a sufficient amount for household needs. It is not clear how the means to acquire the land were generated and how the wealth of this household had been built. They migrated to Pakistan for 10 years and sold some land in order to do this. According to the head, they had a good life there: “My four sons worked; two used to sell materials on a push cart, a third one was a grocer and the fourth one used to sell vegetables in a shop.”⁷⁰

One son stayed behind to look after the land. When the family returned from exile, they returned with money to rebuild their destroyed house. On account of political connections with Taliban opposition figures, they had to be careful on their return but the sons were able to find enough work as the head commented:

My sons used to work in our land and sometimes...on others' land. Two were embroidery makers and used to work in a shop in the bazaar...they could get 300,000 Afs (Taliban money) per day. The income of my other sons was

69 There are additional male members who are either not working (through the effects of drugs or are grandsons at school.

70 Interview with Household B40 Head.

200,000 Afs. It was enough for my family...we didn't get credit. We also had products of our land, we had a bore well for our vineyard.⁷¹

The interviews did not reveal the extent of opium cultivation but other informants commented on it; this must have generated significant income. Since 2001 the household has further prospered and now have diverse income sources:

My son is in Dubai and he sends us money...I also have lands on which I harvest products. One son works in an organisation (as a driver)...my main economy is based on land.

The son in Dubai went to join a maternal uncle but his father provided him with money to invest. He has been successful in his car export business and sends significant amounts of money back. Another son works as a mechanic and another as a driver with an international organisation. At least two sons work on the lands; before when his sons were young there were four sharecroppers but now there is one. Haji reported that the previous year's income from the land was about 0.5 million Afs and his son in Dubai had savings of over 7 million Afs. Over the last five years three daughters have been married for bride prices ranging from a reported 100,000 to 1.2 million Afs. But as will become clear from other case households that are related, this household has considerable internal and external conflicts. At least two sons have a drug addiction that according to the father was acquired in Pakistan:

They are high on drugs. The reason that I don't take care of them is that they are crazy. Migration gave us a lot of advantages and disadvantages; hashish is a custom in Afghanistan but it is not so dangerous. I have heard that my two sons smoke heroin.⁷²

At least one of these sons is not living in the household and the means of his support is not clear. One daughter-in-law and her daughter have also left the household and she has returned to live with her parents. At the time of his fourth marriage, the third wife left the household but when his fourth wife died, she returned.

Household B42

Household B42 does not have the resources of Household B40, and is smaller (16 people), but is still prominent within the village. The head is a *haji* and the *malik's* assistant, the latter a position that he has held since 2003. This is a household that has done well although its rise to economic security is recent and not based on inherited assets. The head of household's father was a donkey driver. In 2007 the household head was able to secure employment for his three sons with key national and local politicians through his connections. When his father died, he inherited two and a half *jeribs* of vineyards and by leasing additional vineyards, he gradually built up a business of raisin production. He described himself as a farmer, did not migrate to Pakistan although he sent his family for a short time during the worst period of bombing:

I am a farmer...I got experience in sharecropping. The work of raisins requires patience because raisins can't be sold soon (at harvest); we have to keep them until autumn. I was not a *malik* before, I was a poor person and I used to work as sharecropper on others' land and I got this experience. In the time of the Soviets, we couldn't sell all the grapes, therefore we had to change some to raisins...[the conditions] were almost good because there was sufficient water; the prices were not as high as they are now. I had a vineyard and I used to change all the grapes to raisins and then sell them. Until the second

71 Interview with Household B40 Head.

72 Interview with Household B40 Head.

year of the Taliban I used to do the business of raisins but then there was a drought and all vineyards got dry and then I left [the business].⁷³

His daughter suggested that the reason he left the raisin business was that he made a big trading loss:

Before becoming *malik*, he used to be in the raisin business and was able to give credit to others. Later, he faced a big loss in business; once he bought raisins and put them aside to sell at a high price later but prices became low. He and his two brothers started work, loading and unloading trucks and labouring. His wage was 250 Afs a load.⁷⁴

What is evident is that toward the end of the Taliban period, the head was in a position to buy an additional 14 *jeribs* of land which he bought from an agent acting on behalf of the Hindu owners. As he admitted, the prices were very low: "Some people left their lands, therefore, the price of lands was very low and those who were in the village bought lands." Not only was he able to buy land and expand his raisin cultivation he also drilled a bore well that increased the reliability of irrigation. He acquired a tractor and his sons worked as ploughing and transport contractors so that by 2001 he was relatively secure in his income sources. The major transformation in his household fortunes appears to have happened over 2007-9, when through local political connections, he was able to secure paid employment for his three sons as guards, one with a national-level politician and two within Kandahar. He described his income now as follows:

30,000-40,000 Afs yearly from vineyard products; my son who works (in Kabul) gets Afs 250,000 a month in salary and my other two sons who work in (Kandahar) get (together) 40,000 Afs a month. This is my income.

He has recently built additional rooms in the house and has savings, possibly of about 100,000 Afs. The head, following the death of his first wife, has also remarried a much younger wife (23) for a total cost of 200,000 Afs. The costs of his wife's medical treatment in her final illness (50,000 Afs) and his re-marriage were covered by household savings. When his daughter was asked about her stepmother's marriage costs, she replied:

150,000 Afs was her bride price and 50,000 Afs were marriage expenses. We had that much money in our home as savings money and we didn't take that from anyone.

While the overall route to the household's rise to prosperity is not entirely clear, its current economic security is not in doubt. The connections of the head of household and his position within the village, evidenced by his selection as assistant *malik*, indicate that this household has secured both its social and economic position.

Household B48

The third household in this group, Household B48 is also headed by a *malik*.⁷⁵ The household's social and economic position is based on inheritance. A household of 15 with two married sons, the household has diversified out of agriculture into transport with ownership of two trucks which are driven by two sons. A third son, again by virtue of connections to key political figures established through fighting against the Soviets, has found employment in the security detail of a leading national politician. Thus although agricultural income primarily from raisins is important, generating about 250,000 Afs in a good year, the monthly salary of the son in Kabul of 20,000 Afs and the

73 Interview with Household B42 Head.

74 Interview with Household B42 Daughter.

75 One of the 4 sub-*maliks*.

income from the trucks provides economic security to the household.

According to the household informants the household inherited at least 20 *jeribs* of land and has disputed ownership of another 18 *jeribs* which the head bought at the end of the Taliban period, as was common in the village. The head reported:

This was a land of a Hindu and was sharecropped. After I bought this land, the Hindu owner gave me a deed of sale. When I started to cultivate this land, that sharecropper who had this land didn't allow me to do so and he said, "This land is mine." I asked him for a deed of sale and he showed me a deed of sale in front of all village elders. Elders told us to take our dispute to the government because it is impossible that two persons have the same deed of sale. "Both deeds of sale are correct but the land can't be yours because the date in the deed sale of that sharecropper is an early date," the district governor and court told me. In front of all I warned that this sharecropper won't cultivate/plant this land; now, neither I nor he can cultivate the land.⁷⁶

His threat to the court says something about his power. There is also some dispute over the lands he inherited since he appears to have kept the share of his deceased brother as well. His nephews who had previously been living with him in 2002 had now separated from the household. When asked about this he, according to the interview team, with some embarrassment commented:

When my brother (their father) died, I used to keep his lands and my nephews were my farmers. Later when they got older, the villagers betrayed me to them [the nephews] that I have their lands and then they took their lands from me.

There is no doubt that he views land as the key resource and was interested in buying more and investing in agriculture. In 2002, five farmers lived as servants in the household but as the sons got older and took over the work, all the farmers except one lost their position. One son has been sent to his maternal uncl learn about the cultivation of pomegranates and five *jeribs* of land have now been planted for pomegranates. There have been investments in land, farm infrastructure and housing. The household has also paid bride price for two sons' marriages. They sold a large truck to help pay for the marriage costs but also out of fear of the Taliban:

I was in debt because of the marriage. I repaid the debt and bought another truck from the rest of the money and also I was afraid of Taliban. I have a good connection with government especially with leaders and commanders because I was also a commander of the mujahiddin. The Taliban can't hurt me in the village because this is my village and I know everyone from this village. My previous truck was a big truck and my son was the driver and had trips outside the village to other provinces. Therefore I was afraid for my son that they will do something with him on the way or somewhere else.

As with the two other households discussed so far in this village, a key factor explaining household economic security is the presence of sufficient male labour and the ability through connections to find a salaried position for a son. The head commented:

My life got better, it is true and I will tell you the reasons. Before only I used to work because my sons were young. Now my sons and I do work. The land in which I plant wheat was dry in that time. My son, who works with [name] was jobless and now he has a salary.

Thus although in all three cases land based assets have provided the basis for household

76 Interview with Household B48 Head.

prosperity, the creation of greater income sources has come from non-farm income sources where *wasita* has been a key asset.

Household B57

The head of Household B57 is the nephew of the head of Household B40 and the first cousin of the head of Household B56. Although assigned in the original ranking to wealth group III, in terms of inherited social position, assets and income this household belongs more in wealth group II and so is discussed here. The household had hard times in the past but has become more prosperous, partly from inherited assets but also through *wasita* and sons of able and working age.

The husband has two wives. The second wife was the wife of his brother who was killed. The second wife has four children with the husband (marriage is discussed further in Section 6). Since 2002-3, there have been major changes in the household composition. Four daughters were married out and two of the sons got married. Three daughters from his first wife are all married to their maternal aunt's sons and now live together in Pakistan. A fourth daughter was married to man in Kandahar.

During the Soviet period, the household was living in Kandahar City in his father-in-law's house and the head was working as a vegetable seller. His account illustrates both the struggle to make a living, the usefulness of connections, but also the insecurity of employment:

I used to work with a vegetable shopkeeper and he gave me vegetables and a pushcart. I used to buy food from him on credit but when the debt increased, he told me, "Why don't you start work?" "I can't find work," I told him. He gave me a pushcart and vegetables. I was very happy and I put vegetables in the pushcart and sold vegetables in every street. My daily wage was 150-200 Afs a day. I sold vegetables for two years. When I returned in the evenings, my voice was very hoarse because I did a lot of shouting in the streets. The shopkeeper gave me 300 Afs for my treatment and for my home expenses. I was very happy I took 300 Afs to my home. But that shopkeeper stopped that shop and I couldn't afford to continue my work. Then I used to do daily labouring; I was young at that time and I could do labouring but the work was very hard. After labouring there was my other friend in Kandahar and he was a butcher. He wanted me to cook meat in front of his shop and I started that... I did that for two years but it didn't have good income. One day I came home and I got sick. After two days when I went to that butchery I found another person was hired to replace me. I took 20,000 Afs credit from one of my friends and I came home and told my wife we would go to Iran.⁷⁷

They spent four years in Iran where he worked on a poultry farm and during that time he learned to cook. At the end of the Soviet period he returned to Kandahar and lived off the 8 *jeribs* of land that he inherited from his father. There also was a family jewellery business but according to him, his paternal uncle, the head of Household B40, who he does not appear to be on good terms with, took the shop:

He is my paternal uncle and that shop was left to us; we thought we would also have part of that shop and five years ago I asked him about it. He smiled and told me, "That shop is mine and who are you to ask?" That shop is an inheritance but he takes the rent.

The land he inherited were vineyards but during the drought he had to sell three *jeribs* to pay off debts but also used some of the money to add to his house. After 2001, he

⁷⁷ Interview with Household B57 Head.

secured through the father of a son's friend a job in the customs house.

My son used to attend school and his classmate's father was an official of the customs house. There was a vacant post in the customs house and my son got the news and informed me. I am a middleman; a merchant cannot pay the tax in one day because officials do not want to do that. I have connections with officials in the customs house and I take contracts from merchants (if the tax is 10,000 Afs, I take the contract for 15,000 Afs) and I can pay the tax in one day. After I pay the tax to government, I share the rest of the payment with officials. Therefore officials finish my contracts in one day.⁷⁸

What this middleman business amounts to is a system whereby agents act for merchants to help process the paperwork for the release of goods in customs. Without an agent, the clearing of goods cannot easily be done. With this system the customs agents gain additional income and the merchant, for a price, gets his goods cleared rapidly. In short, it is a system of legitimised bribery. The household head was realistic about it; when asked how often he would get a contract to clear some goods, he responded:

Officials don't take bribes from merchants directly; we are closer to officials, so we can give them bribes and they finish our work sooner. I know how much an official wants. It doesn't take time for me to give them a bribe. I don't give them bribe directly but later.⁷⁹

When asked what the government would do if they found him giving bribes:

They are also involved in bribes. The work of the customs house is not something secret but everyone knows that. Our work needs connection with officials and being smart.

One of his sons has joined him as an assistant. He also started a cooking business although this happened by accident, working through a shopkeeper:

Once I did cooking for a marriage and he was there. He liked my cooking and he asked me to work with him. I gave him my phone number and he became my friend. When someone comes to his shop and asks to rent carpets, mattresses and dishes, then the person also asks him for a cook. If he doesn't have a cook, then people will not rent carpets, mattresses and dishes. Cookery has more income than the customs house.⁸⁰

He reported that he could make anywhere between 2,000 to 10,000 Afs per month in the customs house and along with his son generated a total monthly income of about 20,000-30,000 Afs per month. So it is clear why he considers that his life has prospered:

Yes, my life is better than before because I was the only person bringing income but now my sons are married and my son gets money. Now our income is 20,000-30,000 Afs per month and [that is] the reason I don't delay on debt and credit.

These four households have all prospered since the early 2000s although the earlier life of Households B42 and B57 was less secure and they had to work to reach their current economic position. Their inherited social position and connections have clearly helped, particularly for Household B42. In the case of Households B40 and B48, they evidently used their connections and appear to have shown a certain ruthlessness in acquiring assets. Both are regarded with deep distrust by other households in the village. The evidence from Households B56 and B58 (discussed next) who are related to Household B40 indicate why this might be the case.

78 Interview with Household B57 Head.

79 Interview with Household B57 Head.

80 Interview with Household B57 Head.

(b) Wealth group III: Households B46, B50, B56 and B58***Household B46***

The four households discussed here have no land. Household B46 is a joint household of 11; at the time of the first interview only one of the sons was married but by the second interview a new daughter-in-law had been brought into the house. But behind this most recent marriage there is a story of death and economic hardship and an account of a household struggling to survive. The household in good times was able to make small savings for buying land, building a house and holding small reserves; in difficult times these reserves disappeared. The household is landless and for 20 years had a sharecrop arrangement with one of landed households of the village. In 2009, the landlord terminated the arrangement. The household head explained what had happened:

A relative came from Pakistan; he is wealthier than me but [the landlord] said he will give his vineyard to [the relative] because he is poor. I even wanted to lease in his vineyard for 60,000 Afs but the vineyard was leased for 25,000 Afs to the relative.⁸¹

The wife said there was no possibility to discuss this with the landlord, and noted the basis of the agreement and the possible reasons why the landlord may have done this:

[The landlord] used to say, “You have to work on my lands honestly. If you do so, then you will be working on my lands forever. If you do not, then I will take my lands in two weeks.” [My sons] used to work on his lands and in another place too. The landlord didn’t like that and he took his land away. We couldn’t argue with him anymore. He is powerful and also has wealth; we are afraid if someday we were to ask him for credit, he will deny giving it to us.⁸²

The need to maintain access to credit is essential, particularly with the loss of the sharecropped land. The purchase of land and building of a small house on it cost 60,000 Afs, which was accumulated over a long period of saving from income as a sharecropper. But the household has now become dependent on casual labouring for its income. During the last decade the father has aged and two sons have taken on the responsibility for generating the bulk of the household income. The father described the changing circumstances:

When my sons were very young they couldn’t get a big income and only I was there for my family. But now only I am jobless; my two sons are working, so it was my hope that one day my sons will get older and they will work for me... now (my two sons) drill wells and if they don’t find this, they do labouring.

The sons started seasonal work in the brick kilns but discovered that money could be made on the more risky work of drilling wells despite having to constantly juggle their work opportunities:

Drilling is very beneficial if they find it. Because daily wage labouring is irregular, sometimes they find it and sometimes they don’t. They are afraid but they have to do it as there is no other job. Once my son was in a well, the land was moist and the well collapsed and he was injured but he is better now.⁸³

The household was hit by the death of a son in 2007 who was killed in Balkh while in the army. Although they had not been happy with his decision to enlist, his monthly contribution of 1-2000 Afs from his salary had been important. What had particularly

81 Interview with Household B46 Head.

82 Interview with Household B46 Wife.

83 Interview with Household B46 Head.

upset the father was the lack of compensation they had received from the government on his son's death and the fact that they had not been able to secure his pension. He believed that the pension was being taken by a local commander:

The government is giving me nothing, I think (the commander) is deceiving me and he is taking my son's pension, because when I go to him and ask him for my son's official card he is always telling me that he left the card at home. Finally, I went to his home. He gave me that ID card and official cards. I photocopied those cards. He said, "Put the cards and documents here, I will try to give you a pension and I will try to send you to Haji [name]." I took all those documents to (someone else), a representative of (Kabul) in Kandahar. I was told, "I will either send you to Haji [name] or give you a pension."⁸⁴

Neither of the benefits has been provided. What also greatly worried the head was the fact that the son who was killed was engaged to be married as part of an exchange agreement for their daughter:

My son was engaged and now his bride is left. After his death I didn't have the ability to marry her to my other son, and my other son was not old enough to get married. This girl is exchanged with my daughter. Those people married my daughter to their son, but my daughter-in-law is still in their house.

By the second interview, the fiancée of the deceased brother had been married to his younger son who was five years younger and the household had taken credit to finance the wedding, part of which was provided by the landlord. The landlord had also provided credit for the planned marriage of the son who had died, as the wife recounted:

Once my husband was sick and I borrowed 1,000 Afs from the landlord. Then for (my deceased son's) marriage, I borrowed 10,000 Afs from him. After my son's death, I spent 5,000 Afs from the 10,000 Afs for my home expenses and we repaid the rest to the landlord. My son worked for the landlord as a farmer and collected grapes for him to repay the remaining 5,000 Afs in debt. I borrowed 1,000 Afs from my brother-in-law and gave it to the landlord and then later I repaid 500 Afs to my brother-in-law and 500 Afs is left. Until now he hasn't asked. He told me, "Whenever you get it, pay me then."⁸⁵

The involvement of the wife in accessing credit should be noted, as should the role of the landlord in providing it, a clear reason why they could not afford any conflict with him. The primary means that the household has in repaying him is through labour. The head said that they would repay the marriage expenses through selling the seven sheep they have; the shortfall would be provided by working on the landlord's lands: "My landlord is a good person and then I will work for him—I will work in his lands or whatever he wants."

Household B50

The second household in this group, Household B50 also has no land. However with four working brothers, it can just make ends meet. They have been able to build modest savings through the management of their assets, including the marriage of sisters and migrating to work on opium fields, which was used to buy their own plot of land and build a house. But they also spend much of their time juggling credit and debt, providing labour to pay off debts where required. In the six years between the two research studies, their father has died after four years of sickness. His final sickness and death led the household into debt.

84 Interview with Household B46 Head.

85 Interview with Household B46 Wife.

He had a heart sickness; his heart suddenly stopped beating and he died. We had spent 100,000 Afs on him but he didn't get better, so we borrowed 30,000 Afs from [someone]. We also sold 4 goats for for my husband's treatment. We have repaid our debt from my sons' wages.⁸⁶

The father's death had two main effects. First, it is clear that his experience and judgment in running the household was valued. His second son stated, "Our home lost a head, we lost a decision-maker for our family, and all the responsibilities fell on us and we couldn't make good and successful decisions." Second, his reputation was important in securing the household access to credit and his death led to reduced access. His widow commented:

If he were alive, people would say that he is alive and give us credit. But now our sons do not have any good relations with the village, when we [the widow] tell our sons to take credit, then they don't ask. And with [the father's] death we lost an income.

The continuing debts are clearly a worry for the widow. She stated that they were in debt from "top to bottom" and to listed the debts and how they could be addressed:

[We have:] 2,000 Pakistani Rs from the bakery owner for home expenses but we didn't repay that yet; 150,000 from the landowner (for the land bought for house) is not repaid yet; and 5,000 from a villager for my daughter's marriage but we repaid 3,000 Afs from my sons' brick-making and bakery salaries and 2,000 Afs is still left.

Although the sons are working as labourers, their income is uncertain. One son had contracted in land as *dalika*—an arrangement whereby private wasteland is leased, and the hirer is financially responsible for making the land suitable for cultivation and receives 75% of the harvest while the landlord receives 25%. But the landlord took back the land after it had been cultivated for four years, as the son commented, "The owner wanted us to work in his land as a farmer but we didn't want to and we left." As farmers, they would—at best—get a 25% share of the crop. The widow spoke of her eldest son balancing land labour and brick-making:

He doesn't do both at the same time. When he finds work on the land he does that and when he finds brick-making contracts he makes bricks. He gets 400 Afs per 1,000 bricks but he doesn't get as much on the land. Sometimes he works as *dalika* which has a good income. Once he had a brick-making contract, but then his friend brought a land contract to him. The duration of the new contract was for two months but my son told him, "I am busy in this work and my brother is jobless and he can do this work." They made an agreement that my younger son will get the contract. That contract was a *dalika* contract.⁸⁷

She also commented on the jobless younger brother:

[He] wants to work but can't. I swear that for two years he tried to open a puncture repairing shop but we do not have enough wealth to open a private shop. When we get some money we spend it in repaying debt.

The youngest working brother has been working as an apprentice with a relative who is a baker in Spin Boldaq (a district south of Kandahar City) for a salary of 2,000 Rs per month. He is able to bring some money back with him when he returns home every two

86 Interview with Household B50 Widow.

87 Interview with Household B50 Widow.

months. During his last journey home, he was robbed and the household was unable to have any special food for Eid. Two sons have laboured in the opium fields of Helmand, although this was considered risky. But they felt they had no choice:

We were poor and in debt and we didn't have another way to find money. We knew that this job was risky but we didn't have any other solution.⁸⁸

The household also keeps goats and sells a few each year. However the lack of cash to buy grass to feed them to sell them in good condition means that they are usually sold for a low price. As a son said, "I sold them at a low price because we don't have grass so we can't keep them. We won't find grass in winter." Thus this household, while surviving, continues to struggle to make ends meet, by finding work in the agricultural and casual labour markets.

Household B56

Household B56 in 2002 was a household of two: a man in his early 30s and a young wife. They appeared economically insecure with the man working as casual labourer although they were reported to own one room. Since then, this household has had sons and has managed to slowly establish itself. In his initial interview, the head clearly laid out the series of activities that gradually brought him more income and a slow build-up of resources:

First, I was labouring for a year but I couldn't get enough income, just 100 or 150 Afs a day, and it was not enough for my family. Then I was buying grapes in the village and carrying them to the bazaar on my bicycle. Still, I couldn't get enough income. One of my friends was selling vegetables and he was really an expert. He told me that vegetable selling had a good income. After that, I was buying vegetables in the village and taking them to the city to sell. But it was very hard because I had to wake up early in the morning, or otherwise I couldn't find vegetables for collecting and washing. In the city, I didn't have a shop. I had a pushcart, and I was selling in front of shops. I could sell some vegetables but some got spoiled and people were not buying them. I sold vegetables for one season (three or four months), and I would get 50, 80 or 100 Afs a day. This work didn't give me any benefit. So I started brick-making. I did brick-making until the end of the year. The work of brick-making was very hard but I had a good income in this work. I would get 200 or 300 Afs a day. After this I bought a Vespa car for 18,000 Afs. This had good income; I could get 300 Afs a day. As the Vespa car was old, it was breaking down every day. I had to fix that and spend money on it. I sold that Vespa car and bought another one for 25,000 Afs. The new one was better and I could get more money than the first one. I would earn 400 or 500 Afs a day. Last year, I stopped my Vespa car and I started work as a farmer. I planted poppy, I got much income. I was working on the land for 50% of the product. I got almost 25,000 Afs from poppy. Then I sold my Vespa car...and bought a *zarang* for 45,000 Afs. Now I am driving a *zarang* and doing porter work. The work is hard but I get enough income. I get 500 or 600 Afs a day.

This man's uncle is the head of Household B40. This relationship was not the basis for his economic progress. His comments on his uncle made this clear:

We don't have time to keep connections with rich people [like my uncle]. Rich people are very haughty. Think about my paternal uncle; if I say "Salaam" to him, he will not answer. We are Afghan and Allah made us poor; poverty is

88 Household Interview B50 Son.

not our sin. If we make connections with good rich people, they will give us charity or alms.

Nor has his father provided support. His wife explained her husband's childhood background and the effect of his father's remarriage after his mother's death:

My husband was two years old when his mother died, and his father drove him away. His maternal uncles took care of him... he used to live mostly in his maternal uncle's house but sometimes in his father's house. When he was 14 or 15, his father thought to bring him back because he could get income. He started to work on the lands according to his father's encouragement but he did not reveal how much he got from his work. He used to give less money to his father and used to keep money for himself. When he gained enough money, he wanted to marry but he didn't tell his father and his stepmother. He went to his maternal uncle's wife and told her that he wanted to get married and she accepted.⁸⁹

His uncle found his wife for him, but he himself provided his own bride price:

My uncle arranged my marriage; the bride price was from my money but my uncle's wife went to select a girl for me. I got married with my own money. My mother and father-in-law are very good people. After my marriage, I contacted my father to give me space in his house. Before I could live anywhere because I was single, but after marriage I couldn't stay in my uncle's house because they didn't have space. My father gave me a room in his house. I gave 120,000 Afs for the bride price and spent 30,000 Afs for the wedding. 90,000 Afs was from my own savings and for the rest I took 60,000 Afs credit: 10,000 Afs from [a relative of my wife], 20,000 Afs from my friend and 30,000 Afs from my uncle.⁹⁰

Part of his savings came from working on opium harvesting in Helmand but his marriage brought him support and assistance from his wife's relatives. His wife was fully aware of the credit that had been obtained:

We have borrowed many times from my sister's husband; 50,000 Afs for the *zaranj* and 15,000 Afs for making seats in it. 5,000 Afs from my father—when [my husband] was in jail, my father paid the police for his release.⁹¹ 10,000 Afs more from my father was paid to the water distributor (for the land her husband was cultivating). He is in debt 18,000 Afs to my father. He borrowed 6,000 Afs for the rickshaw from his aunt's son and 3,000 Afs from one of our villagers for it. When he bought the rickshaw it needed repairing.

His economic progress has been heavily dependent on borrowing from his wife's relations who are relatively well-off and could not have got by without the support. But it is also clear that he has been very energetic. His current activities included working as a sharecropper for two farmers, both of whom are relatives of his wife: on one he is cultivating 9 *jeribs* and on the other 8 *jeribs* on a *dalika* basis. When going to his lands he uses his *zaranj* to take passengers to earn a little extra income. Recently he also fattened some sheep: "Last summer I bought 10 sheep—each 2,000 Afs—and I borrowed the money from a cousin. I kept them for 6 months and then I sold each for 5,000 Afs."

89 Interview with Household B56 Wife.

90 Interview with Household B56 Husband.

91 He had been caught with opium on his return from Helmand; the police took the 2 *man* of opium and put him in prison.

Household B58

The fourth household, B58, has 8 members and is headed by the eldest son of a widow. The widow was twice married and the son from her first marriage lives separately. Her second husband was a mullah who died in 2004 and was a brother of the head of Household of B40. The head of B40 provided little support for the household and instead used his power to take over his deceased brother's lands, as a son of Household B58 stated:

My father had appendicitis and people were telling us that if it is not operated on in 24 hours, he would die. As we couldn't take him [to the hospital], I went to every villager and asked for credit. No one gave me money. My uncle has a lot of wealth. I asked him for money and sent my mother twice, but he gave us nothing. Then my father died.⁹²

With respect to their land, in the son's point of view, his uncle had seized them:

We had land before but when my father died, my paternal uncle asked my mother for the deeds and said he would pay the tax. My mother is very simple...she gave him the deeds. After that, my uncle denied having the deeds and hid them. When we were going to our lands, he didn't allow us access. He used to say that he had bought the lands from my father and changed all deeds to his name. He used to tell anybody the story of how he had bought the land from his brother. We were young and we were afraid that he would kill us, therefore we couldn't say anything.

Essentially, this household fell on hard times with the death of a father when the children were young and with the loss of nine *jeribs* of vineyards. However they have their own house and the land on which the house was built. When the children were young, the household appears to have been supported by the mother's relatives. The four sons have since found work as apprentices in the urban economy as plasterers and mechanics, which slowly improved their circumstances. An elder son, now 28, explained:

For eight years, I have been working with the mason as a pupil. Now I can do the masonry by myself but I don't have the money to take a contract. My wage is 250 Afs a day and my brother's is 200 Afs a day. My other two brothers are working with a mechanic in the city. One receives 350 Rs a week and is an experienced mechanic now. But we don't have the money to open a shop for him individually. A year ago we drilled a well in our house. We spent 6,000 Afs for the well.⁹³

Spending 6,000 Afs on the well shows their ability to access credit. Nevertheless, they struggle to balance debt and repayment. In 2006, the elder brother got married:

I gave 150,000 Afs for the bride price and I spent 80,000 Afs on my marriage. I borrowed the bride price and the marriage expenses from our relatives. I also borrowed some money from the contractor with whom I work... I am in debt for too much money. In total, I am in debt 96,000 Afs: 19,000 Afs from my uncle for my marriage; 5,000 Afs from my neighbour for my child who died; 35,000 Afs from the contractor for my marriage; 18,000 Afs from my friend for my mother's sickness; and I don't remember the rest.

The recent sickness of the widow has added further expenses to the household. A cow and calf was sold to help pay and the daughter-in-law has also been able to help her go to Pakistan for treatment (where the widow's brother lives) with the sale of some embroidery:

92 Interview with Household B58 Son.

93 Interview with Household B58 Son.

I had an embroidery cloth and I sold it for 5,000 Afs. She told me, “I want to go to Pakistan and I need some money. From whom can I borrow?” Then I gave that 5,000 Afs to her.

The second of the two sons who works as an apprentice plasterer also has some ill health due to plaster dust. There are insufficient funds to pay for both the medical costs of the mother and the brother. The elder brother has prioritised his mother’s treatment: “My brother is young and he has energy to suffer sickness but my mother is old and weak and therefore my mother’s treatment is first for us. We don’t have money to treat both of them.”

His two youngest brothers had been in school but because of the sickness of the other brother they had to drop out:

When they were school students, my brother and I were daily labourers. Later on [my brother] got abscesses on his body, and a doctor told him to be careful with dust and soil and to not to allow dust on the abscesses. He left work and was in bed for 6 or 7 months. We were compelled and therefore the two younger brothers had to leave school.

Despite the lack of education, the married son wants his own children to go to school:

Now I am like a real human because you asked me about my children’s future and you gave me the hope that I have a future. I will work and send my children to school. Not only will my children but my nephews will also attend school.

The household tries to find opportunities. The son who is the experienced mechanic finally managed to rent a shop with tools lent to him, and they are hopeful that this will generate income. They try to save a small amount of money each week from the various sources of income so that they can build some savings on the advice of his father-in-law:

When [my brother] was a pupil he used to spend his income for himself because his income was not so much. When he opened his own shop, my father-in-law told me to keep 50 Afs from his salary and think of his wage as 50 Afs less than its actual amount.

The elder brother has for the first time with borrowed money tried to fatten some lambs using pasture on the little plot of land that they still have:

I bought four lambs three months ago. I bought one couple in 3,500 Afs and the other couple in 4,500 Afs. I kept them until now and now I can sell each for 5,000 Afs. I borrowed money when I was buying them.

Households B56 and B58 both related to Household B40, reveal the unrestrained behaviour of the Head of Household B40 who clearly does not come within the category of Household B56’s “good, rich men.” Both these households also indicate how quickly the economic circumstances of members of rich families can decline although Household B56 appears to be building a robust but modest economy through marriage. The other two wealth group III households have also been hit by shock: for the former, the loss of land that they had been sharecropping; in the latter, the death of their father. The former still needed to keep good relations with the landlord to ensure access to credit and the sons of both are working in the casual labour market in order to maintain the household. All four of these households are critically dependent on access to credit.

5.4 Key themes

Table 9 provides an assessment of the overall direction of each household's trajectory and the likely causes or factors contributing to it.

Table 9. Village B: Household trajectories

Wealth group	Household	Overall	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Other issues
I	B40	Prospering	Land	Diverse income sources	Rich in male labour	Well-connected
II	B42	Prospering	Employment of sons through connections	Land & contracting business	Rich in male labour	Well-connected
	B48	Prospering	Land	Diversification into transport	Rich in male labour	
	B57	Prospering	Land	Middleman in custom house	Cooking business	Connections
III	B46	Struggling	Sharecropper that has lost land	Death of son in army & head's ill health	2 sons working as casual labourers	Debts
	B50	Struggling	Death of head of household	Sons working as casual labourers	Debts	
	B56	Slowly improving	Resourceful, and hard working	Access to credit	Support from wife's relatives	
	B58	Slowly improving	Death of father	Diverse income from city	Rich in male labour	Access to credit

The themes that run through the accounts from Village B households are not dissimilar from those in Village A, but they do differ in significance. First, certainly for the poorer households, access to informal credit on a no-interest basis to meet consumption needs and marriage costs are important, although the slightly greater distance from the city may mean that off-farm work is rather more important than the non-farm work in Village A. Thus in this case the agricultural economy of the village is rather more significant than in Village A and it should be noted that Household B56 saw a move into farm work as a step for the better. Second, the importance of sufficient male labour again emerges but Household B56 shows that one active working man can be sufficient for a small household, although women's income should not be forgotten. A further advantage of more male labour is the ability of a household to diversify its income sources, although the returns from this diversification are highly variable. The final theme is how those in an advantageous social position can and do, and in some cases ruthlessly, use it for self advantage, even against relatives. Further, given the particular political connections of the village they can exploit social connections for considerable personal economic advantage.

These two village sections have mainly treated the household as a unit in relation to the outer world of the village and the city, in its struggle to make a living. The next section investigates more the internal dynamics of the household. It particularly examines the issues of household composition, marriage, debt in relation to marriage, division of responsibilities, and decision-making in relation to struggles to provide economic security and physical protection for household members.

6. The Institution of the Household

6.1 Introduction

As commented earlier, a majority (11 of the 16) of the case study households are joint ones. It is the poorer households which are the smaller and single households. For example, Households B56 and 58 have only 4 and 8 members (respectively) compared to the four wealth group I and II households that average 19 people. While account has to be taken of the stage of each household in the family cycle—households with a younger head are more likely to have younger children and so less labour available—the evidence regarding household composition suggests that joint and larger households are advantageous. There was, however, no direct discussion of this issue in any of the interview transcripts. Rather as the mother in Household A19 said with approval, “All my sons eat together and they all spend [together] for consumption.”

Single households were either poor or there were specific circumstances that led to the household living separately. Household B56 was a single household where a son was driven out by a stepmother; he then lived with his uncle before establishing himself independently within his father’s compound. In Household A12 the son was sent out of the household by his mother on account of his hashish addiction. A further example is the youngest son of Household A10 who left after a conflict with his father. His father had commented that he left the house because of lack of space, but his daughter-in-law revealed a rather different story:

He didn’t leave the house because of less space. My father-in-law wanted to engage his granddaughter to the son of a relative but he (the son) didn’t accept. Then my father-in-law told him to leave the house.⁹⁴

This example raises questions around norms over composition, decision-making, and authority within the household and the separate roles of men and women, fathers and sons, mothers, daughters and daughters-in-law in relation to its physical and economic security. As discussed in an earlier ALT case study on Badakhshan,⁹⁵ the observation by Nancy Dupree⁹⁶ on the household being “the most influential social institution in Afghan society” and her conclusion that “as shaky as it is, in some instances, the family is the only stable institution available”⁹⁷ merits much greater attention on how and why this is so. As noted in Badakhshan, “the key question is why there is such allegiance to institutional norms that clearly compromise the scope for individuality and autonomy and why such social norms are proving so durable.”⁹⁸

This section explores two main themes in relation to building long-term household economic and physical security: first, the decision-making around marriage, marriage practices, and meeting its costs which can be the major expenditure a household faces; second, the decision-making and roles within marriage and factors that lead to separation from the household.

94 Interview with Household A10 Daughter-in-law.

95 Pain, *Alternative Livelihood Trajectories: Evidence from Badakhshan*.

96 Nancy Dupree, “The Family During Crisis in Afghanistan,” *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 35 no. 2 (Spring 2004), 311 - 329.

97 Dupree, “The Family During Crisis in Afghanistan.”

98 Pain, *Alternative Livelihood Trajectories: Evidence from Badakhshan*.

6.2 The making of marriage and the meetings of the costs

There can be no doubt as to the significance of marriage, given the efforts that are made to get married and the resources that are deployed or credit taken to ensure that it takes place. The mother of Household B48 was very clear about its importance:

When a son grows up, parents should make a decision about his marriage. If a parent can afford the expense, then the parent should marry their son at an early age. According to Islam, marriage is the most important thing in comparison to other things. When children grow up then they should get married as early as possible.

In her view, marriage was more important than holding on to productive resources:

We can sell all of our productive resources for making a marriage happen. The reason is shame. It is shameful for us to let our bride sit in her father's home. We sold our tractor for the marriage, so now think whether marriage is important for us or not. We are Afghan and Afghans can't suffer the taunt of others.

Although shame is a part of it, as the earlier sections have revealed, underlying it is importance of the command of household labour and household survival. Thus social norms and economic imperatives drive the impulse for marriage—sooner rather than later if possible. The decision on marriage is one in which the main protagonists, the bride and groom have little, if any, say.⁹⁹ For the marriage of sons, the men play the key role although the wives also have a say: “Our men select the family and women go and ask the girl.”¹⁰⁰ The husband of Household B46 confirmed his role: “Selecting the girl or family was my responsibility. Then my wife went to her family, then we discussed it with [our son] and he agreed with us.” The decision to marry his deceased son's fiancée to his younger son was again the head's:¹⁰¹ “I decided first then I told my wife and she also agreed.” When asked if the girl accepted he went on to say, “This is the culture of this village. If a girl's parents decide for their daughter, the girl will accept.” But women do sometimes have a say, as the husband from Household B57 made clear:

My wives wanted me to ask my sisters for their daughters. First we went to one sister and asked about her two daughters, but she wanted to marry one of her daughters to another boy. After one week we went to my other sister and we asked for her daughter and she accepted. My wives and my sisters used to talk about such relations.

A married daughter can also have influence. Household B57's married daughter, living in Pakistan, was keen to have her sisters come live with her, as their father went on to say:

My first daughter wanted me to marry her sister to her brother-in-law and I accepted, and later my two daughters were in the same family. Both of them then came for their third sister to marry their third brother-in-law and I couldn't say anything. I accepted.

The wife of Household B57 was approached by an unknown woman who asked for their daughter in marriage:

One day a woman came; she was my husband's friend's wife but we didn't know her. She introduced herself and asked for my daughter. I told my husband

99 For a more extended discussion on marriage practices, see D.J. Smith, *Decisions, Desires and Diversity: Marriage Practices in Afghanistan* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation, 2009) and Pain, *Alternative Livelihood Trajectories: Evidence from Badakhshan*.

100 Interview with Household B48 Woman.

101 Interview with Household B46 Head.

and he told me to tell them to wait until we do an investigation about their son because my husband knew only his father and not the boy. We asked about the boy from many people and people said that boy was a good person and then we accepted.

In the case of female-headed households, the women make the decision; the widow in Household A19 made clear, “I myself decided to choose...my daughter-in-law.” But children themselves have little say in whom they get married to: “Neither sons nor daughters can make a decision or can select (their spouses),”¹⁰² a view confirmed by the wife of Household A05:

We do not involve them in our decisions. Even we were not asked for our marriages. I was 12 years old when I got married. I even didn’t know what marriage was. My father engaged me to my husband in the mosque...So since I was not asked, why should I ask my children?

However the decision has rebounded on the mother. It turned out the new daughter-in-law was older than she thought, could not cook and as a result “[her] son doesn’t talk with [her] since he got married to her.”

The younger son of Household A19 laughed when asked about his role in the decision to marry. When asked who would select his wife—him or his mother—he responded, “I have never heard such nonsense. I am telling you that I do not have the (financial) ability to get married... we people give the decision to our elders, so my mother will select a girl for me.” Even when a son is independent, as in the case of Household B56, he asked his paternal uncle and aunt to find a wife for him.

Thus there is little choice in marriage. Only when women or men have been previously married is there some independence in decision-making. However, in the case of the widowed second wife of Household B57, there was no debate about whether she could choose not to marry. She described how her decision to marry her husband’s brother was made:

I was his brother’s wife but my husband died in the time of the Soviets and I got widowed. The Soviets killed my husband... then my mother-in-law told me to get married with another of his brothers but I didn’t accept. I was not alone; I had a son. I was asked whom I wanted to get married to. They didn’t want me to marry with unknown people and then I told them that I wanted to marry with [my current husband] and my mother and father-in-law talked with him and he accepted.¹⁰³

Only older and rich men have independence in decision-making about marriage. Their ability, however, depends in part on their reputation. The head of Household B40 spoke of a fifth marriage but informants indicated that his reputation was such that no family was willing to marry a daughter to him. The head of Household B42, whose wife had died, was able to choose to remarry a young divorced girl from another village.

Social norms, poverty and the need for labour can drive early marriage. When asked about the most appropriate age for marriage, the wife in Household A01 responded:

In our village we give our daughters at the age of 9, 12 and 13 because girls must go to another family one day. This tradition is from our great-grandfathers. The reason we send a girl at a young age is that she should get accustomed in her husband’s house. She should take the habit and learn to live with her husband.¹⁰⁴

102 Interview with Household A01 Wife.

103 Interview with Household B57 2nd wife.

104 Interview with Household A01 Wife.

An example of a very early engagement is given below but it is important to note that an engagement can take place many years before a marriage happens. And marriage at a young age does not mean that marital relations are entered into. The widow of Household A12 married her daughter at the age of 12:

We were leading a very poor life. We did not have enough space to keep her at home. People send their daughter when she is young but she is not allowed to live with her husband in one room at the in-law's home until she grows up.

The head of Household A03 had different views on the right age; he engaged his daughter five years before she got married and felt that the couple was too young to get married when they did:

He was a good boy so I married my daughter to him. He is my uncle's son. My uncle took care of me like his own sons. When they asked for my daughter, I couldn't deny [them]. The couple was young and they were not ready for marriage. It was not a bride price problem. I didn't value bride price because they are family. In fact no one wanted to get them married. The boy was 19 when they got married and the girl was 17. But they needed to marry because his mother was old and could not work at home.¹⁰⁵

Marriage requires affordability: for payment of the bride price and the costs of the actual wedding. It can take place either through exchange or through the payment of a bride price. Unlike in Badakhshan, none of the evidence from Kandahar showed individuals unable to get married because of poverty. Then again, social disapproval of exchange marriage in Badakhshan ruled it out as an alternative route to bride price. Exchange marriage was found among the poorer Kandahar study households that could not afford a bride price. This strategy requires that the household has marriageable daughters. In Household A01 two sons were contracted in marriage with their two sisters being exchanged for their two wives. The mother saw this as a bad choice but she had no other option:¹⁰⁶

I brought my daughter-in-law and after two months I sent my daughter... exchange is the worst thing. Marriage with a bride price is better. [With] exchange there is a big competition: if one girl has a bad life with her husband, then the second family tries to make the daughter-in-law's life worse. I am not able to pay bride price. If I take bride price then I have to spend it on the daughter and I won't have money to bring the daughter-in-law in.

Household A19 could not raise a bride price for five years when they wanted to get their eldest son married. When asked why she exchanged her daughter in marriage, the mother answered: "We couldn't pay the bride price for my son." By the time the second son was married to the mother's niece, the household economy had improved, a bride price was paid, and the marriage expenses raised through borrowing:

[We paid] 250,000 Afs. We all have jobs and salaries. Of course, we took credit. Men took credit from villagers but we don't know from whom. I know that we borrowed 40,000 Afs but we haven't repaid the debt. We paid the bride price from our own income but borrowed 40,000 Afs for marriage expenses.¹⁰⁷

For Household A12 the marriage of her eldest son through an exchange marriage has caused problems. The mother contracted an exchange marriage with the daughter of her sister's brother-in-law in order to get her two sons married. She described it as follows:

105 Interview with Household A03 Head.

106 Interview with Household A01 Wife.

107 Interview with Household A19 Daughter-in-law.

I chose the girl for my eldest son and her bride price was 60 million old Afs (old money). We didn't have that much money to pay for her, so we married my daughter to the bride's brother who already had another wife. So we didn't pay the bride price for my son's wife. As my daughter was the right age and marrying an already married person, we also got as a bride the youngest sister who was 6 months old in that time... We wanted to keep her and when she grew up, she would marry my second son... She was with us for two years but then her parents took her home.¹⁰⁸

All the girls involved in this complex transaction were young. The eldest son's wife was 8 when she was brought to the household; the daughter was 12 when she was married, which the mother agreed was not the right age: "They gave us my eldest son's bride, then they wanted my daughter and we couldn't deny." Then a 6-month old baby was brought into the household as a future bride for another son. But there has been a conflict between the two households (discussed later). So the parents of the young baby took her back while the daughter remained with her new family.

As is clear from the above, marriage through a bride price is preferred. But for many, there are struggles to raise the resources. Household B58 had to delay a marriage because they did not have the money and eventually sold land to fund it:

They didn't have savings; my mother-in-law borrowed 10,000 Rs from her brother for the bride price...[and] told my father, "I don't want to marry your daughter because I don't have money" and my father agreed. After two years, [she] came to my father and told him, "I can't find money, until when should I wait to get it? I want to marry your daughter." She sold her land for 120,000 Afs and paid [the] bride price.¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, there are views that bride price is not a good practice. The head of Household B57 commented that he did not agree with it but nevertheless accepted a contribution toward the costs of the marriage and the dowry for his daughters:

In fact, bride price is not allowed in Islam but most of the people take bride price because of poverty. They take it and give dowry to their daughter. And most of the people take bride price as competition. Everyone wants their daughter's bride price to be more than others'...this is the competition. On the first day when I accepted the deal, the father-in-law of my daughter put 70,000 Afs in front of me. I was ashamed because I couldn't take that money because there were a lot of people. "You have to put this money in my pocket," I joked with our new relatives. Our mullah smiled and said that the money was good. I told him that I don't like bride price.¹¹⁰

He reported that he spent 80,000 Afs for the marriage and dowry of his first daughter. And in addition to the money received for the second and third daughters, he spent about 50,000 Afs of his own savings and also borrowed from his father-in-law. For the fourth daughter he commented that he spent more than the 100,000 Afs he received as bride price. His two sons were married to his nieces, and he borrowed money to meet the costs of the dowries and marriage expenses.

Bride price can vary considerably and when asked why the bride price for her three daughters varied so much, the wife of Household B40 commented, "One daughter's father-in-law was very poor, a second's was very rich and the third was from a middle class, therefore we accepted such bride prices,"¹¹¹ although it was unclear why the

108 Interview with Household A12 Widow.

109 Interview with Household B58 Daughter-in-law.

110 Interview with Household B57 Head.

111 Interview with Household B40 Wife.

marriages into such different economic circumstances was acceptable. In the case of one son, who married the daughter of one of the richest people in the district, no bride price was charged for him because the role the *malik* had played in resolving a dispute.

For poor households, bride price their daughters not only reduces their expenses (as evidenced by the previous comment of Household A12), but also helps their economy. In Household A00, it was the wife who had made the contact with the son-in-law by using of his public call office in the city:

One day, he told me about his wife. He said, “My wife has an illness and she can’t deliver (produce) a child, so I want to get married again. I want you to find me a girl.” I told him that I would marry my daughter to him but that her leg was disabled. He asked me whether my daughter could bear children or not. I told him that my daughter didn’t have any other sickness... I didn’t take bride price but they gave me 100,000 Afs. I bought a little dowry... I just spent 8-9000 Afs for my daughter and the rest was spent for our consumption. My son-in-law paid us in cash.¹¹²

In the example of Household B46 when the father was alive they had been able to marry one of the daughters for a good bride price and made a substantial saving on it. This helped both with the medical expenses during the father’s sickness and with the purchase of land for the building of the house. The widow’s description of what happened also illustrates the flow of credit and debt among several people:

She (the daughter) got married to one of the villagers and her bride price was 300,000 Afs. Her dowry cost 150,000 Afs and we gave the rest to someone for keeping. When my husband got sick we asked for our money but that person had spent it. Then we went to a landlord and took 50,000 Afs credit from him and when that person gave us our money we repaid the 50,000 Afs debt. From the remaining 100,000 Afs, we bought land to build a house.

In summary the imperative to marry one’s children is driven by a combination of social norms and self-interest, including the desire to break out of poverty and to maintain relationships. Households are ready to incur substantial costs, met through the sale of key assets or borrowing heavily, to marry sons. The imperative can drive households into practices such as early marriage and exchange marriage, which are undesirable but unavoidable. For poor households the receipt of bride price for a daughter can be an important income source.

6.3 Life within the household

Patriarchal rule or joint decision-making?

Decision-making in the household varies from the dominance of patriarchal rule to more equitable circumstances where there is much more discussion with women. The head of Household B40 evidenced more the former, stating “Without my command, no bird can fly in my house. My walking stick has a lot of secrets; when someone sees it, they won’t be able to move.”

The research team witnessed such behaviour in Household A10; the head had come home and felt that the daughters-in-law had not done their work on time. He became angry at them and threatened them all in turn. His wife asked, “Why do you act like this in front of these guests?” He replied, “Just shut up, otherwise I’ll beat you too.”

112 Interview with Household A00 Wife.

In contrast the wife of Household B48 presented a picture of greater discussion and respect:

We can sit together and discuss plans. Our men respect us and don't make plans by themselves. When selling the truck, my husband thought, "I should not ask anyone for credit and I have to discuss this with my family." Then he came and we all discussed this one night and finally we decided to sell the truck.¹¹³

The husband in Household B56 was very clear on how he relied on his wife to help make decisions and handle the difficult relationship with his father. His reporting on his wife's views says much about the norms of duty and obligation to the parents despite the treatment received:

If my wife and my father-in-law weren't good people, I would have either killed myself or have killed others and be in jail... I have a very good wife who helps me with any type of problem, economic or disputes. She helps solve them. She always tells me that father has many rights over me and I should not react against him. She says, "I can pass any kind of hardship and you should not face any kind of problem for me or for my children."

In the female-headed Household A16, the daughter-in-law made clear the joint decision-making of her mother-in-law and her sons: "My mother-in-law and her sons sit together and make decisions for everything, such as sending a daughter [for marriage] or bringing a bride."

Separate gendered spheres of activities

Even though there are households where discussions take place on marriage, the underlying decision-making shows a very clear gendered division of labour. Men and women have separate spheres of activities reflecting social norms.¹¹⁴ When the wife in Household A10 was asked about assets and sources of income she was very clear that there was no reason for her to know, although other women showed they knew very well what was going on:

What a question! I told you I am not literate to know all about these things. These costs, expenditures and deals all belong to our men. What type of question is this? I told you many times that we don't know about income, earnings and others. We are not like women who live in the city. We can't ask men about any income, earning or expenditure. If we ask them the reason why they do what they do, they say why do you want to know?

The evidence from Sections 4 and 5 makes clear the division of economic activities between the working male members of the household. In the case of Household B10, the sons have specific responsibilities in the management of the household's assets and income. This is also true of the allocation of women's tasks within the household. The wife of Household A05 explained how work was divided between her three daughters-in-law: "Yes, one bakes bread and washes dishes for two days. Then a second bakes bread and washes the dishes for two days. The third's job is to wash and iron clothes."

Also evident from the earlier sections is the independent income that women can command from their embroidery work and its significance, particularly for poor households. The wife in Household B56 illustrates this well:

I also make embroideries and I get money for my work. [She showed her

113 Interview with Household B48 Wife.

114 Lundberg, S and R.A. Pollak, "Separate Spheres Bargaining and the Marriage Market" in *The Journal of Political Economy* 101 no. 6 (1993): 988-1010.

embroidery]. I made this embroidery for our relatives for 800 Afs. A few days ago I made embroidery for 500 Afs. I bought grass for our sheep from those 500 Afs. People come and ask us to make embroidery. They bring cloth and we embroider it. I make embroidery according to the price; if a person tells me I will give you 1,000 Afs for one embroidery cloth and another person tells me 5,000 Afs for the same embroidery cloth, of course I will make a better embroidery cloth for the second person.

But the economic activities are clearly confined to the home. Women are not allowed to go out for work “because [the] men say, ‘Qomen are only for housework not for the outside.’”¹¹⁵ A similar view echoed was, “No, they can’t (go out) because they’re uneducated, so how can they find work?... Women are just for housework, not for paid work.”¹¹⁶

Conflicts within the household and their resolution

There was evidence of conflicts over decision-making on education between husband and wife and between father and son. The head of Household A10 is against education in general. According to his wife, “People always used to tell my husband not to send children to school because otherwise they would be non-Muslim. So my husband also didn’t want to send children to school.” She did not agree with this and when asked why people were keen on their children’s education, she commented: “Because they know that they grew up uneducated and faced many difficulties. So they don’t want their children to stay uneducated.”¹¹⁷

The son’s insistence that his children would be educated led to conflict and the head directly exerting his authority. The wife narrated what happened:

My son wanted to educate his children. He told his father, “If you don’t let my children attend school, then I will leave this household.” My husband also told him to go and live separately. Then the matter was left and no one did anything... Then [my son] went and enrolled all his children, including his daughter, in school. When they returned home, my husband asked my granddaughter, “Where were you?” She replied, “I went to school, my father took me to school.” Then my husband used many bad words. My husband asked my son, “Why did you take her to school?” He replied, “I enrolled her in school.” My husband said, “You must not send your daughter to school.” My son told him, “I am taking her in my car to school. What is the problem in this? She will attend a girls’ school.” The next day he told his daughter to dress for school. My husband was at home but he didn’t say anything and went outside. My son said, “I told you he would accept.” My granddaughter attended school up to 4th grade and then my husband had her expelled. My husband was really angry at my granddaughter. The next day, when my son told her to put on her clothes for school, she didn’t because of her grandfather.

Others would like to send their daughters to school but cannot because there is no local school. The husband in Household B57 said that, “All these customs are from our people. People don’t allow someone to provide us school in this village. If there was a school in this village, I would have sent my daughter to school.” And his wife was equally keen for her daughters to be educated, but felt that she could not send them to a school in the city:

I think women should take part in society. Problems or jobs are not only

115 Interview with Household B58 Wife.

116 Interview with Household A01 Wife.

117 Interview with Household A10 Wife.

solved and done by men, and therefore, women should also work beside men. Whoever is educated can decide for doing something and will not need to go to others and ask what to do... (but) a girl cannot attend school in such far distance because it is not our custom.

The wife of Household A16, on the other hand, saw sending girls to school differently: “It is shameful for us to send girls to school. Villagers do not send girls to school because people will talk about them.”

Conflicts did not just take place over education. Household A12 was involved in a complex exchange marriage (including taking in the baby sister of a son-in-law as prospective wife for a son) where a conflict centred on the fact that the son-in-law, a Talib, did not want his wife to be treated by male doctors. His wife had been pregnant and she was taken to Merwise Hospital in Kandahar City. Her mother told the story:

When the midwives visited her they said that there was still time [for treatment] before her delivery. Then the husband didn't want to leave his wife in the hospital. He wanted to take medicine from midwives and take his wife back to the village. My son told him not to do this and fought with him. That night, my daughter delivered a baby child and we all came home. Her husband wanted to take his baby sister and go back home but we told him to stay for two or three nights and then take his wife and child both home. He said, “No, I will take the baby now and then I will come back for my wife.” We let him take his baby sister; after four or five days, we telephoned him and told him to bring the baby girl back and collect his wife but he said that he wouldn't come. After a few days, I sent my son (to whom the baby girl was betrothed) to bring her back and tell the husband to come for his wife. He fought with my son and didn't give the baby girl to my son. He said that he wouldn't give us the girl nor was his wife to come home. We even sent his wife (my daughter) but he said that he didn't need her anymore and he wouldn't give us the baby girl. So until now, we haven't heard anything from him neither he divorces nor accepts her.¹¹⁸

The breakup of the household: divorce and separation

Violence toward women was reported to lead to separation. The head of Household B40 commented on one of his drug addicted son's treatment of his wife and the consequences of it:

My son is an idiot. He used to fight with his wife and hit his daughter. One day his wife was in the hospital giving birth. He was not at home but when he came he asked about his wife. His wife gave birth in the night and in the morning he beat her in the hospital. Next day her brothers came and wanted to take their sister to their home and I let them take her. Now his wife and his daughter live with her father.

But the head of Household B40 has also been divorced once because of violence. According to a neighbour:

His second wife... she didn't like to live with him and he divorced her. He used to be violent against his two wives, he was using them as labour in the day and during the night he was hitting them. As a result one got sick because she was beaten on her head. When the other saw that situation, she thought that she will become crazy like the first and then went to her father's home; she invited the elders from both villages, when the elders came, she asked for a divorce but the husband didn't want to divorce her because he is *malik*

118 Interview with Household A12 Widow.

and it is shameful for him. Then the woman's son said, "My father has used a lot of violence on my mother; now he should divorce my mother, and I want to omit his name from my mother's name."

The husband said, "If I divorce her, then I will disinherit her sons." But the elders told him, "It is not according to your wish that you can disinherit her sons" (e.g. Sharia law applies), revealing the limits of his power.

Sons can also separate out of the household, which occurred with the younger son of Household A10. According to his mother, another son—with whom the head had a conflict over his daughter's education—also wants to live separately:

He wants to go and live separately but his wife doesn't want to leave. She says that she is very comfortable with us because she doesn't need to work all the time. If she lives separately, then she has to do all the work for her household. So he agrees to live with us.¹¹⁹

Household B48's son also wants to separate and the father made clear the costs of doing this, the effects on the household but also the underlying norms of responsibilities and reciprocity:

Parents bring up their children with many difficulties. When they get older, new ideas grow in their minds. I haven't let my children feel they lacked anything. I spent all my life providing for them but they make decisions by themselves and don't ask us. Because of these actions, parents get disappointed. I don't want them to serve me but I want them to use our advice, so that they will have success in their lives. A few days ago, he told his mother to provide him with a separate life. But I don't want to separate them until all my sons get married. If he wants to live separately, then he should spend for his wife but he must bring his salary home and give it to me, because I and his other brothers spent our money for him and his marriage.

Asked about the effects of a separation, he replied, "Our family will be decreased, our consumption will be decreased and we will lose his income." This comment brings the discussion back to the economic significance of maintaining a joint household.

6.4 Discussion

The evidence clearly shows the overriding importance of getting married and the extent to which households will sell core assets or take on debt in order to achieve that goal. Where poverty limits the resources of a household, marriage practices including early marriage or exchange marriage may be entered into. The detrimental effects of doing this are clearly understood but such households see little choice in the matter. This links to the importance of ensuring household reproduction and the ideal of building a large joint household for economic and social security in a context where village institutions are deeply problematic. However, there was no discussion in the transcripts of the role of the household in providing physical security. But the evidence from the households also pointed to some marked divergence of opinions between husband and wife and between father and sons, with both wives and sons sometimes willing to challenge the household head's authority.

119 Interview with Household A10 Wife.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

Four research questions have structured this investigation into household livelihood trajectories from 2002-3 to 2008-9 in two villages close to Kandahar City. These relate to finding out what these trajectories have been and how and why they have varied between households and villages, exploring how households have coped with physical and economy insecurity and how far individual action (agency) has allowed people to negotiate through or around the institutions that control or regulate their lives.

Before responding to these questions, it is useful to be reminded of the key characteristics of the context in which these household have lived. Kandahar remains an environment of acute physical insecurity: the accounts of the field team in their visits to the field are full of reports of police actions, security force presence and security incidences. Most household have refugee experience in response to war. One household (A00) came to settle in Village A to escape the Taliban in the head's home village; another is under threat from a Talib over a marriage conflict. The presence of the insurgency is also felt in the Village B, where threats against schools are rumoured. Despite the proximity to Kandahar City and its relative security, the villages' identity as mainly Popalzai (with their political linkages to the current government) may make them vulnerable. However, the more vulnerable are arguably the village elite. Landlord 1 has protected himself both through arming his sharecroppers and a more formal armed security detail.

The household accounts provide evidence of deep inequalities in land ownership linked to the social and landed elite, who display more of an interest in self-enrichment and in maintaining strong patron-client relations with dependent landless farmers. The elite exhibit little concern for the collective welfare of the village. Thus these villages are, drawing on the analogy of village republics,¹²⁰ autocratic regimes where the village base is a means for the social elite to leverage greater power in relation to economic self-interest or provincial and national politics. There is no evidence of any developmental interests. Thus, as Sections 4 and 5 make clear, those dependent on the landlords for livelihoods (employment, land, access to credit), the maintenance of that relationship (and the risks of losing it) constitute a constant hazard in their life. This is a major form of insecurity where there are no rights and limited social sanctions possible, although the example of the *malik* (Household B40) being advised he could not break Sharia law with respect to inheritance should be noted.

The context beyond the village—the city and its provincial government—is also one of acute uncertainty and at risk for the less powerful and the poorly connected. Patronage politics (linked to social identity) determine appointments. The acceptance of a system in which government officials take bribes, as evidenced by the accounts of transactions in the customs house (head of Household B57), shows a context where the use of public office for private gain is considered entirely legitimate. Further down the social order, respondents' accounts of the petty traders evidence arbitrary and corrupt police action.

All of this is possible in part because of the dynamics of Kandahar City's economy, which is a potent mix as: a trading centre with a rich agricultural hinterland in the districts; a key transit point in relation to the opium trade; a city with important transnational trading links; and a reconstruction economy driven by wealth from the various trading activities, an international presence and war. There are considerable economic opportunities

120 Pain, *Alternative Livelihood Trajectories: Evidence from Badakhshan*.

although access to these is highly regulated by informal means¹²¹—*wasita*, patronage and access to credit. So how have all these dimensions affected the study households?

7.2 What have been the economic trajectories and welfare outcomes of the case study households and their members?

The evidence from the case study households points to three very distinct types of trajectories. For those with land and inherited social position—the one household in Village A (A10) and the four in Village B (B40, B42, B48 and B57)—they have greatly prospered through a combination of agricultural assets, deployment of these into other income sources (e.g. livestock markets), a movement into non-farm income and the securing of employment through *wasita*. Some have done this more easily than others. (Household B57, for example, had a more difficult path to prosperity.) These households have also been helped by the institution of the joint household which has given them command over labour resources in order to diversify. A sixth household (A42), an immigrant to Village A with no land, also prospered through a contracting business built through *wasita* in Village A. These households' economic security is not in doubt. Their physical security, on the other hand, in part continues to depend on the political status quo.

There is a second group of four households who, from poor beginnings and without the land resources or the patronage networks of the first group, have also benefited from the dynamic urban economy although not nearly to the same degree. These include three households from Village A (A03, A16 and A19) and one from Village B (B56). For the three households in Village A, the building of economic security has been a slow process and the means of doing so variable. In the case of Household A03, through effort and small savings, the sole adult male worker gradually built a small business trading shoes in the city, acquired land, built his own house and separated from Landlord 1. For Household A16 despite the early death of the father, the support of a maternal uncle and the hard work of three brothers through labour and sharecropping enabled the household to build reliable access to credit and get married. This is also true of Household A19, where the father also died and the labour of five sons slowly led to economic security and marriage. Household B56, on the other hand, with just one hard-working male labourer, access to credit through his wife's relations was fundamental to improved circumstances.

The third group of households are those that are struggling to survive. These include three households from Village A (A01, A00 and A12) and three from Village B (B46, B50 and B58). In the case of Household A01, a sharecropper with Landlord 1, despite being labour-rich (five male members), because of bad luck or judgment, it made a series of ill-fated investments based on and is struggling to meet mounting debts. The other two households (A00 and A12) are in dependent relations with Landlord 1 because they need to maintain access to credit from him but are subject to his decisions on all matters. In both households, the wives work as servants in the landlord's household where the threat of dismissal and loss of living quarters is ever present. Either sickness (A00) or widow status (A12) gives neither household any room for manoeuvre. Of the households in Village B, Household B46 has just lost its sharecropping arrangements after 20 years and has been hit by the death of a son in the army, but needs to maintain relations with the landlord for credit to pay for medical treatment and marriage of the children. Household B50 experienced the death of a father when the sons were young. While they

121 See Sarah Lister and Adam Pain, *Trading in Power: The Politics of "Free" Markets in Afghanistan* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2004).

have six adult males and their own house, they work more in the limited village economy, are struggling to keep abreast of debt management, and rely on the landlord for access to credit. Finally, Household B58 also suffered a death of the father (a brother of Household B40) and the paternal uncle has been by all accounts rapacious and unsupportive; the household depends on the three sons working as labourers in the urban economy to survive. The household is struggling to keep ahead of its debt burden. What distinguishes the wealth group III households from those in wealth group II is household-specific or idiosyncratic factors such as death or illness which make it difficult for them to escape the dependent relations in which the landlords are keen to keep.

But one striking contrast between Kandahar and Badakhshan is the absence of any substantial discussion on food insecurity and consumption rationing in the poorer households. This reflects the fact that sufficient work, even though poorly paid and irregular, is available. Thus, basic food consumption can be assured, even if food quality for the poorest (as in Household A12) is not good.

For members of these households other than the head—sons, wives, daughters and daughter-in-laws—individual economic and welfare outcomes largely reflect the fortunes of the household, indicating equitable distribution within the households. For sons, autonomy is limited and most work is, without question, for the household's collective good. For wealthier and better-connected households, this often means access to better paid employment. For poor households, sons are restricted to the urban and agrarian labour market. Access to education for sons is largely the preserve of the wealthier households. For wives, daughters, and daughter-in-laws, social norms largely dictate their outcomes. Daughters have limited access to education although the case of the educated wife of Household B57 indicates that it is possible. Further, it is in marriage that daughters of poorer households find themselves exchanged at an early age to ensure a brother's marriage or are married out for a bride price.

7.3 How have household coped with economic and physical insecurity and with what consequences?

The route to prosperity or reinforcement of existing positions for wealth group I households has been through social position, assets and external connections which they leveraged to their benefit. They have also benefited from the many opportunities of Kandahar City's vibrant informal economy. This has enhanced their position and power within their communities so as to capture the resource of others (the Hindu lands) and the limited public goods provided by NGOs or the government. Nevertheless, the term "bandit" may not be inappropriate. Due to their connection to the existing political order, they are vulnerable targets for the insurgency.

The slow economic improvement among wealth group II households has been through a combination of skills, hard work, and, critically, ability to build access to informal credit outside dependent relations with a landlord. Crucial to these is the importance of supportive relations to help and assist in access to credit.¹²² Most of these households work in the less remunerative parts of the informal economy, forced to balance a portfolio of diverse labour-demanding activities. However, the urban economy seems to provide sufficient opportunities for them, particularly if the household can command enough male labour resources. Some of the activities they undertake are hazardous—such as the digging of wells or migrating for opium harvest—but as a number of them put it, "We are

¹²² Consistent with the findings of Floortje Klijn and Adam Pain, *Finding the Money: Informal Credit Practices in Rural Afghanistan* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2007) on the pervasiveness of informal credit.

compelled to do this.”

The third group largely still lives in dependent relations with a landlord, particularly for credit. A combination of sickness, death, widowhood, poor judgment or management, and an uncertain relationship with the landlord keep them in place. They have actively sought to build and maintain dependent relations with their landlords—ideally for access to land, but if that fails, for continued access to informal credit since their sources are more restricted than the wealth group II households. Their physical security is dependent on that of the landlords, and in the case of those that have been armed by the landlord in Village A, closely tied to it.

7.4 What do these livelihood trajectories reveal about informal and formal institutions?

All three groups, in their various ways, are deeply revealing of the institutional context in which they live. For wealth group I—who might be considered as working with or having more interest in the formal realm—it is clear that they have used their connections to subvert the formal through informal means to their personal advantage. *Wasita* the means to gain government employment for their sons; and the NSP *shuras* are directly subject to their rule and interests. Their enhancement of their informal power derived from *wasita* with the government thereby becomes a potential threat to others.

Group II households can evade the landlords and construct a life outside their control, helped by the significant institution of informal credit. Those that cannot, as in group III households, live subject to their landlords’ informal power. In either case, neither the group II nor three households are in a position to challenge their informal power.

7.5 To what extent have individuals and communities been able to bring about changes in their circumstances?

The household trajectories since 2002-3 in these two villages have indicated that many of the old social structures are still in place and the capacity for collective action to change these and to enhance public good availability has been deeply limited. Individuals have been able to improve their circumstances, and those starting from a socially disadvantaged position have done so through a combination of personal skills, luck (maintaining good health, having male labour), building *wasita*, and the ability to get support for risk-taking through informal credit practices. This ready access to cash may reflect the advantages of being close to Kandahar City. But their progress has largely been on the margins of the Kandahar economy, whose higher and more profitable levels are barred from those without the connections and wealth to secure access to them.

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