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**Monitoring and Evaluating the RALF (Research in
Alternative Livelihoods Fund) Programme.**

A Report to ICARDA (The International Centre for
Agricultural Research in the Dry Area)

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Executive Summary

This report (structured around six sections) develops a set of proposals for the monitoring of the component projects of RALF (Research in Alternative Livelihoods Fund). These proposals are designed to improve the learning that can be gained from the implementation of the individual projects both with respect to their own specific purpose and goal as well as the broader RALF outputs and purpose. At present most of the RALF projects have monitoring frameworks focused more on accountability concerns rather than learning and are weak in addressing the linkages between outputs and more complex outcomes relevant to the programme purpose.

We remain uncertain about cause and effect relations in relation to the growth of the opium poppy economy (Part II). Understanding impact requires building good monitoring systems that can tell us what does and does not work, where, how and why. Monitoring will have to respond to and capture the key dimensions of the variability of circumstances of different household's engagement in opium poppy cultivation, the influence of geography and location on the opium poppy economy, the complex of drivers leading to household engagement and critically, the understanding of risks and incentives.

There are four general issues that are relevant to the building of a monitoring framework (Part III). The first is the use of the livelihoods framework and what it can offer as an organising principle for assessing where project outputs are likely to have fitted in to complex and diverse rural livelihoods. The second is to recognise that the deductive approach on which project log frames are based make assumptions about causal relations. In this case with considerable uncertainty as to what causal relations are in terms of household decision-making to engage in or exit opium poppy production, a more open-ended approach to monitoring is required that builds on story telling of significant change. This leads to the third issue and an argument that the monitoring should be established around building evidence and arguments to refute null hypotheses – that no impact has been achieved. This approach seeks to stimulate debate about how to construct positive evidence of success. Finally different dimensions of effect and impact need to be explored across a hierarchy of domains of enquiry – at programme and project level.

The content of the domains of enquiry is then explored through an analysis of the RALF programme goals and criteria (Part IV).

Each of the individual projects have been reviewed (see Annex 2) identifying points that need strengthening in relation to individual project monitoring but also identifying key areas of cross-project learning. Note (Part V) is made of the location of various of the project in the differing opium poppy growing contexts – from areas with deep history of cultivation to those that are more recent. Key areas of cross project learning have been identified in relation to Livelihood Analysis, Participatory Processes, Risks and Incentives, Markets and Technical. It is proposed that these themes provide the basis of technical meetings within the programme both to explore methods and lessons across the projects and contexts.

The proposed technical workshops should provide a key part of the building of cross project evidence used to engage with the null hypotheses that are outlined for the

Programme and Projects in the final section of this report (Part VI). Key evaluative questions have been identified at the programme and project levels. Programme and project managers will to work with the null hypotheses that have been attached to each of these questions and develop evidence and arguments to refute them.

This report is not a recipe book of what to do and how to do it. It provides an analytical framework for addressing monitoring as a learning tool in relation to a complex problem. Its implementation will require:

- (a) programme management to be actively involved with project management in the development of appropriate indicators and evidence for each project to respond to the key evaluative questions and thus strengthen individual project monitoring;
- (b) well prepared and structured cross-project technical workshops to build cross context learning and thus build arguments in relation to programme purpose.

Monitoring and Evaluating the RALF Programme.

I Introduction

1. The RALF (Research in Alternative Livelihoods Fund) was established in 2003 by the Department of International Development (Dfid, UK) to develop and promote innovative alternative livelihood options for rural Afghans currently economically dependent on opium poppy. The overall focus of RALF is to support, through a competitive research grant mechanism, applied research and promotion of natural resource-based livelihoods. This includes post-harvest processing and services and is specifically directed at farmers and other rural stakeholders in areas currently affected by poppy production. The fund was also intended to support the development of national capacity in applied research and agricultural service delivery. The beneficiaries of this fund were seen to be the largely poor farming population and casual workers who were dependent on growing opium poppy for their livelihood.
2. RALF has been managed by the International Centre for Agricultural Research (ICARDA), supported by a project review panel (PRP). Two rounds of project proposals review have been held and 11 projects (see Annex 1 for a summary) have been approved and funded for implementation with project completion set for the end of 2006.
3. Monitoring of the progress on the projects as described in the RALF project memorandum was seen to have two dimensions. The first, for which ICARDA has specific responsibility, was essentially a monitoring of individual project progress based on the specific measurable indicators related to the project purpose and goal identified within each project logframe. The second was an output to purpose review of the RALF, which Dfid plans to undertake two years after project initiation.
4. It is widely recognised that the motivation and incentives that drive household engagement in the Opium Poppy economy (OPE) are diverse, structured by asset ownership, space and time as well as the broader context of a vibrant non-formal economy and powerful non-state actors situated within a state that has been variously described as a post-conflict state, a weak or failing state or just a difficult environment. It follows that the incentives that might drive household exit strategies from opium poppy will also be diverse. The encouragement that alternative livelihood options developed by RALF are likely to provide has to be seen within the context of wider incentives and risks that households experience.
5. The complexity of the problem addressed by RALF suggest that this programme provides an opportunity to deepen understanding of the OPE and its actors, using the individual project interventions as much to provide learning opportunities as specific outputs and within the construct of the log frame to provide better understanding of how project outputs might leverage purposes, and how these in turn might contribute towards the goal and supergoal of RALF.

6. However it became clear during the project review and approval process that the log frame of the projects approved largely established an indicator and monitoring framework that focused more on accountability concerns rather than learning, a bias towards the quantitative in terms of indicators (rather than the qualitative) and weak logical linkages between immediate outputs and more complex outcomes relevant to the programme purpose. Few of the proposals approved by RALF fully address the complex inter-linkages between poverty/vulnerability, power and resource access, poppy production and trade or analyse the current role of poppy production in the livelihoods of different social groups – who is growing, who is financing, who provides land resources and who is trading.
7. Equally they are not strong in terms of strategic thinking within a changing environment about whether what they do will leverage change and how, at either a household or more general level, and how they will monitor and learn from such changes. Many have simply taken changes in opium crop area as a sufficient indicator and have not given thought to effects of changes in motivation, perception, assessment of risk or other process indicators and how these might differ between different sorts of actors in the OPE. Indicators are largely undifferentiated.
8. It was agreed that there was an opportunity to address these issues at the programme level both through a process that developed a set of guidelines that needed to be followed across the projects and also through support for processes of active learning through the project implementation, both through cross project workshops as well as project support visits. Individual projects needed to be supported to develop appropriate indicators and M&E processes (which are weak in many of the agencies), so that at the end of the project, assessment of changes in motivation and behaviour with respect to poppy production can be made and insights provided on the mechanisms whereby change has been, or will potentially be brought about. Such a process would enhance the programme's capacity to inform future research and development with respect to the OPE in Afghanistan and contribute significantly to the RALF output to purpose review.
9. This document develops a set of proposals with respect to monitoring guidelines that need to be followed across the component projects of RALF. It seeks to improve the learning that can be gained from the implementation of the individual projects both with respect to their own specific purpose and goal as well as the broader RALF outputs and purpose.
10. Five sections follow this introduction. Section II outlines some of the key dimensions of the OPE that need to be taken into account in considering the impact of individual projects and RALF. A major issue is that of understanding risk and uncertainty. Section III addresses more generic issues of monitoring and evaluation that are relevant to the RALF projects. Section IV briefly reviews the RALF programme and its overall logic. Section V examines the individual RALF projects from a comparative perspective drawing on a more detailed analysis of individual projects contained in Annex 2 and the final section, drawing from the preceding analysis, develops a set of key questions and issues that need to be addressed by individual projects.

II RALF and responding to Livelihoods in the Opium Poppy Economy.

11. This is not the place for a detailed analysis of the OPE, the reasons for its spread and possible strategies for addressing it. There is no doubt that there is a spectrum of opinion with respect to the reasons for the growth of the OPE and as to whether it is simply to be seen as the growth of a criminal economy or regarded more as an outcome of development and state failure. These two contrasting positions argue for rather different intervention responses with contrasting assumptions and arguments as to what types of intervention will lead to what sorts of impacts and change. At the heart of this debate is the issue as to whether the OPE is to be seen as the cause of a weak and fragile state or a symptom of it, raising the question as to what is cause and what is effect – in sum what does the area of opium poppy indicate?
12. The issue of uncertainty over causalities is a critical question for monitoring and understanding impact because if we cannot be certain about the causal relations between interventions and possible effects and impacts, we need to build good monitoring systems so that we can learn not only what works and does not work and where, but also why and how. This point is developed further in section III.
13. The body of field evidence (see Mansfield and Pain¹) argues for the OPE to be largely understood as an outcome of development failure – that is a coping strategy for the many poor rural households for whom opium poppy has provided a currency not only to gain income but also access credit, land, food security and many other dimensions of survival associated with deep patron-client relations. As Geof Wood² has argued it has been an issue of staying poor but staying secure – a Faustian bargain – because the state has failed to provide the security to escape extractive social relations. The work of David Mansfield has drawn particular attention to the differential returns on opium cultivation among poor indebted sharecroppers, labourers and differing categories of landowners. Project impact assessment has to take account of these dimensions.
14. However understanding of the OPE needs to be sharply differentiated both with respect to place and time. The geography of opium poppy cultivation – its longer term entrenchment in ‘hard core’ provinces (Badakhshan, Nangarhar, Helmand etc), its more recent spread to other provinces (for example Ghor, Bamyan) and the 2004-05 decline in planting in Nangarhar etc., point to a complex of ‘drivers’ leading to household decision making over whether to plant/ cultivate opium poppy or not. Drivers are not only about personal motivations (profit, responding to debt, seeking food security) but also about an overall climate associated with wider disincentives (the threat of eradication, the possibility of opium crop failure or fears of a higher wheat price etc) and incentives (markets, alternative income sources etc.). One cannot assume that the motivations and incentives to plant or

¹ David Mansfield and Adam Pain. Opium Poppy in Afghanistan. Issues Paper. AREU. Forthcoming

² Wood, G. 2003. Staying Secure, Staying Poor: The “Faustian Bargain”. *World Development*, **31**, 3, 455-471.

not to plant are uniform with respect to geography or time. Context therefore has to be carefully analysed in order to inform effect and impact assessments.

15. There is a further dimension to geography and the rural landscape, which at its most simple is the contrast between high-potential areas with good market access and low potential environments with poor market access (see Ashley & Maxwell 2001³) – in a sense the contrast between the irrigated valleys/ plains and the mountain areas. Choices and opportunities, as well as market access can be sharply differentiated between these locations and impacts have to be understood with respect to these dimensions.
16. From an actor perspective the claim for RALF is that it seeks to motivate behaviour by pull factors, providing opportunities and incentives to producers to shift out of opium poppy production. It is based on an assumption that opium poppy producers are economically rational actors who will respond to price incentives (aided perhaps by a stick of threats of eradication). The assumption that price incentives are a key determinant of response ignores the social structures and associated obligations and dependencies within which many producers are locked. Price may well not be the major factor behind their decision-making. Indeed one of the characteristics of the way in which the poor address risk is to choose less risky crop opportunities and accept lower incomes as the trade-off for lower risk. Moreover risk has to be seen not just in relation to income but also in terms of risk of accessing assets (land etc) and ability to deploy capabilities (risks associated with markets, state provision of services etc).
17. This wider view of risk and incentives challenges the universal model of profit generation that has informed some positions on why opium poppy is grown. It also requires a recognition that markets themselves can often be the major source of risk to poor people, since they are unable to protect themselves against the risks and shocks of price fluctuations. As Dercon (2004)⁴ notes ‘ the normative prescriptions of basic neoclassical economics, to let the markets work freely without interference, have weak foundations in the presence of risk and uncertainty, since it would require that competitive markets should exist that allow anyone to insure themselves for all contingencies’. Given the evidence on the way in which real markets operate in Afghanistan⁵ – the fact that they are embedded in existing social relations structured around economic class, ethnicity and gender with highly inequitable distributional outcomes – there can be no reason to expect (or hope) that the market structures for licit crops will operate in any way different from that of the OPE. Markets are not just about mechanisms of exchange.
18. It follows that an understanding of risks and incentives in relation to household and individual decision making must be central to the understanding of whether or not alternative livelihood options offer real opportunities for various actors to

³ Ashley, Caroline and Simon Maxwell (Editors). 2001. Rethinking Rural Development. *Development Policy Review*, Volume 19, Number 4.

⁴ Stefan Dercon. 2004. Insurance against Poverty. Overview. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

⁵ See Sarah Lister and Adam Pain 2004. Trading in Power: Understanding Real Markets. Briefing Paper, Kabul, AREU.

move out of the OPE. This understanding has to be differentiated with respect to the various actors, the choice, opportunities and risks that they face and the extent to which exit strategies out of the OPE are a realistic option and can be voluntaristic or driven.

19. We might expect *a priori* that responses would vary between socio-economic groups depending on their resources and priorities. Four stylised households and responses⁶ to the opportunities and constraints provided by RALF and the broader context (e.g. counter-narcotic measures) may be distinguished and these are outlined in fig. 1. They are divided between ‘remaining in’ (although the capacity for independent action is very different between profit and survival strategies although both could be seen as choice) or ‘exiting’ the OPE.

Figure 1: Four household responses to changes in incentives for opium poppy cultivation

<i>Key actors</i>	<i>Persist</i>			<i>Exit</i>
Identity	Processors, Big Traders and Commanders	Those with no alternatives – the indebted, landless sharecroppers etc	Labourers; Landless	Richer producers and Smaller traders
Objectives	Profit and Power	Survival through defiance: Weapons of the weak	Coping	Accumulation through substitution
Strategies	Covert action	Hanging on to survive	Displacement	Shift into alternative activities
Tactics	Exploit Networks	Deepen patron – client relations	Same activities, different place	Alternative income sources; Alternative crops
What resources needed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - political clout to control rules - connections to profit from bending those rules - knowledge & networks 	Vertical patron-client relations	Labour	Assets
Effect	Enrichment and	Status-quo if	Simply shifts	Works for some

⁶ These would need to be refined for each context

	power	viable	production	
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Adapted from Pain 2004 AREU Draft Briefing Paper

20. The first group of actors are those who could be considered as operating for profit and power and who achieve the greatest returns on the opium poppy cultivation. These are clearly a mixed group who vary from opportunistic profit taking to criminals or worse. Alternative income sources may not be sufficient to drive them out of opium poppy cultivation although threats or risks to their assets might. They may easily shift their area of operation in response to localised threats.
21. A second group who might engage our attention more with respect to RALF are those who are engaged in the OPE through lack of choice – through debt, patron-client relations, sharecropping arrangements etc. They will have limited choice about moving – for them an exit strategy might be flight (to escape the pressure of debts) or movement out of the on-farm economy all together – either to off farm or non-farm. The consequences for this group if their landlords move into alternative crops need to be understood.
22. The third group who may persist are those who work primarily as labourers on the opium poppy crop – they may well be migrant. Their choice will be to either follow the opium poppy crop elsewhere as it migrates – or shift either to other on-farm activities or out of the farm economy. Again the consequences of the uptake of alternative crops by other farmers to this group need to be understood.
23. The fourth group that can be identified are those who may well be responsive to alternative income sources, have sufficient assets (of land etc) to respond to the risk of markets and will therefore fairly readily move out of the OPE.
24. These four groups are of course idealised but they represent points on a spectrum that need to be more clearly defined for each particular location and understood with respect to the opportunities and incentives that alternatives to opium poppy might offer, as well as the risks that the members of each group might face in shifting the composition of their livelihood portfolio. In this regard it is important to look not only at the direct effect that alternatives income sources might have (and who moves in response to these), to analyse the risk and opportunities that each offers, but also to consider the wider set of factors which if addressed might contribute to other groups moving or not moving.

III Generic M&E Issues.

25. As noted earlier (para 3) there are two planned dimensions to the monitoring of the RALF programme, one internal to each project, the other a broader output to purpose review of RALF. Section IV will look at the logical linkages between the individual projects and RALF programme but there are a number of general points that need to be made at this stage in relation to the monitoring and evaluation objectives.
26. The first, which logically follows from the discussion in section II, is that the livelihoods framework can be brought to bear on the monitoring and evaluation

methods for the project. The framework provides a structured approach to considering the circumstances of households at the micro level, in particular within the economic and social domain. The evidence for the diversity of rural livelihoods in Afghanistan has been mounting (see Grace and Pain, 2004) and a focus on monitoring the agricultural dimensions of the household portfolio alone will provide only a partial view of the factors that allow households to survive and thrive. The key dimensions of the framework that require attention are the relations between the assets that households have at their disposal, the activities in which they engage in constructing a livelihood and the outcomes in terms of higher or lower incomes, greater livelihood security etc. that they achieve.

27. The inter-relations between these components are critically affected by the vulnerability context and the institutional environment that may in the context of Afghanistan seen to be more disabling or blocking than enabling. These factors need to be understood.
28. While potentially the livelihoods framework could provide systematic indicators that could be used to track local and broader livelihood impacts derived from research outputs (e.g. tracking of asset, activity portfolios and their associated income streams) the extent to which individual projects will be able to do this will vary. Even if this cannot be done systematically, the SL framework does provide a useful organising principle for assessing where project outputs are likely to have “fitted in” to complex and diverse rural livelihoods, the asset or productivity constraints they may have alleviated, the risk reduction that they may have affected and their potential or actual influence on the policy and institutional environment within which beneficiary and broader groups construct their livelihoods. A critical part of the monitoring must assess both the positive and negative impacts of the research outputs on the livelihoods of the diverse groups involved in the OPE and build this on evidence based argument, rather than supposition.
29. The second aspect that needs to be considered is the underlying principles on which the log-frame works. It is essentially a deductive approach working from an intended goal and purpose backwards to the outputs that must be achieved in order for that purpose to be gained and identifying the indicators that will tell you whether or not you are moving in the right direction. It is premised on an assumption that you know what the causal relations are – if a certain output is achieved then the purpose will be gained – and that there is an evidence-based problem analysis. As has been discussed in Section II, there is considerable uncertainty as to what the causal relations might be in terms of household decision making to move out or into the opium poppy economy. Not only will this mean that external contextual factors may have a major influence on whether or not the outputs do achieve their purpose but equally outputs may have unintended consequences which could be either positive or negative. We need to understand what these are and the log frame and its indicators even at their best do not provide a reliable framework to systematically address these dimensions.
30. What is required (to complement the use of log frame indicators) is a more open-ended approach that is open to unintended consequences and works in a more inductive way through building understanding of significant change at the

household and district level and then building the case as to if and how project outputs may or may not have contributed to this. From a point of view of method, the use of story telling is particularly useful.

31. This brings us to the third point. If the causalities are complex and unclear and a deductive argument difficult to sustain, then this argues for an approach that builds on a null hypothesis – that a project output has had no effect in identifying alternative income sources and has limited potential impact. By phrasing the question in this way it places the burden of proof on the project. This is not a pessimistic way to proceed but serves to stimulate a debate about how to construct positive evidence of success. Overall monitoring is about ‘building arguments’ for the conclusions reached rather than a straight and narrow matter of testing outcomes against unambiguous indicators. Part of this can be expressed as ‘looking for significant change’ (which brings us back to the inductive approach) put in motion by projects – what changed, why did it change and what are the perceptions of different actors about the change. This could also be seen as a process of improving probabilities surrounding conclusions that are reached, but in many cases the findings are likely to remain probable rather than certain.

32. The final point concerns the different dimensions of effect and impact and separating out the more immediate effects of project outputs from their intermediate and longer term effects and impact – and taking this perspective at the broader RALF programme level as well. While this will need to be explored in terms of the details of the RALF programme and individual projects, the more general point given the complexity of the issue and drawing on the preceding three points of this section, is that it is useful to structure the monitoring and evaluation around a hierarchy of domains in order to identify, explore and organise the key questions for monitoring and evaluation. Figure 2 presents an indicative framework of how the proposed four domains (Project Delivery, Direct Project Impact, Direct Programme Impact, Wider and Longer term Programme Impact) could be structured.

Figure 2. Structuring Monitoring and Evaluation Themes into Domains and Questions.

Is the programme impacting on sustainable alternative livelihoods?	
Wider & Longer term programme impact	Questions about the ways in which the RALF has contributed to the goal & super-goal
Direct Programme Impact	Questions about the ways in which RALF has achieved its purpose
Direct Project Impact	Questions about the ways in which projects have achieved effects and impact
Direct Project Delivery	Questions about whether the projects have fulfilled the criteria and delivered the agreed outputs
Are the projects well designed and managed?	

33. The framework can be used to build on these M&E domains by setting out hypotheses, detailing questions that ensure a comprehensive coverage of the purpose of M&E, relating these to the qualitative and quantitative data that might be used and indicating the analyses that will be undertaken on the basis of such information. Figure 3 lays out the proposed format which will be returned to in Section VI

Figure 3 A format for linking M&E domains to key M&E Questions.

M&E Domains	Null Hypothesis	Detailed M&E questions	Data Sources	Proposed Analyses
The core structure of M&E domains	The null hypothesis to be tested	The main M&E questions reflecting the specific context / project	Clear specification of sources of data & mode of enquiry	Clarifying how data will be analysed and results presented

IV The RALF Programme

34. We turn now to briefly summarise the structure of the RALF programme and the logical linkages between the programme and its component projects. Figure 4 presents the logic and proposed indicators from the log-frame for RALF

Figure 4. RALF Log Frame: logic and indicators

Element	Objectively Verifiable Indicators
Supergoal: Sustainable reduction and elimination of illicit poppy cultivation in Afghanistan	Poppy cultivation reduced by 70% by 2008
Goal: Sustainable livelihoods in place for rural Afghans in poppy growing areas	1. Licit income levels increased 2. Improved food security
Purpose: To develop and promote innovative alternative livelihood options for rural Afghans currently economically dependent on opium poppy.	End of project. 1. At least 6 alternative livelihood technologies identified, tested and promoted in poppy growing areas. 2. Channels and essential services secured, for rapid promotion and uptake of successful technologies
Outputs	
1. A competitive mechanism for funding innovative applied research projects tailored to the programme purpose.	1.1. Administrative and governance mechanisms in place for CRF 3 months after project initiation. 1.2. At least 4 high quality applied research and development projects selected and first tranche funding disbursed within 6 months of project start; and at least 10 projects (cumulative total) selected and first tranche funding disbursed within 18 months of project start.
2. Recommended technologies and support services, tested and available for implementation.	2.1. 75% of projects funded by the CRF yield positive results, translating into practicable recommendations that can be used to improve incomes or food security, or provide employment. 2.2. Support services needed to support improved technologies clearly identified.
3. Improved capacity for applied research and extension in government and NGO partners.	3.1. MAAH PRP member fully conversant with operating a CRF mechanism for agricultural research, by e.o.p. 3.2. Participating Afghan GO/NGO partners have

	improved research and development skills by e.o.p. 3.3 ATA adopts lessons from RALF in new research strategy.
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35. The call for projects required that the project proposals should contribute to the RALF purpose although it also noted in the introduction that the outcome of RALF ‘ would be licit alternatives to opium production that are practicable in the socio-economic context of Afghanistan and that are accessible to rural people’. This outcome is not quite the same thing as the purpose in this case (although purpose and outcome can be used as synonyms) – and relates more to the goal level of RALF.
36. Desirable criteria (and these were made explicit in the first request for proposals) by which the projects were evaluated and which are relevant (highlighted) to the M&E of the projects/ RALF are summarised below in Figure 5.

Figure 5 Key Criteria used for Project Evaluation and relevant to M&E

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|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal demonstrates a clear understanding of the complexity of the problem addressed by RALF and a high likelihood of contributing to the RALF purpose of developing and promoting innovative alternative livelihood options for rural Afghans currently economically dependent on opium poppy. • Likelihood of achieving sustainable and quantifiable impact and replicability of results, including a clearly defined mechanism for scaling up and promoting successful results of research. • Particular attention will be given to participatory research approaches. • The proposal clearly identifies (i) target areas, (ii) participants and immediate users, and (iii) beneficiaries, including an understanding of all stakeholder groups. • Are particular needs of poor stakeholders/ vulnerable groups (including women) addressed? • The proposal considers market aspects and identifies potential markets for products, or includes relevant market research in its scope of activities. • The proposal demonstrates potential for rapid uptake of results during the project. • The proposal includes an element of capacity building for Afghan research and development personnel. • Comparative advantages of the partners involved in (i) conducting the proposed research and (ii) maximising the synergy between international research practice and knowledge of the local Afghan context. |
|---|

37. The final comment that needs to be made concerns the linkage between the projects and programme. Logically the RALF programme sits at a higher level than the projects and project goals should contribute to RALF’s purpose and project purpose to its outputs (Figure 6). Output 2 of the RALF programme is the one to which project purposes will most directly contribute to although they will through the implementation process contribute to Outputs 1 and 3. This would

imply that the individual projects should have a consistent goal. In fact they don't as will be clear from Annex 2.

Figure 6. The relation between Programme and Projects and the Intervention Logic (Goal, Purpose and Results) for RALF

<i>Programme</i> <i>Super-Goal</i>	Project 1	Project 2	Project 3	Etc
<i>Goal</i>				
Purpose	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Goal</i>
Outputs	Purpose	Purpose	Purpose	Purpose
	Outputs	Outputs	Outputs	Outputs

V The RALF Projects.

38. Each of the RALF projects have been reviewed (see Annex 2 for the individual project reviews) with respect to the overall project rationale, the implicit or explicit hypothesis underlying the project with respect to how the outputs might impact on actors engaged in the opium poppy economy and leverage change and what the indicators for output, purpose and goals are. In addition some of the strengths and weaknesses of the projects with respect to the project selection criteria have been noted and potential cross-project learning points identified.
39. These comments along with a draft of this paper have been circulated to the individual projects inviting response and discussion on the suggestions made. It had been hoped that responses from the projects as to how the various points could be handled could be incorporated into this report, but it is clear that it will take longer for the projects to internalise and respond to these issues. Part of the reason for this has been the insecurity and instability that has been pervasive across Afghanistan in recent weeks – indeed one project (01-04) had its office burned down in Jalalabad. Informal discussions have been held with several projects (01-07, 02-02, 02-07) and a very detailed, thoughtful and constructive response received from 01-16 that will provide the basis for very useful discussions.
40. It is suggested that rather than trying to set in stone at this stage exactly what each project should do and how, the proposals and issues identified in this overview document and the specific project reviews should provide the basis for detailed field discussions and resolution during monitoring visits of the projects. The development of methods and approaches should be shared across projects for cross-project learning purposes.
41. Accordingly this section will address some of the cross-project issues that we need to be attentive to. The first issue relates to the context in which these projects are being carried out. Table 1 presents summary statistics on opium poppy area for the provinces in which RALF projects are being implemented. The

table presents⁷ province level statistics on opium area over seven years from 1998, the contribution of the provincial area to the national statistics and details on the importance of opium poppy area relative to the wheat area in 2004. The project activities are referenced to the province of their activities although in the case of 02-07 where the final choice has yet to be made, not all have been included.

42. A number of summary points need to be made. The provinces can be clearly categorised with respect to their engagement in opium poppy cultivation. Three provinces (Badakhshan, Nangahar and Helmand) together contained over 50% of the national opium poppy area with a long history of cultivation although Badakhshan has shown an overall increase in area in recent year. However, note should be made of the differences between them in terms of the significance of the poppy area and in particular the importance of opium poppy in Nangahar in 2004 in contrast to Badakhshan and Helmand. These are in a sense the ‘deep’ opium poppy areas.

Table 1: Changes in Opium Poppy Areas in RALF Project areas. (area in hectares & percent of national area)

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Opium area as % wheat area 2004
Badakhshan	2817	2684	2458	6342	8250	12756	15607	
01-08, 02-05, 02-07	4.4	2.9	3.0	79.3	11.2	15.9	11.9	16
Nangarhar	17821	22990	19747	218	19780	18904	28213	
01-04, 02-11	27.8	25.3	24.1	2.7	26.7	23.6	21.5	76
Helmand	30672	44552	42853	0	29950	15371	29353	
01-07,01- 09,02-11	47.9	48.9	52.2	0	40.5	19.2	22.4	40
Kandahar	5229	5522	3034	0	3970	3055	4959	
01-07, 01-09	8.2	6.0	3.7	0	5.4	3.8	3.8	13
Laghman	77	297	707	15	950	1907	2756	
01-03	0.1	0.3	0.8	0.2	1.3	2.4	2.0	20
Kunduz	0	38	489	0	16	49	224	
01-09	0	0.04	0.5	0	0.01	0.01	0.2	0
Takhar	0	201	647	211	788	380	762	
01-09	0	0.2	0.7	2.6	1.1	0.5	0.6	0
Baghlan	929	1005	199	82	152	597	2444	
02-05	1.5	1.1	0.2	1.0	0.2	0.7	1.9	2
Ghor	0	0	0	0	2200	3782	4983	
01-06	0	0	0	0	3.0	4.7	3.8	13
Hirat	0	0	184	0	50	134	2531	
02-02	0	0	0.2	0	0.01	0.01	1.9	2
Balkh	1044	4057	2669	4	217	1108	2495	
02-05	1.6	4.5	3.2	0.01	0.3	1.4	1.9	2
Khost	0	0	0	6	0	375	838	
02-07	0	0	0	0.01	0	0.5	0.6	5
Paktya	4	29	46	1	38	721	1200	
02-07	0.01	0.03	0.05	0.01	0.01	0.9	0.9	7
Bamyan	0	0	0	0	0	610	803	

⁷ Drawn from UNODC / CND 2004. Afghanistan, Opium Poppy Survey, Annexes 1 and 3.

02-07	0	0	0	0	0	0.7	0.6	4
Total	64000	91000	82000	8000	74000	80000	131000	

43. These ‘deep’ provinces can be contrasted with two other categories. There are several provinces (Khost, Ghor, and Bamyan) where opium poppy cultivation is of recent origin and has come to occupy in 2004 a variable proportion of the arable area (ranging from 4% in Bamyan to 13% in Ghor). The other category where there has been a long history of cultivation (Baghlan, Balkh, Paktya) but the area remains small in terms of the national contribution but may be significant in terms of area at the provincial level (e.g. Laghman with 20% of its annual arable area to opium poppy in 2004).
44. While there are likely to be changes in these statistics for 2005 (early indications are that there is a dramatic decline in Nangahar opium poppy area) the important point is that the projects are working in very different contexts. Where there is a deep history of cultivation and the area is large, then the role of different social groups (as landlords, sharecroppers, labourers etc) needs to be well understood. The issue will be understanding the incentives for the various actors to move out of opium poppy cultivation. For projects working in areas where the role of opium is limited, the issues are going to be thinking through how their interventions are likely to keep various actors out of opium poppy. For those projects working in newly emerging areas of opium poppy, a careful look at who is cultivating and where may help build arguments about potential projects impacts.
45. Table 1 has summarised data at the province level. Individual projects will have to be more attentive to the district level data in the provinces in which they are working and locate their project implementation areas in relation to these and the changes within the province. This should provide an important part of the contextual analysis.
46. The second issue is that of cross project learning; each of the project analyses in annex 2 identify some of the potential lessons from method, approach and content that could potentially contribute to other projects and will allow the building of comparative lessons across the projects and contexts. These issues are summarised in figure 7 grouped by theme (five of them) and located with respect to the project from which they were specifically identified. It should be made clear that these recommendations draw from the strengths or focus of particular projects that might have wider relevance and are not intended to suggest that other projects cannot and will not contribute wider learning to the programme in these areas. Nor is this intended that this is an exhaustive list and new themes may emerge.
47. The five proposed themes are Livelihood Analysis, Participatory processes, Risk and Incentives, Markets and Technical and there are clearly crossovers between them. The Livelihood theme relates very much to building understanding of different livelihood groups and their role/ engagement in the opium poppy economy and thinking through, given their asset bases and strategies, what the potential for ‘alternatives’ actually are and how impacts might be understood.

Key questions of method and responding to the needs of the poor and women arise here in relation to their engagement in the OPE.

Figure 7 Potential Cross Project Lessons / Issues

<i>Project</i>	01-03	01-04	01-07	01-08	01-09	01-11	01-16	02-02	02-05	02-07	02-11
Cross Project Lessons / Issues											
LIVELIHOODS											
Livelihood Analysis	X							X			
PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES											
Participation & opportunities for women		X					X				
Capacity Building for participatory engagement	X										
Enterprise development & CBNRM										X	
RISK AND INCENTIVES											
Adoption alternatives in new versus old opium cultivation areas		X						X			
Incentives from the livestock sector to reduce OP						X					
Wider context of incentives & risks			X								
Governance structures & decision making			X								
Debt relations, access to financial services & poppy cultivation				X							
Role of credit & support services in uptake of AL				X							
Importance of financial returns from new crops as criteria of substitutability for opium poppy		X									
MARKETS											
Institutional innovation and market development							X	X			
Methods of Market Research					X						
Livestock & Livestock Product Marketing Chains					X	X					
Market development & medicinal issues										X	X
Is market research / business development enough without institutional innovation									X		
Market opportunities & the poor	X						X			X	
TECHNICAL											
Forage production for intensification						X					
Technologies for intensification of wheat									X		
Shared learning on technical research/ training						X			X		
Case study on new role for existing product											X

48. The Participatory Process theme addresses both method and monitoring and assessment issues, linked to capacity building processes. The Risk and Incentive theme raises a number of issues both with respect to method and to the understanding the role of risk in household decision-making. How is this related to governance issues, specific matters of debt and how does it contrast between new and old areas of opium poppy? The Market dimension cuts across all the projects and here there are concerns both with methods of understanding markets, as well as looking at how the institutions in which markets are embedded can be reformed to provide particular access for the poor. A critical issue which may be one of the key lessons that come out of the cross-project learning is the extent to which market structures for potential or existing licit commodities are similar or different from those of opium poppy, which links to the Risks and Incentive's theme. Finally there is a set of Technical issues related to particular commodities and their potential role through management changes to contribute to supporting licit livelihoods.
49. These themes essentially provide the basis for a series of technical meetings within the programme to explore both methods and lessons learnt across projects and contexts. They should be approached through a prepared and structured agenda with guided presentations to maximise the potential for learning.

VI Developing an M&E Framework.

50. We now return to develop the generic issues on M&E into a framework for monitoring the programme and its components projects in relation to programme and project purpose and goals. The framework is summarised in Figure 8.
51. For each domain the key evaluative question has been identified as follows:

Achievement of Programme Goal: *Which RALF projects have made or have a strong potential to make, an impact on increasing licit sustainable livelihoods in poppy growing areas?*

Achievement of Programme Purpose: *Which RALF projects have successfully promoted, or have a strong potential to do so, alternative livelihood technologies?*

Achievement of Project Purpose: *How effectively has the project delivered practicable recommendations that have demonstrated potential to improve licit incomes or food security or provide employment?*

Achievement of Project Delivery: *How effectively has the project responded to deliver the agreed outputs of the programme?*

52. To each of these evaluative questions have been attached a set of null hypotheses which we recommend programme and project management work with and build evidence and arguments to refute them. The programme management will be working with the programme level purpose and goal. The technical workshops should provide a key part of the building of cross-project evidence that can be

used to engage with these hypotheses. Understanding about risk and incentives may play a crucial role in building arguments why certain technologies may or may not have worked. Debate and cross project lessons about markets, support services and uptake may help identify key institutional issues that are relevant to the programme purpose.

53. From a project viewpoint the attention will be on the evidence for project delivery and purpose. It should be stressed that at the project delivery level what is being asked is no more than was identified as the criteria that the project had to fulfil for funding. While the project log frames indicators are specific to project and purpose achievement, they should also provide, if they are comprehensive and robust indicators, evidence based argument to challenge the null hypotheses. The fifth column of the framework outlines the sort of indicative analyses that will need to be undertaken to provide the evidence. If the existing indicators do not fully respond to the null hypotheses and it is appropriate that they should (the null hypotheses are not necessarily relevant to all projects), then projects will need to develop additional indicators.
54. At the project purpose level attention to context, its changes and different livelihood groups will be required. Again these should be largely contained within the project design if it has fully responded to the funding criteria although the individual project reviews have indicated areas where these could be strengthened. Individual project discussions and cross-project technical meetings should contribute towards the evidence building at this level.

Figure 8 An M&E Framework for RALF.

M&E Domain	Null hypothesis	Detailed M&E Questions	Data Sources	Proposed analysis
Achievement of Programme Goal <i>Which RALF projects had made or have a strong potential to make, an impact on increasing licit sustainable livelihoods in poppy growing areas?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RALF has had no impact on increasing the levels of licit incomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has been the intended focus of the programme in relation to sustainable livelihoods in poppy growing areas (increased income licit income) and to what extent, where, how and for whom have these impacts been achieved and are attributable to the programme? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NRVA data and analysis National Level opium poppy surveys Project Reports and analyses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examination of direct and indirect evidence in relation to licit incomes differentiated by area and livelihood group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RALF has had no impact on improving food security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has been the intended impact on improving of the programme on food security and to what extent, where, how and for whom have these been achieved? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution to increased food security examined differentiated by area and livelihood group
Achievement of Programme Purpose <i>Which RALF projects have successfully promoted, or have a strong potential to do so, alternative livelihood technologies? (for rural people currently depending on opium poppy)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The component projects have failed to identify, test and promote 6 alternative livelihood technologies in poppy growing areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What have been the intended project achievements (and failures) in terms of developing and promoting viable alternative livelihood technologies, and where and why have these been achieved (failed) and for whom? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Reports & Monitoring Data Participatory assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examination of successful and unsuccessful AL technologies, reasons for success & failure.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Channels & essential services for rapid promotion & uptake of successful technologies not secured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What have been the intended project achievements (and failures) in terms of securing channels for promotion & uptake of successful technologies and where and how have these been achieved? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of services and channels for technology promotion & uptake & further potential for scaling up.

Achievement of Project Purpose <i>How effectively has the project delivered practicable recommendations that have demonstrable potential to improve licit incomes or food security or provide employment?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project has not achieved its purpose and demonstrated a high likelihood of having demonstrable potential to contribute towards innovative alternative livelihood options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the intended project's purpose and what is the evidence that there is demonstrable potential (for whom, where and how) for a contribution towards licit livelihoods options? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Reports & Monitoring data; Participatory Assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actual or potential contribution towards licit livelihoods options
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project has not achieved quantifiable impact differentiated by livelihood group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the intended project impacts and for whom and how have these been achieved? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As Above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before and after livelihood analysis, identification of significant change.
Achievement of Project Delivery <i>How effectively has the project responded to deliver the agreed outputs of the programme?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project has not successfully scaled up and promoted results or shown potential for rapid uptake of results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What efforts and results have the project shown with respect to scaling-up and demonstrating potential for rapid uptake? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Reports & Monitoring data; Participatory Assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project understanding & action with respect to scaling-up, potential for uptake etc
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project has not used participatory research approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the intended participatory project approaches and have these been achieved? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As Above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects use and evaluation of participatory processes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project has not clearly identified target areas, participants and immediate users, potential beneficiaries, and those who will not benefit from the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the intended target areas and who are the intended beneficiaries and participants in the project and have these successfully been responded to/ addressed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As Above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project definition and characterisation of target areas, beneficiaries & methods of working with these
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project has not addressed the particular needs of the poor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the project clearly identified the poor and how has it responded to their particular needs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As Above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project identification & response to the needs of the poor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project has not sufficiently considered market aspects and undertaken relevant market research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the project critically investigated the markets and market structure? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As Above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project characterisation & analysis of markets

