

Enhancing livelihoods for resource poor households In the Afghan Hindu Kush using the Territorial Approach to Agroenterprise Development

Melody R. McNeil, Paul Hicks, Kamal Bhattacharyya¹,
Carlos F. Ostertag², Adam Pain³
February, 2006

Abstract

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Afghanistan Program began using the Territorial Approach to Agroenterprise Development for its Agroenterprise Research Project in April 2005. The Territorial Approach, developed by the Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), has been useful as a tool for rural enterprise development in its attention to situational differences and systematic inclusion of a variety of market actors. CRS and CIAT cooperate in a Global Learning Alliance for Agroenterprise designed specifically to benefit poor people in rural areas. Through implementation of the Territorial Approach in Ghor Province, the project team has been able to use and begin to adapt the approach to suit the project's dual purpose of increasing rural incomes through enterprise development and identifying potential alternatives to opium poppy production. During this process, CRS has realized the need to deepen its understanding of existing market institutions, the relationships at each level of the market chain, and look at projects that benefit all parties or that minimize threats to the current benefits experienced by critical stakeholders.*

INTRODUCTION

Typical NGO agricultural development interventions in Afghanistan focus on supply or production, emphasizing improved seeds, fertilizer, and other inputs. While these activities usually improve yields, they often have little impact on real income gains for farmers. The absence of market linkages and market support systems are critical impediments to farmers' abilities to increase returns from agriculture related livelihood activities. Complex and dysfunctional informal markets in rural Afghanistan further constrain growth for small and marginal rural producers through preventing

¹ Melody McNeil, Paul Hicks and Dr. Kamal Bhattacharyya work for CRS Afghanistan and can be contacted through Ms. McNeil at melody@crsherat.org

² Carlos Ostertag is the Andean Region Coordinator for CIAT's Rural Agroenterprise Development Project and can be contacted at c.ostertag@cgiar.org

³ Dr. Adam Pain is a professor in the Department of Urban and Rural Development at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and can be contacted at adam.pain@sol.slu.se

*** This Project is one of the 11 Projects under the RALF (Research in Alternative Livelihoods Fund) Program, funded by DFID-UK, managed by ICARDA, and implemented by 25 national and international organizations in 17 provinces of Afghanistan.**

RALF Website: www.icarda.cgiar.org/RALFweb/RALF.htm

diversification in marketing practice and erecting strong barriers to entry for new opportunities.

CRS is working in Shahrak District of Ghor Province to develop market linkages and small scale agroenterprise supporting farmers involved with direct agricultural production and other rural stakeholders involved in off-farm economic activities. The project has the dual purpose of increasing rural incomes through enterprise development and identifying potential alternatives to opium poppy production. CRS is working in consultation with researchers from the Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT) under a Global Learning Alliance to develop agroenterprise in 10 villages in Shahrak District of Ghor Province through a tool called the Territorial Approach to Agroenterprise Development (TA-AD). The project is funded by the British Department for International Development under the RALF * Program for identifying and promoting alternatives to opium poppy cultivation. The following case study describes the research process undertaken by the project from April, 2005 to December, 2006.

METHODS

The CIAT developed Territorial Approach to Agroenterprise Development consists of four major areas of work:

1. The identification of a specific interest group composed of diverse local organizations with interest in rural business development.
2. Identification and management of market opportunities available to the region.
3. Participatory sub sector analysis and consensus building with market chain actors.
4. Provision of appropriate and sustainable business development services for the region. (Lundy, et al:4).

The major assumption underlying the TA-AD is that low input and traditional production systems characterizing most small-scale producers in developing countries leads to undifferentiated products and low profit/investment cycles. Because of this cycle and due to a lack of coordination among small producers, most remain price takers in markets which may also have further systemic barriers to entry (Ferris, et al:5). The TA-AD seeks to approach rural development through entrepreneurial support and encouraging collective action.

CIAT researchers also recognize that local and international market structures will heavily influence the implementation and results of the process for a given region. The TA-AD should be used in a way that best serves the target territory in making decisions that will benefit participants. (Ferris, et al:8) Therefore, the TA-AD uses generalized materials (tools and methods) for enterprise development, while assuming the practitioners will adopt what is useful for their context and adapt other tools as they see fit.

The TA-AD method is greatly simplified in Shahrak due to a lack of value adding activities taking place within the district. There is no formal storage, packaging or processing, other than simple wheat mills, making market chains very simple. In other

areas where the TA-AD has been used⁴, existence of processing, dense production chains and positive state interventions have increased the number of stakeholders and the formality of market interventions.

Implementation of the Territorial Approach started in April, 2005 in Shahrak, with a “Territorial Characterization” involving two distinct sets of activities: an exploratory study followed by a validation study. The purpose of the exploratory study was to get an overview of the operating area through an open interview format. From the results of the exploratory study, the team set up a more targeted validation study to divide the project area into distinct territories and to have a clear picture of the current production and marketing practices.

The second stage of the TA-AD, the Market Opportunity Identification (MOI) is designed to work with local interest groups made up of various stakeholders in each territory to do market studies and prioritize enterprise options. Under the TA-AD the groups would ideally have formal membership. As will be further described in the implementation section, the project found formal interest group formation difficult for a variety of reasons.

The project has just completed the MOI process and has not yet begun the subsequent processes of scaling-up, performance evaluation, institutionalization and then looking at possible advocacy options.

OPERATING CONTEXT

Ghor Province, located in the western Hindu Kush Mountains, is one of the poorest provinces in Afghanistan. Ghor is physically remote with extremely poor roads winding through a mountainous terrain. According to the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA, 2004), more than 90% of Ghor communities remain with no electricity, 71% of households are at least a half day from health facilities (predominantly basic health centers), and 60% of households have no sanitation facilities.

Ghor has a seasonal economy with production and collection activities consuming the warm months in preparation for harsh winters during which many parts of the province are cut-off from external supply routes. To this end, farmers in Shahrak use complex irrigation systems to feed small plots of land, while depending more substantially on unreliable rain-fed agriculture for staple foods, and gathering shrubs from mountains for winter forage and fuel. Villages in Shahrak are quite isolated from one another as well, centered around small and sometimes seasonal water sources like springs and streams.

Drought in Ghor during 5 of the past 7 years exacerbated already low access to water and resulted in widely reported livestock and other asset sales. One impact of the drought on Ghor has been a trend towards poppy cultivation. Although opium poppy cultivation was only introduced during the past 3-4 years (Pain, 2006:9), it is a relatively drought

⁴ See Ferris, et al:36-37.

resistant crop (IRIN Web Special, 2004) and carries with it functional marketing and credit arrangements.⁵

MARKET CONTEXT

NRVA (2004) data indicate that physical market access in Ghor Province in general is much lower than in other parts of Afghanistan: 34% of communities in Ghor may go to the bazaar only one time per season and 88% of Ghor residents access the bazaars by animal or foot. The principal bazaar relevant to this project is Dara-e-Takht, on the northwestern fringe of the province. Because western Shahrak borders Herat Province, some areas of Shahrak have much better physical access than NRVA suggests, but in many cases these statistics apply even for those living 2 hours walk from Dara-e-Takht. Physical access also does not necessarily translate into substantially improved terms of trade as there are other constraints that continue to hinder Shahrak producers in agricultural and non-agricultural production.

Entry of Ghor stakeholders into anything more than village to village trade is hampered by market conditions in Afghanistan. These conditions are elaborated in studies by the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) which show that “participation in markets is not open to all...” and that the very successful informal market in Afghanistan “is highly regulated by informal institutions and is definitely not ‘free’”(Lister, et al, 2004:2). The implications of AREU studies and CRS findings regarding market access and opportunities in Shahrak show the need for attention to the informal institutions effecting Shahrak producers and care in working within and around them.

The relative importance of Dara-e-Takht as a bazaar linking western Shahrak to the large Herat urban market is a recent development. Established only 30 years ago, it houses more than 100 shops selling mostly common dry goods. Shops in Dara-e-Takht are often owned by more than one person who pool resources to buy the initial stock (Bruckner, et al, 2005). Shopkeepers are generally local people with connections in Herat for supplies. Dara-e-Takht traders are highly dependent on giving and receiving credit; temporary lack of funds can force shops to close intermittently.

IMPLEMENTATION

Exploratory Study

The exploratory study covered 24 villages in Shahrak District. More than 60 interviews with 2-15 participants were carried out. This initial exploration revealed a high level of debt stemming from the longstanding drought and the harsh winter of 2004-5, and a lack of wage labor opportunities forcing many families to send one or more sons to labor somewhere else. The study also pointed out poor access to agricultural inputs like seeds and fertilizers, animal health facilities, and extension services.

⁵ Pain (2006) shows the relationship between inputs, land, credit and poppy cultivation in Afghanistan which become very important to marginal households during drought.

The exploratory study was constrained by difficulty in meeting with villagers without the presence of village leaders. While this made it difficult to fully assess the dynamics of the informal markets and how less powerful people are affected by it, it did ironically reinforce the assumption that village leaders wield considerable control within the informal institutions.

Validation Study

The validation study covered 10 villages, where CRS had ongoing projects. Village selection was done prior to the validation study on the basis of size, distance to markets and level of access throughout the year. CRS decided to begin this program with villages that were not smaller than 80 families, with one exception⁶, and that were close enough to “major” bazaars to make regular use of them. Village selection was made somewhat easier in that 2 villages under consideration declined to be part of a project because it did not include a “cash for work” element. Table 1 gives a description of the villages.

Table 1. Agroenterprise Research Project Village Descriptions by Territory

Villages by access category	Number of Households	Walking Distance from Dara-e-Takht bazaar	Type of Access
<i>High Access*</i>			
H1	30	20 minutes	Main Road/all season/ public transport available
H2	106	1.5 hours	Main Road/all season/ public transport available
H3	250	4-5 hours	Main Road/all season/ public transport available
<i>Medium Access</i>			
M1	109	4 hours	Secondary Road/all season
M2	180	2 hours	Secondary Road/all season
M3	150	3 hours	Secondary Road/all season
<i>Low Access</i>			
L1	110	6 hours	Tertiary Road/variable availability
L2	152	6 hours	Tertiary Road/variable availability
L3	102	3-4 hours	Secondary Road/ 9 months
L4	105	3-4 hours	Secondary Road/ 9 months

*Villages H2 and H3 are on the main road as well as having their own minor bazaars on the main road.

The study⁷ was done using several PRA tools including wealth ranking, transect mapping, and social mapping. Transect mapping identified land that can be used for poppy cultivation, and the appropriate seasons for poppy cultivation⁸. The results of the wealth ranking are summarized for all villages in Table 2. Dependence on off-farm income sources is higher for the “poor” wealth group compared to the others, as is credit.

⁶ Village H1 has only 30 households, but the closest proximity of all villages to the Dara-e-Takht bazaar.

⁷ CRS has used this process to build capacity in local staff for research. Incomplete information is mostly due to misplaced data. Recollecting data has proven problematic within communities.

⁸ A separate paper is forthcoming on the seasonal and spatial considerations for poppy cultivation.

A follow-up questionnaire also helped in understanding livelihoods in Shahrak. In 4 of the 8 villages completing formal surveys (2 villages were inaccessible during the survey period due to snow), 2 families from each wealth ranking were interviewed. In 3 of the surveyed villages 3 from each of the “rich” and “medium” categories and 4 families from the “poor” category were interviewed, and in the final village 3 from each category were interviewed. The number of surveys was reduced by 4 when it became apparent that 1 survey in the “rich” category from M2 would unnecessarily skew the entire sample to appear wealthier than they are, and 2 from M3 and 1 from H1 in the “poor” category were misidentified, most likely by village leaders.

Table 2. Wealth Category Descriptions from PRA

Wealth Category	General Characteristics
Rich	Rain-fed and irrigated land holdings Ownership of sheep, goats, oxen, donkeys, cows Orchard holdings Looms for independent carpet weaving Little to no migrant labor
Middle	At least rain-fed land holding Enough trees to derive some income from them Enough livestock to derive some income from them Looms for carpet weaving (some on credit, some independent) Sharecropping labor Some migrant labor
Poor	Very little land or even landless Negligible livestock ownership Few trees for home consumption or local in-kind trade Looms for weaving on credit Sharecropping labor More migrant labor

Table 3 uses quantitative data from the Validation Study to illustrate differences between wealth rankings and access categories. The Low Access category has low physical access to markets as well as significantly lower overall land and livestock holdings. The wealth of the Medium Access category across wealth rankings has several possible reasons including greater overall access to land and a seemingly higher level of opium poppy cultivation than in other groups. However, the power structures in the Medium Access category are also very top down and interviewing households without the input of village leaders is impossible. Therefore the team may be missing representative households. Further, the higher land holdings in the Medium Access category may not result in greater production/income due to very low access to water in that area compared to other categories.

Table 3. Average Comparative Wealth between Access Categories

Access Category	Irrigated land (jeribs*) owned	Rain-fed land (jeribs) owned	Number of Trees	Number of Goats & Sheep	Number of Cows	Number of Chickens
<i>Rich</i>						
High Access	5.29	10.00	87.14	6.28	2.86	0.71
Medium Access	6.71	12.29	58.57	9.71	1.43	4.43
Low Access	0.75	6.25	23.75	17.50	1.00	0.50
<i>Middle</i>						
High Access	1.78	4.06	27.38	5.63	1.88	1.63

Medium Access	2.72	4.63	36.88	6.88	1.00	3.25
Low Access	0.50	0.75	12.50	2	0.75	2.00
<i>Poor</i>						
High Access	0.88	2.12	8.25	0.63	0.25	0.50
Medium Access	1.31	1.88	28.75	5.88	0.38	2.25
Low Access	0.19	0.50	10.00	0.50	0.25	1.00

*5 jeribs=1 hectare

A strength of the Territorial Approach is the ability to classify different areas or zones of operation to ensure that interventions can be tailored specifically to the conditions in that area. While Shahrak District is not vast, villages in the three categories have varying access to productive resources as well as physical access to markets.

Entry-Level Activities

Villages in Shahrak are accustomed to direct distribution projects rather than development projects, so entering a village to talk about potential for agroenterprise was unpopular. This, coupled with food insecurity following the long standing drought and then the harsh winter⁹, meant that entry level activities should focus on food production as well as enterprise development. Table 4 describes initial activities undertaken by the project.

Table 4. Activities undertaken in the CRS/RALF project

Village	Saffron (number of farmers)**	Vegetable* (number of farmers)	Wheat (number of farmers)	Nursery (number of farmers)
<i>High Access</i>				
H1	1	4	3	2
H2	1	4	3	2
H3	1	0	3	2
<i>Medium Access</i>				
M1	2	7	3	2
M2	1	6	3	2
M3	1	5	3	2
<i>Low Access</i>				
L1		4	3	2
L2	1	6	3	2
L3	2	9	3	2
L4	2	12	3	2

*Onion, leek, carrot, turnip, radish.

** Currently CRS activities target those in the Medium and Rich categories due to land availability.

In order to support products that can be the basis for enterprise development, the project explored potential for late season vegetable production in 9 out of 10 villages (vegetables are scarce and high value in Shahrak). Vegetable plots were in fact grown in opium poppy land in at least 2 of the villages. Security concerns precluded recording of yield data from the vegetable plots. However, when asked if the results were positive, participants from 8 of the 9 participating villages expressed satisfaction¹⁰. The project also experimented with small saffron plots of 10 to 20 m² in all 10 villages. Saffron is

⁹ Livestock sales, reduced seed stocks and cutting of orchards combined to create a food deficit from low purchasing power and declining credit sources.

¹⁰ The participants from M1 did not sow the plots during the recommended period, leading to poor results.

attractive because, as a perennial, it requires significant investment only once in 8 years, it is labor intensive rather than labor displacing, and has relatively high value on the Herat market. First year expectations are low even in the best conditions; however, about ½ of the farmers said there was flowering in the experimental plots, which is a good first-year indicator.

Directly addressing food deficits, each of the target villages also has 3 improved wheat variety demonstrations to assess potential for yield increases. Table 4 also includes nursery trials which were identified as a priority through the MOI process described in the next section.

Market Opportunity Identification

Interest groups for the project have been formed through general village meetings regarding the project and are not exclusive. Generally the village leaders have indicated who would be the most appropriate to participate in the groups, but others continue to participate through their choice. The initial targeting of agricultural production activities has helped to ensure the interest groups are made up of appropriate households for the project. By this it is meant that those with their own land, or sharecropped land they can control, are the most likely to be direct participants. Continued participation of waged laborers and women has been very interesting.

MOI activities have included both participatory market chain mapping and characterization of growing conditions for high yielding crops in Shahrak. Table 5 shows the main income generating products by territory. The products were scored for relative importance to income and then ranked based on the score. All products listed in Table 5 could generate more income through improvements in production, post-harvest handling, or marketing. The “Marketing/Production Constraints” column of Table 5 comes directly from market chain mapping exercises done with interest groups in the 10 villages.

Many of the post-harvest handling issues that were raised come from low level technology and a lack of price incentives to improve quality. Marketing processes in Shahrak present important constraints facing poor members of the target villages. Boxes 1 and 2 give examples of the market conditions mentioned in Table 5.

Table 5. Products ranked by importance to village income

Product	High Access (2 villages responding)	Medium Access (2 villages responding)	Low Access (4 villages responding)	Marketing/ Production Constraints
Almond	4	-	-	Low volumes
Apricot (dried apricot and apricot nut)	1	4	5	Sorting, drying technology, non-transparent market conditions
Carpets	2	2	-	Quality, access to materials, non-transparent market conditions
Korc	-	1	3	Low volume, cleaning
Kurut	-	4	1	Black salt lowers quality for smaller producers
Male Sheep	-	-	5	Animal health conditions, drought induced animal sales (low volume)
Potato	4	3	4	Low volumes, incomplete

Walnut	3	-	2	knowledge of quality requirements (color, sorting, size) Sorting, size, non-transparent market conditions
--------	---	---	---	--

Box 1 outlines basic quality and marketing problems facing dry apricot producers. It should be noted that this pattern is repeated in potato, melon, walnut, almond, and other products. The problem can be characterized by 2 key issues:

1. While the Dara-e-Takht bazaar is considered a major bazaar relative to other Shahrak bazaars, the level of competition in the bazaar is low. Shops in the bazaar depend on relationships, often involving credit, with Herat suppliers. A reportedly lower number of suppliers and actors involved in transport to the Herat market limits competition heavily. Only producers with high volumes of production can afford to transport goods to Herat themselves.
2. Credit arrangements between shopkeepers and producers can lower the terms of trade even further than they would be in more competitive conditions and on a cash basis. Producers buy goods on credit and pay the debt with wheat, apricot, carpet or other production. The market exchange rate for goods on credit in Dara-e-Takht usually includes a 10-30% premium which can be higher depending on the reputation of the debtor. A debt relationship with a particular shopkeeper obligates a producer to that shopkeeper and reduces his ability to seek better prices from other shopkeepers or traders.

Box 1. Dry Apricot

Apricot is a common product throughout Shahrak. Farmers place apricots on the roof tops on mats to dry in the sunshine. Quality is significantly diminished during the drying process by the amount of dust that settles on the apricots and the proximity of livestock.

Apricots are dried in two main ways depending on whether the product is destined for sale or home consumption. When apricots are to be sold, the nut is separated from the flesh and each is sold separately (prices range from \$0.50-0.60/kg for nut and \$0.34-0.46/kg for dried apricot depending on the time in season). The apricot is dried whole when destined for home consumption.

Participants in responding interest groups sell dry apricot and apricot nut to the bazaar without sorting for size, color, or cleanliness. Shopkeepers and traders purchasing dry apricot and apricot nut do not offer higher prices for sorted production, and therefore do not price differentiate based on quality. Rather, traders sort for size and color themselves capturing price increases on higher quality production. Traders in Herat can sell apricot nut for more than \$3/kg.

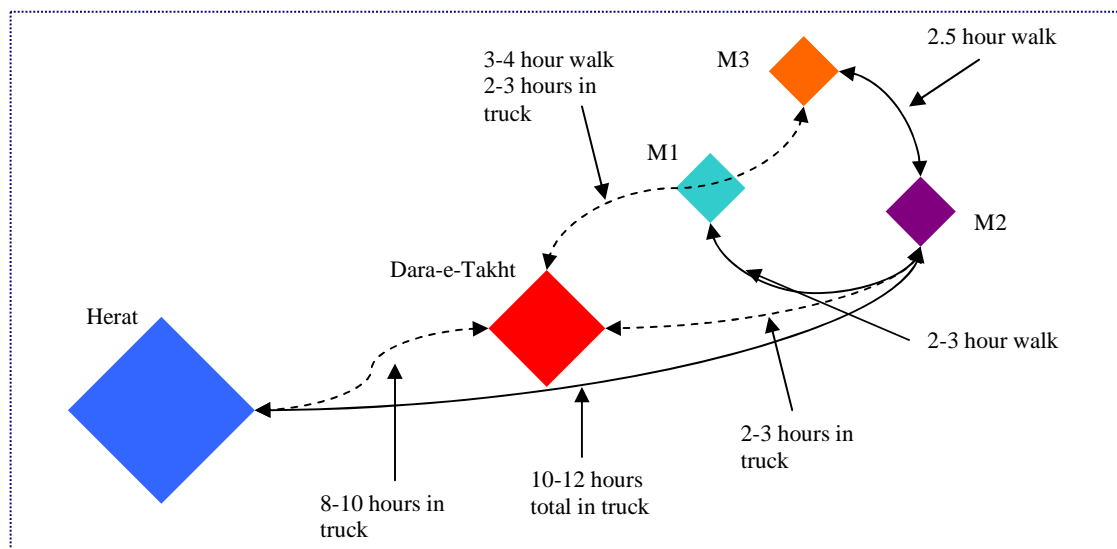
Farmers have agreed that better drying technology and sorting should help them to get a better price, but they see no real possibility of that happening without the promise of higher prices for better quality from their current buyers or access to a different market. This attitude results in some producers keeping the highest quality production for home consumption.

Box 2 demonstrates that isolation of producers can be increased and their current terms of trade reduced as they make trade-offs between convenience and greater competition. The

power relations in the 10 target communities are not considered in detail here, as they are not fully understood, and are most likely partly causing the non-competitive market situations facing marginal producers.

Box 2. Village-based Traders

The villages in the “medium access” category use a different marketing process than has been observed in the other access categories. While some villagers, especially the wealthier villagers, still sell directly to the Dara-e-Takht or Herat bazaars, there are 3 traders based in M2 village who have a truck they use to trade goods from the surrounding villages directly in Herat. Farmers sell their goods to the traders at the Dara-e-Takht price. If the price is higher in Herat, and it generally is, the traders keep the difference. In some situations the exchange is done in cash, but trade in kind is also very common.



The exchange for goods brought from Herat is on a dual pricing system.

1. If the household has given a list of necessities to the traders, they pay the Herat rate for the goods.
2. If trade takes place between households and the traders without a previous request or understanding, then the household buys and sells at the Dara-e-Takht rate.

At a first glance this seems like it would be quite beneficial to the villagers.

1. Their opportunity costs of time are reduced as shown in the above map. It would take these villagers anywhere from 5-8 hours round trip to transport their goods to Dara-e-Takht using animal traction,
2. The price of transporting goods by animal can be as much as double the cost of vehicle transport for the same destination.

Negative impacts of this arrangement are important to note.

1. There is an incentive for the traders to be dishonest about prices on the Herat bazaar. This lack of transparency can allow them to make substantial gains.

2. The arrangement also prolongs a lack of incentives to improve quality of production by removing contact between the producer and the intended bazaar.
3. Credit arrangements between the local traders and producers can reduce bargaining power even more.

Producers in the Medium Access category indicate that the current 3 local traders are not enough.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The structural issues surrounding markets identified in the previous sections have important implications for livelihood strategies in Shahrak District. According to Pain (2006), many individuals become involved in poppy cultivation because of the access to land, capital and markets it provides. If poppy cultivation guarantees access to land for wheat cultivation, credit for basic needs, and a reasonable level of production even in a drought year, then market-led initiatives for alternatives to opium poppy will need to show benefits to not just producers and laborers but also landowners, transport operators and traders.

The TA-AD has been useful in the following ways:

1. Promoting the inclusion of all market actors in the formation of enterprise plans. The project has involved shopkeepers and traders in discussions whenever possible. The traders mentioned in Box 2 are interested in improving their incomes and see potential in the project for their own gain.
2. Introducing useful and adaptable tools that help stakeholders to see their current situation more clearly. For instance, talking about a market chain with stakeholders in the 10 villages did not bring up many interesting difficulties in production, post-harvest handling or marketing; however, participatory chain mapping on flip charts helped stakeholders to visualize and discuss conditions surrounding the products mentioned in this paper and many more.
3. Realizing and prioritizing benefits to all stakeholders. Benefits of initiatives taken under this project should and will benefit more than just the producers. While interventions up to this point have not created significant changes to current trading relationships, those planned for the future may. Showing traders and landowners that they can benefit from products other than poppy might also help to stem difficulties in land and credit access facing sharecroppers or laborers.
4. Systematically encouraging collective action. Given the small size and isolated locations of the target villages it would seem to follow that collective action would be common. This is in fact, not the case. Rather the project team has faced very individualistic producers with debt arrangements that make it difficult for them to change. The emphasis on collective action through interest group formation has the potential to improve the bargaining power of more marginal actors.

Directly addressing some of the institutional market constraints mentioned above seems beyond the scope of the project. This would require a much more concentrated effort by various levels of government to restructure markets, a topic discussed in more depth by AREU researchers (Lister, et al, 2004). The CRS project, using the TA-AD, is more

interested in working within and/or around these constraints to improve the relative terms of trade for small producers in Shahrak.

One way around these constraints is introducing entirely new enterprises that serve buyers who are not infringing on existing systems and relationships. While new enterprises could run into their own set of institutional constraints, and new buyers may not be any better than the current buyers, the project has the opportunity to assist interest groups in bargaining capacity and collective action. Further processing and/or packaging of current products (apricot, walnut, kurud etc.), off season cultivation (vegetables), and especially non-farm goods (carpets, natural dyes, medicinal plants) are high priorities as they will, by and large, be outside current trade patterns.

Use of the TA-AD must be adjusted to focus more directly on marginal stakeholders realizing that they are the most difficult for the project team to access. The potential for the process to be hijacked by the most powerful stakeholders, who are in direct control of where the project team goes and who they speak to, is very real. Therefore, making an effort to have general interest group meetings, but then to also have more informal interaction with members of the “poor” wealth groups is a strategy the team is using. Furthermore, a simple market information system for producers and other stakeholders in the area is a method the project is developing for increasing general public knowledge of markets in the target areas.

Again, continued difficulties of market access, distorted price incentives and incomplete market information are unlikely to change in the short run. Therefore, support to enterprise development will continue to focus on using the tools of the TA-AD to assist rural Afghans through improved collective action in bargaining, market chain analysis and information sharing. These are expected to be the foundation for improved market conditions for stakeholders in the area.

REFERENCES

1. **Bruckner**, Till and Abdul Basir Afzali. *Life in Shahrak*. Unpublished research for Catholic Relief Services, Herat Afghanistan, May 2005.
2. **Ferris**, Shaun, Rupert Best, Mark Lundy, Carlos Felipe Ostertag, Maria Veronica Gottret and T. Wandschneider. *Strategy Paper: A Participatory and Area based Approach to Rural Agro-Enterprise Development*. Rural Agro-enterprise Development Project, CIAT. Please see <http://www.ciat.cgiar.org> for more information.
3. **Lister**, Sarah and Adam Pain. *Trading in Power: the Politics of “Free” Markets in Afghanistan*. Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit Briefing Paper, June 2004.
4. **Lundy**, Mark, Carlos Felipe Ostertag and Rupert Best. *Value Adding, Agroenterprise and Poverty Reduction: A territorial approach for Rural Business Development*. Rural Agro-enterprise Development Project, CIAT. Please see <http://www.ciat.cgiar.org> for more information.
5. **Pain**, Adam. *Opium Trading Systems in Helmand and Ghor*. Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit Issue Papers Series, 2006.

6. **IRIN Web Special.** *Bittersweet Harvest: Afghanistan's New War.* UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2004.

<http://www.irinnews.org/webspecials/opium/poppro.asp>

7. **Report on Findings from the 2003 National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) in Rural Afghanistan.** The World Food Program and the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Dec. 2004.