

RELIGIOUS ACTORS FOR PEACE IN AFGHANISTAN



WE MUST DO MORE THAN PREACH ABOUT PEACE

AFGHAN MULLAH

This report is written by

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Allah will not bring change to the people unless they bring change among themselves

FEMALE RELIGIOUS LEADER

The evaluation was carried out with assistance from Mohammad Ibrahim Shahab and technical support from SDO and NCA. The views expressed in this report are from the author, project participants and interviewees and may not represent the official views of NCA, SDO, MWTC or the British Embassy. Front page photo is from the Blue Mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif. Photo: Norunn Grande

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Acronyms

AOG	Armed Opposition Groups
BEK	British Embassy of Kabul
HPC	High Peace Council
RAP	Religious Actors for Peace (2015 -)
MRAP	Mobilising Religious Actors for Peace (2013, 2014)
MWTC	Miller White Training and Consulting
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NOREF	Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre
NUG	National Unity Government
PBUH	Prophet Mohamed
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
SDO	Sanayee Development Organisation
SWOT	Strength Weakness Opportunitites Threats
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
USIP	United States Institute of Peace

Concepts

Alim or Olim (single), Ulema (plural)	the higher clergy
Mullah imam	lower clergy, leader of a mosque
Shura	council
Maharam	women's husband or male relative that follows her on travels

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Religious Actors for Peace (RAP)

is a network of religious leaders in Afghanistan engaged in conflict transformation and peacebuilding initiated in 2014. Partners in the project are Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), responsible agency, Sanayee Development Organisation (SDO), implementing partner, Miller White Training and Consulting (MWTC), technical support and British Embassy in Kabul (BEK), funder.

Phase 1: 2014 Mobilising Religious Actors for Peace (MRAP I - Malaysia)

Phase 2: 2014-2015 Mobilising Religious Actors for Peace (MRAP II - Turkey)

Phase 3: 2015 – 2016 Religious Actors for Peace (RAP - Bosnia), 7 months

- Strategic planning workshops, Training of Trainers, regional meetings, selection of participants, September - October 2015
- Training workshops, Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation Workshops, November – December 2015
- Study visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), 22nd February – 3rd March
- Action plan implementation, January – April 2016
- End of project gathering, revised strategy, new leadership structure and elected board, 27 – 29 March 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Religious Actors for Peace (RAP) responds to an immediate need for peaceful conflict transformation in Afghanistan by providing training and an organisational structure enabling religious leaders to contribute more effectively to sustainable peace.¹ With steady reduction in trust in the government and the judicial system of Afghanistan, institutions that represent continuity and tradition are favored by large groups of people, especially in rural communities where most Afghans live. Mosques and religious schools are among the institutions that people knows will remain through times of war and uncertainty. At this time when people in Afghanistan increasingly are losing hope for the future, the RAP-initiative of working with trusted institutions and their leaders is a strategic move at the right time with a potential for sustainability and outreach.

Religious leaders are viewed to have great wisdom and are expected to solve conflicts, but do not necessarily have the skills that are needed. Invitations for trainings in Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation were therefore well received among religious leaders. The report from the 15 training workshops concludes that the trainings are judged extremely relevant for most participants.²

With an overall aim of contributing to sustainable peace in Afghanistan three intended outcomes were identified for this 3rd phase of the RAP-initiative from Oct. 2016 – April 2017: 1) Strengthening the reach, effectiveness and sustainability of RAP-members , 2) Enabling the RAP network members to work to manage and resolve conflicts about resources, family or identity at community or provincial levels and 3) Support RAP to support of the formal Track I¹ peace process by connecting armed opposition groups (AOGs) and Government and insurgents with formal peacebuilding structures.

This project has organised an impressive number of activities throughout the country, involving male and female leaders, from different ethnic groups and including both Shia and Sunni Muslims during its seven months of operation. Within two months in 2015 RAP managed to train 414 religious leaders in peacebuilding and conflict transformation, from all 34 provinces of the country. Among them were 98 women from 13 provinces³. From before there were 50 religious leaders in the network recruited in the two earlier phases of the project, in this group there were 10 women. For every training there was an expectation that the participants put the learning into practice by making their individual action plans. This resulted in a number of activities ranging from teaching and preaching to resolving conflicts in families and local communities, networking and advocacy work and a few cases of successfully reconciling armed groups.⁴

Through skills based training in peacebuilding and conflict transformation which is heavily influenced by modernist and traditional Islamic teachings as well as practicing what they learned, more than four

¹ Mobilising Religious Actors for Peace, End of Project Formative Evaluation Report 2014

² Cumulative report on 15 Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation training workshops, NCA 2016

³ Over all list of participants, NCA 2016

⁴ Summary Report on the Action Plan implementation, NCA 2016

hundred religious leaders are now better equipped and more motivated to contribute in this field. Regionally they have worked on advocacy to make people more aware of the benefits of peace and destruction of war. RAP-participants have mobilized against issues that create conflict such as corruption and high dowries, using the channels they have to spread the word from Mosques and through social media, TV, radio, newspapers and posters. In schools, families, among neighbours and in wedding parties, female religious leaders have spoken up on the importance of peace in the family in the local community and in the country. Female and male religious leaders are involved in resolving family disputes and local conflicts with a new approach and improved skills. Mostly male religious leaders (Ulema) report that they have contributed in resolving conflict on land and heritage and tribal conflicts.

The study and dialogue visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina organised by RAP in February 2016 was a revelation for most of the 20 participants. Seeing that it is possible to live together peacefully after a brutal war, helped them to be more aware of the challenges in Afghanistan and to see that there are solutions to some of the problems they face such as additional ways of allowing women's rights within Islam, cooperation between ethnic groups who have been fighting on opposite sides during the war, and different religions working together. Insights from the exposure visit are shared from Mosques, in religious schools and among RAP-members. Travelling abroad together brought all the 20 participants into a place where they were equally vulnerable which drew the group together and provided an environment that was open and conducive to dialogue and deep conversations.

At the Religious Actors for Peace leadership gathering in Kabul in March 2016 commitment from religious leaders to promote peace in Afghanistan was reinforced through a revision of their strategic plan and election of a leadership team. Expectations are high among the participants for a continued and more active process and external support. Ideas and plans for developing the initiative further serve as inspiration for more widespread involvement and motivation for peaceful societal change.

The interest expressed through recruitment for trainings and exposure visits shows that there is a need and heretofore a relatively unrecognized desire for capacity building within the Ulema. RAP has corresponded by widening the scope and vision of a multilevel cohort of religious leaders through international exposure and experience and by facilitating networking and dialogue around the most pressing issue of how to move forward towards a peaceful society.

After an intensive phase it is time to reflect on whether the activities and initiatives can be seen as a strategic move towards sustainable peace in Afghanistan, and further to identify what is needed to nurture the initiatives already taken and to further support the people involved. One of the strategic recommendations from the last evaluation was to "build a critical mass of over the next three to five years working for peace in each strategic province".⁵ In this 3rd phase of RAP a critical mass was attempted to be built in 7 months. Due to effective implementation the organisers managed to reach the desired number of participants and completed planned activities. This project phase focused on quantity, building a critical mass within the network. Participants have asked for further trainings, follow up and regular meetings to exchange of experiences. This should be a focus in any future phase of this project.

⁵ Mobilising Religious Actors for Peace, End of Project Formative Evaluation Report 2014

Gender; The impact of bringing male and female religious leaders together in trainings, activities and exposure visits may be the most important achievement so far in this project. Among organisers as well as participants this was reported as groundbreaking. There were training workshops that started with a demand for a curtain between male and female participants where trainers managed to facilitate a process that ended up in an acceptance of working together across gender.⁶ At the end of project gathering and in the focus group workshops male and female participants engaged in dialogue together in a respectful way. In a highly gender segregated society with strict religious codes separating men and women it is significant when religious leaders themselves take steps towards inclusion.

There are distinct differences between the roles of female and male religious leaders as perceived by RAP-members. Whereas female religious leaders basically work as teachers, with a few exceptions, male religious leaders are the leaders of the Mosques, the Ulema and Mullahs. They can preach to hundreds of people, sometimes thousands through media and they can move freely. Men have access to all levels of society except spaces that are reserved for women. Within RAP there are women who have roles in regional provincial councils and leading positions in schools and universities, but we did not see women in RAP having central political positions at national level. Women do however have exclusive access in some spheres within the family and in gatherings where men and women are separated. There are still only a few women who are trainers within RAP. After recruiting more than 20 % female participants in this 3rd phase of RAP the potential is there to give women more opportunities to have leading roles and eventually to be included in formal peace processes.

Two of three intended outcomes for the 3rd phase of RAP are achieved to a large extent; the first of strengthening the reach, effectiveness and sustainability of RAP-members and the second of enabling the RAP-network members to work to manage and resolve conflicts about resources, family or identity at community or provincial levels.

Peace process; The third intended outcome “to support RAP to support the Track 1 peace process” has not yet resulted in a breakthrough. So far there has been no direct link from RAP to the official peace process. This is explained more under Effectiveness, Outcome 3, p. 24.

By raising consciousness and including large groups of people RAP already makes an important contribution in making people more aware of the importance of peace. Although the issue of the peace process was not mentioned as an advocacy point specifically the message about peace in general and new experiences and insights they have had is included in the sermons of Ulema and in the teaching of young and future religious teachers. Support of Ulema for peace negotiations will make people more prepared to support and engage in peace initiatives. This type of work with influential leadership groups is integral to every peace process and complements, facilitates and encourages other efforts at political level. Already established contacts with other actors can be strengthened and explored to find the most appropriate ways for cooperation, so far the RAP-network has not formalized the relationship to the other actors, interest is however expressed for continued and strengthened engagement from High Peace Council regionally and in Kabul and Ministry of Haj and Religious Affairs.

⁶ From the training in Kunduz one participant reported that he removed the curtain between men and women and argued on the need for confidence and to see women as humans. This was accepted and the day after they had roundtable with men and women.

This activity intensive phase, that has included a large group of religious leaders, can be seen as a strategic step aimed to provide a platform for the next program phase. This was supported by the election of a new leadership by the regional delegations at the end of the project gathering. All the initiatives in this evaluated phase has laid a foundation for a next phase: people are included and motivated, and they expect the process to continue. However, the structure that is established depends on further external support to continue its development. Without follow up the initial investments in this and earlier phases will not be fully utilized.

Until now the RAP-network has been run by the organisers (NCA, SDO and MWTC) and funded by British Embassy of Kabul (BEK). A gradual shift of ownership was initiated at the last gathering in Kabul in March 2016 that elected a new leadership team (national board) of 17, including 2 who were appointed, and revised the strategic plan for the network of Religious Actors for Peace. The new organisational model (see appendix nr 4) has a national leadership team at the center supported by the RAP-resource group, NCA and partners. RAP-members applaud more ownership and are ready to have increased responsibilities. At the same time they emphasize the need for continued support. It is too early for RAP to be a self-autonomous group. Support from internationals in this project has been crucial and a presence of international leadership will still be needed for the years to come. The internationals who have initiated this program and who have been the leading force of this process have long-term experience from Afghanistan and in the field of peacebuilding. Sufficient trust has been established through trainings and travels and strategic discussions. They are now in position to challenge the religious leaders on sensitive issues from a suitable distance.

New questions, however, come up; what is needed to ensure the sustainability of the network, and what should it look like in the future? All the stakeholders we interviewed at regional and central level emphasized the importance of supporting this initiative and the network. The strength lies to a large extent in its independence, that it is not being affiliated with government or political movements, and therefore can hold more influence. Support will be needed for the network to be able to perform its role now and in the future. The High Peace Council and the Ministry of Haj inform that they appreciate the RAP-initiative, their contribution however is in the form of moral support, although the ministry also helps with recruitment of participants. While that is appreciated is it recognized that more than moral support will be required to ensure the sustainability of the network. International support to challenge further on the difficult and sensitive issues and support for training and mentoring from national and international facilitators will be needed to develop the RAP-initiative to its next phase.

This evaluation looks into the activities implemented and initiatives taken to see if they respond to the overall aim set for this project; to contribute to sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Religious Actor for Peace (RAP) is a seven-month project aiming to contribute to sustainable peace in Afghanistan. This is a continuation of two earlier phases of the project Mobilizing Religious Actors for Peace (MRAP) 2013 and 2014. Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is the responsible agency, while Sanayee Development Organisation (SDO) is the implementing partner and Miller White Training and Consulting (MWTC) provides technical assistance and support.

Earlier phases of RAP were evaluated in December 2014 and resulted in the report “Mobilizing Religious Actors for Peace – end of Project Formative Evaluation report.” Based on the experiences and recommendations a strategic plan was developed and a 3rd phase was prepared and funded by the British Embassy in Kabul (BEK), which is the scope of this evaluation.

Capacity and critical mass building are the priorities agreed upon by the donor BEK and the implementation partners, NCA, SDO and MWTC for this phase. The idea was to develop the network further and institutionalise it to make it a permanent body. Facilitator and technical advisor Ian White from MWTC presents RAP in this way; “Religious Actors for Peace is an inclusive network of religious leaders and scholars engaged in peacebuilding, which includes men and women, Sunni and Shia, every ethnic group in the country and which has geographical reach into each province of Afghanistan.”

Including the 50 pioneer participants from the first two phases, 462 religious actors have participated in RAP. In line with the objectives of RAP the participants represent an inclusive, multi-level range of stakeholders from religious communities in Afghanistan. Participants include high profiled Ulema in cities with a large audience, Mullahs who lead mosques in smaller communities and religious teachers and principals in madrasas, public schools and universities. Some have political positions in provincial and district councils and a few have central political positions such as the present deputy minister at Ministry of Haj and Religious Affairs who is a core group member of RAP. Female participants are mostly teachers and some are principals in schools, madrasas and universities. In addition to family and work some of the women hold other positions as well. One of the female participants is an elected member of provincial council⁷ and others are members of associations⁸. Among the participants there are religious leaders who work actively in civil society forums⁹ and organisations.

There are Uzbeks, Hazara, Tajiks and Pashtuns and both Shia and Sunni Muslims in the group. The mix of rural and urban also creates an important dynamic which acknowledges that those in the cities often have more opportunity for exposure to other ways of viewing the world than their rural peers. The experiences of Mullahs in more urban areas are not more important than those of more rurally based Mullahs, and RAP allows a sharing across the rural/urban divide. For some of the participants from rural communities and where anti-government forces have more influence and control, their reality is very different to that of more urban based participants where they are more distant from the reality of daily dynamics between pro and anti-government forces.

⁷ From 2005 Provincial Councils in all 34 provinces is a part of the political structure in Afghanistan, in 2007 a new provincial council law was signed by former president Hamid Karzai. (Afghanistan Analysts Network)

⁸ For example in Herat some of the women who met for the evaluation workshop were members of Association of Ethics and Knowledge.

⁹ In Faizabad one of the RAP-members is a preacher in the big mosque and also an active member of Civil Society Forum

Afghanistan 2015 – 2016

Afghanistan is still facing severe security problems affecting people all over the country, limiting their possibilities to live ordinary lives and to move around. Taliban and opposition groups are gaining ground in several parts of the country. After two major events in 2014; president elections resulting in the National Unity Government and military withdrawal of most of the foreign troops, Afghanistan is still far from being stable and secure. Suicide attacks and landmine explosions disturb peace and order on a daily basis.

The government of Afghanistan has not managed to deliver basic services or security to the Afghan people. The UNDP reported in 2014 that approximately 42 percent of Afghans then lived below the poverty line, compared to 33 percent in 2005.¹⁰ UNAMA, in their recent report on civilian casualties note an increase in security over recent years where “In 2015, the conflict in Afghanistan continued to cause extreme harm to the civilian population, with the highest number of total civilian casualties recorded by UNAMA since 2009.”¹¹

Expectations were high with the new government in place in 2014 as many were concerned by the increased confrontational relationship between former president Hamid Karzai and the international community, and especially the United States. After 18 months in service the current government remain split in two camps; President Ashraf Ghani on one side and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah on the other, that have continued to disagree over important appointments in the government. Some of the religious leaders we spoke to accuse the government for generating divisions among the population due to a lack of cooperation and consolidation among themselves. There are complaints about inefficiency, nepotism and corruption. Law and order is also affected and the judiciary system does not work very well. Leaders with documented responsibility for past atrocities have still not been made accountable, and powerful individuals continue to get away with crime and corruption. This adds to frustration about the role of politicians and governmental institutions among ordinary people. The peace process is presently at a stalemate despite some initial “talks about talks” between the government and opposition. This despite the efforts of The Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG), comprising Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and the U.S., and increased international pressure on Pakistan. The possibility for a separate peace agreement between the Afghan government and the Hezb-e Islami party of Gulbuddin Hekmatiar might be presented a political victory for the government, but hold no significant influence on the security situation due to the group’s diminished military influence.¹² Attempts by the Afghan Government to divide the Taliban can also be questioned, as they might have more to gain from negotiating an agreement with a united movement that can enforce an agreement.

¹⁰ UNDP (2014) Assessment of Development Results: Afghanistan. New York, UNDP

¹¹ UNAMA (2016) Afghanistan Annual Report 2015: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2016, Kabul, UNAMA

¹² See i.e. Vinay Kaura: *Afghan Peace Talks: Road to Nowhere*, in *The Diplomat*, April 06. 2016, available at <http://thediplomat.com/2016/04/afghan-peace-talks-road-to-nowhere/>

In 2015 and 2016 Afghanistan has remained in a situation of instability and unpredictability. There is a continued flow of people leaving the country, especially young people, a clear indication of a lack of hopes for a future in and for Afghanistan. Many of those leaving try to enter Europe, where they were the second largest group of asylum seekers after the Syrians in 2015.

In this prolonged situation of war and instability, with steady reduction in trust in the government and the judicial system¹³, institutions that represent continuity and tradition seem to be favored by large groups of people in Afghanistan, especially in rural communities. Mosques and religious schools are among the institutions that people know will remain through times of war and uncertainty.

Role of religious leaders

“There are around 170 000 religious leaders in Afghanistan with a presence in every district and village. Ulema in Afghanistan generally have little life experience outside Islam and Afghanistan and an education which is often restricted to religious and Quranic studies. Ulema do not require election in the same way as political leaders and in fact can influence the outcome of elections at both national and local level. Many Ulema are averse to change and can apply their influence to support peace and prosperity or can obstruct what they perceive to be anti-Islamic. Ulema represent a vital connection between extreme and moderate Islam. Ulema are religio-political and some advise political parties as well as armed groups and others.” (Ian White, MWTC)

Many Afghans listen to messages from religious leaders as they are more trusted than politicians whom are commonly regarded as corrupt and less reliable. In rural communities the Mullah is often one of the best educated. Since there is a lack of public safe spaces in Afghan society, the Mosques serve this purpose in many communities. Instead of relying on institutions that are known of being corrupt, as the police and the judiciary, many people prefer to have their cases resolved by a Mullah or Ulema council of religious leaders. This point was raised in all the workshops and most of the interviews we made and is supported from research and findings from United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and United Nations (UN).

Preaching and teaching are main activities for most religious leaders. They are traditionally and currently engaged in dispute resolution, counseling and serve as advisors on matters relating to conflict and managing life challenges.

Religious actors and institutions have often been neglected when international NGOs approach civil society, sometimes causing tension and adding to Afghans skepticism of “the internationals”. “In Afghanistan traditional forms of association – such as the local councils (shura/ jirga) – and religious institutions such as the mosque, the religious seminars (madrasas) and religious leaders (Mullahs and Ulema) – are influential forces that historically have played an important role in society and politics.” (Borchgrevink, PRIO 2007)

Most of the informants for this evaluation underlined the authority and respectful position religious leaders hold. There were, however, some who questioned this seemingly undisputable position and were critical about the performance of Mullahs claiming that they sometimes misuse their power, and that they are outdated and that in some areas people do therefore not listen to them.

¹³ Maren Christensen, *Judicial Reform in Afghanistan: Towards a Holistic Understanding of Legitimacy in Post-Conflict Societies*, 4 Berkeley J. Middle E. & Islamic L. 101 (2011). Available at: <http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/jmeil/vol4/iss1/3>

These observations from civil society actors outside the religious circles are important reminders that there are different perceptions of the role of Islam and of religious leaders. Also there are a wide range of opinions among the Ulema based on theological as well as ethnic, political and denominational differences.

The main impression is that Islam and its leaders still play a vital role in Afghan society, though with variations between and within communities on how supreme their authority and influence is perceived. It is also important to remember that religious actors cover a range of different political viewpoints and affiliations with political actors and movements from the government to opposition. It is therefore problematic to talk about religious actors as one unified group. In a population where almost everybody defines themselves as Muslims you will find religious actors on all sides of the conflict. This can cause confusion, but also provides a potential to build improbable relationships between people and groups to generate the oxygen required by track 1 actors to move the peace process forward.

When religious leaders in the RAP-project are asked about peace, they say they consider peace as a religious duty. The meaning of Islam is peace. Some talk about peace as a passion and have a strong motivation to enlighten people on the importance of peace. After visiting other countries there are Mullahs that reflect on why in a country of 99 % Muslims there is still not peace. They acknowledge their responsibility and search for opportunities to play a more active role.

Religious leaders in Afghanistan are influential and also vulnerable to threats and attacks. United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reports that attacks on religious personnel and places of worship continued in 2015, anti-government elements threaten and kill religious leaders and destroy religious shrines and buildings. Those who are seen as supporters to the government are particularly vulnerable. UNAMA notes that while the total number of civilian casualties from attacks deliberately targeting religious personnel decreased, the number of fatalities more than doubled, from 19 deaths in 2014 to 42 deaths in 2015¹⁴.

EVALUATION METHODS

Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation training challenge participants personally and on an interpersonal level. To understand how they receive new insights and to what extent they allow themselves to change, we need to learn from their stories and perceptions. Insights for this evaluation were gained through focus group dialogue workshops, interviews and a survey.

To assess the learning outcome of trainings and international exposure visits this evaluation specifically looked for performance of participants, and how they include what they have learned in practice. Reported actions of intervention in local conflicts, resulting in understanding between the parties and/ or reduced violence are among indicators of implementation of skills in peaceful conflict resolution. NCA and SDO have made reports on the results from every program activity. These reports provide basic information for this evaluation.

¹⁴ UNAMA AFGHANISTAN ANNUAL REPORT 2015 PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT

Since this is the 3rd phase of the project Religious Actors for Peace (RAP) and it includes an attempt to transfer more ownership to the participants themselves we have included the strategy plan for the network to be implemented by the newly established group of leaders and supporters (NCA, SDO and MWTC) and the model for the new organizational model. (Appendix 3 and 5). The strategy process earlier initiated and further discussed and amended during the RAP gathering in Kabul provide insights on their own assessment of relevant steps to be taken for them as a group. This also serves as information required to consider the sustainability of the program. For the evaluation of the 3rd phase we have approached a number of participants and stakeholders.

The evaluation was carried out from March 20 to May 20, 2016, starting with desk review and practical preparations from Norway, fieldwork in Afghanistan from March 27 – April 12 including observations at end of project gathering, interviews with participants and stakeholders, focus group workshops in Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif for participants from the regions and interviews with local stakeholders. The last part was report writing in Norway in the period from April 15 – May 20.

Data for this evaluation are from;

- Observations from project gathering in Kabul, March 27-29, 2016
- Survey for 40 participants at RAP-gathering
- Semi-structured interviews with organisers, RAP-members and stakeholders in Kabul, Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif
- One Day focus groups in Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif with male and female participants
- Half day focus group for female participants in Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif
- Project reports, documents and plans

Dialogue focus group workshops were held in Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif. In each of these regional centres we had one fullday workshop with 12 participants for men and women and one halfday workshop exclusively for female participants with smaller groups of 4 to 6.

In Herat we had participants from the city of Herat, from Badgis, Ghor (Taiwareh), Farah (Bakwa and Khak Sawid), Bagis (Kalaye now). Out of 12 participants, there were 4 women. For the halfday workshop exclusively for women we had 4 participants. They were all new to RAP, recruited to this last phase 7 months or 4 months before. Both female and male participants had leading positions as head of Ulema Council (male) and leading positions in educational departments (female). Most of the participants were preachers (men) and teachers (women). The female teachers that met for the fullday workshop worked at the same school. They had all participated in 6-day training and implemented individual action plans. Their age was from 23 to 57. The workshop was held at a hotel in the city. Recruitment and practical arrangements were done by SDO.

In Mazar-i-Sharif we had participants from Samangan (Hazrat Sultan), Balkh (Mazar e Sharif, Nahr Shahi), Jawozjan (Saborghan), Faryab (Maymaneh), Sare pol. Out of 12 participants there were 4 women. For the women's half day workshop there were 6 participants. They were all teachers, but working at different schools, public school and madrasas. As for the workshops in Herat most of the participants were all new to RAP for the 3rd project phase, starting 7 months earlier and all had participated in 6-days training and worked on individual action plans. Their age was from 22 to 51. The workshops were held in SDOs regional office. Recruitment and practical arrangements were done by SDO local staff.

We had similar programs for each of the focus group workshops, starting with an introduction on dialogue and peacebuilding, including guidelines on how to conduct dialogue in a way that insures that everyone is heard and listened to. Dialogue was practiced in the groups on the following questions; What is peace? What is needed to build peace? What are the main threats against peace in your community? Reflections from the groups were presented for everyone. The next question was about the role of religious leaders and the specific roles of male and female religious leaders. Then they were asked to share the activities they had implemented from their individual action plans, what was successful and what was not successful. The initial questions on their perceptions of peace and what is needed to build peace were asked to see whether there are connections between what they think about peace and what they do to promote peace in practice through their action plans.

The dialogue focus group workshops were conducted for evaluation purpose, but at the same time we wanted the participants to have a learning experience. Sharing experiences from activities makes the participants more aware of each other and the challenges they have. Separate workshops for female participants were held to get a better understanding of how women are included in RAP, their specific experiences and activities and what is needed to insure female participation.

At the project gathering in Kabul we distributed a survey for the participants. The questions for the survey and focus group workshops are attached in Appendix nr. 2

Limitations and implications: Self-reporting is a limitation for this evaluation as most of the information are from participants and organisers. We did not have the opportunity to observe participants in their local environment or to approach beneficiaries of religious leaders, congregations or students of the religious teachers. From the findings of this evaluation it is not possible to make a clear assessment of repercussions of reported actions. To consider the impact of RAP-activities for communities a more in depth study would be required. We can report on results for participants and activities they have performed in their communities. We can also confirm that the activities have reached out to large numbers of people throughout Afghanistan and that small and large conflicts have been resolved as a result of the initiative of RAP-members.

Another limitation is language and need for translations; the evaluator does not know the local languages and depends on translation. It is always a risk that informants answer what they think you want to hear. To control for this possible bias we talked to people in different settings and the workshop context was organised similar to a training in dialogue and peacebuilding allowing for more interaction and reflection.

Participants for the evaluation were selected by the organisers. In Afghanistan it is difficult for someone coming from the outside to select people on their own. The evaluator depended fully on the facilitation of the staff that were responsible for the project.

Time was a limitation. Some of the interviews were restricted because of time constraints. Implications of self-reporting and time constraints is limited possibilities to validate findings. By using multiple sources that support each other we are confident that our findings reflect the overall impression of the project and its achievements.

Project goals, objectives and intended outcomes

The overall aim of the project is to contribute to sustainable peace in Afghanistan. Operational aims are expressed in project plans and proposals.

Priorities in this phase

In this phase of the project a stated aim was **to increase the critical mass of Religious Actors by providing training for a large group and a transformative experience for a smaller group.**

This capacity and critical mass building initiative within the overall RAP - program involves three inter-connected elements. For this study these elements are seen as the intended outcomes of this project phase;

Outcome 1: Strengthening the reach, effectiveness and sustainability of RAP members;

Outcome 2: Enabling the RAP network members to work to manage and resolve conflicts about resources, family or identity at community or provincial levels;

Outcome 3: Support RAP to support of the formal Track I¹⁵ peace process by connecting AOGs and Government and insurgents with formal peacebuilding structures.

These elements/ intended outcomes are identified in the proposal for a continuation of the project for 3 years. Since the funding was only for 7 months, activities were planned for this period of time.¹⁶

For this 3rd phase organisers and donor agreed on the following priorities.

- Developing critical mass – training of 414 religious actors from 34 provinces, among them 88 women, 15 persons in a resource group to serve as trainers. Provide trainings for 6-day peacebuilding and conflict transformation workshop in 7 regions.
- Individual action plans to resolve conflicts, promote a culture of peace and facilitate dialogue between different conflicting parties, for 414 who participated in trainings
- Training and transformative opportunities - continued transformative experiences through exposure visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina for 20 participants
- Strategic development and strengthening of network

¹⁵ Track 1 diplomacy: Official discussions typically involving high-level political and military leaders and focusing on cease-fires, peace talks, and treaties and other agreements. <http://glossary.usip.org/resource/tracks-diplomacy>:

¹⁶ A 3-year submission was made to BEK, but they preferred to support selected actions within that submission, resulting in the 7 month time frame for this project, with a more limited scope and shorter timeframe than the original submission suggested.

Underlying assumptions - Theory of change

From reports, presentations and conversations with RAP-facilitators the underlying assumptions for the RAP-initiative that can be expressed as the RAP-theory of change are here summarized as suggested points for a RAP Theory of Change;

Religious leaders have influence in communities, they are highly respected and because of their elevated status are often invited to resolve local conflicts. You find religious leaders in all spheres in Afghan conflicts, as commanders leading militant groups and as leaders finding solutions to conflicts peacefully in their communities. Religious leaders are not a homogenous group and within that cohort you find a range of opinion on political, ethnic, religious and economic issues.

- If religious leaders are trained in peacebuilding they will be better equipped to use their substantial influence to promote peace in Afghanistan.
- Tailor made study and dialogue visits offer transformative experiences that deepen and widen participants scope of understanding. All being equally vulnerable in such a setting makes transformation more likely.
- When religious leaders committed to peace form a network with leadership and a strategy they can more effectively utilize their potential to promote and facilitate peace in Afghanistan.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Program activities include training workshops, local activities (action plans), visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina and organisational development for the network, including the gathering in Kabul at the end of the project. To prepare for all these activities strategic workshops and training for trainers was conducted in the first months of the project.

Training workshops

15 workshops in peacebuilding and conflict transformation were held in 5 provinces for 414 participants in November and December 2015. The RAP resource group, drawn from members mainly, was established and received a Training of Trainers (ToT) program before undertaking the training with new members in the regions, with the support of SDO. Locations for the workshop trainings were in Kabul, Herat, Mazar, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Gardez and Kunduz. Participants were recruited through introductions from Ministry of Haj, Nuzhatul Ulema Organization, SDO contacts and RAP members from phase 1 and phase 2. There was a selection process with applications and telephone interviews. Potential key actors and “hard to reach” participants were prioritized, and there were several participants from Taliban controlled areas. The recruitment was in the age group 30 – 55 with some exceptions, the average age of female participants were lower than for the men.

Most of the participants found the concepts and skills of peacebuilding and conflict resolution useful and relevant to their area of work. The report from the workshops tells about challenges they met and gives an assessment of what they learned. Participants had a test on their understanding of concepts

relevant for peacebuilding before and after the training. In all fields that were taught there was a significant improvement in the learning (understanding of conflict, peace, prejudice, arbitration, role of women in peacebuilding and Islam and reconciliation.) Improvement in the understanding of the role of women in peacebuilding had the highest score. The participation of women was seen as a major achievement and the workshops were successfully held in one group with men and women together after some initial resistance. The composition of the groups with different linguistic and ethnic background and representation from both Shia and Sunni Muslims was found important by the participants giving them an opportunity to address prejudices against each other. All participants in the trainings made their own action plans.

Action Plans

A total of 1363 actions were planned by the 414 new RAP-members, this is almost 4 actions for each member. There are regional variations: Jalalabad has the highest number followed by Herat and Kabul. Mazar, Kandahar and Gardez had the lowest numbers of implemented actions. 76% of the actions were planned by men and 24 % by women. 83 % of the actions were completed or ongoing by March 30, 2016.

Activities were planned and performed within the following areas; teaching and preaching, conflict resolution, networking and reconciling armed opposition groups. 932 out of 1363 planned actions were carried out by RAP-participants. Most of the actions were **teaching and preaching**. The areas that were covered were; peace and reconciliation (389), non-violence (122), women`s rights (92), prejudice and discrimination (69), compassion and tolerance (56), human rights (31), inappropriate cultural practices (27), violence against women (24), poppy cultivation and addiction (21), greed and grudge (16), women`s role in peacebuilding (5), corruption (5), Islamic teaching (2), youth`s role in peace (2) and support for government (1). On **conflict resolution** it was reported on resolving local conflicts (215), family conflicts (149), resource conflict (39), tribal conflict (29) and post murder reconciliation (4). The third group of actions was **networking for peace**. Most of these activities were meeting with other religious leaders (49), use of mass media (14), meeting with local government (12), establish peace shura (9) and meeting with PPC (2). The last group with least cases are actions of **reconciling armed opposition groups**. Three instances of reconciling armed opposition groups were reported and there was one case of preventing a group of young boys from joining Taliban. (Aziz Naderi: Summary Report on the Action Plan implementation)

The reported actions are based on the self-assessment of RAP-members without detailed descriptions of what happened in each case. It is therefore not obvious what was the added value of RAP-input in all cases. The question about what has changed after RAP-trainings was raised in interviews and workshops we conducted for the evaluation and is commented under Evaluation findings.

Study and Dialogue Visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina

Twenty RAP-participants visited Bosnia-Herzegovina from 22nd February to 3rd March. According to the report from this study and dialogue visit this journey made strong impact on participants and motivated not only those who travelled, but also participants that heard their stories, students and congregation.

“The study visits expose Ulema to new experiences, relationships and contexts and in particular new perspectives and interpretations of the holy scriptures of the Quran in relation to peace and reconciliation. The study visit offers an opportunity to explore how other Muslim leaders outside Afghanistan interpret the scriptures and apply their learning practically in relation to issues such as peace, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation.

The study/dialogue visit was the first opportunity for the Ulema from the RAP-network to experience a pluralist, post war context which was not monolithically Islamic but accommodated a variety of Christian denominations as well as a small Jewish population.”¹⁷

In the report on the study visit there is an explanation on the rationale behind the visit as part of the wider transformative experience of RAP and an explanation of how this transformation takes place.

“The study visit in particular presents the possibility for Ulema to change each other through dialogue and social encounters together and with each other in a safe environment.”

The selection process was designed to make maximum impact in strengthening the capacity and impact of the RAP network. SDO facilitated the selection process and managed to ensure a balanced inclusive composition of the group. There were however challenges in the selection process. One of the female religious leaders that was selected could not participate because she would have needed a maharam to have the permission to travel and this was not provided for. The women who participated were young and not so experienced. Organisers reported that the delegation could have benefitted from having senior female religious leaders represented.

In interviews and focus groups for this evaluation we heard several examples of how participants had changed their perceptions and widened their understanding as a result of participating in the study visit. Some of the quotes are presented under Evaluation findings.

Organisational development of the network

End of project gathering 27 – 29 March was at the completion of phase 3 for the RAP-network after a substantial growth of more than four hundred new members trained by a resource group of selected and competent trainers. The gathering aimed to encourage and support the emergence of competent, positive and inclusive leadership for RAP, as well as establish Terms of reference for both regional and national leadership committees.

End of project phase means in this case end of funding and the program enters an interim phase where RAP-members take more responsibility for the network. A new structure was agreed upon with an elected leadership group and continued support from NCA, SDO and MWTC.

The gathering started the partial transfer of power from NCA to the leadership of the network as part of a gradual move towards greater autonomy. The representatives were from the original core group together with more recently elected members of regional committees. This gathering had a special focus on leadership, refining the strategic plan and developing terms of reference for the members of regional committees. The new leadership was elected by every regional group appointing two of their members. Two members are also selected by NCA, SDO and MWTC and a member of core group was nominated.

¹⁷ Ian White: Report on Study visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina

The organisational vision of RAP is;

“An Afghanistan which is free from ethnic and religious hatred where the work of Religious Leaders bring peace within and between religious and ethnic groups through the promotion of Islamic studies and practical peacebuilding actions at all levels of society”.

The values of RAP are underpinned by the peaceful teaching of the holy scriptures of the Quran and the examples set by the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) and include; Specialization, Respect for difference and Non-violence. A SWOT analysis was made at the meeting through an interactive workshop exploring the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats at individual and national level.

The gathering agreed upon 7 strategic objectives;

- To advocate for and act to address the root causes of violent conflict
- To reduce discrimination of all kinds
- To improve the level of trust within and between religious, ethnic and political groups
- Contribute to institutionalizing the peace process particularly at community level
- Facilitating the development and sustainability of RAP and encouraging cooperation within and between RAP-members, the Resource Group and the Core Group
- Promoting support for the Rule of Law
- Increase people`s awareness about and support for peace

For each of these main objectives there are a number of specific objectives with a range of suggested activities. (Strategic plan for Religious Actors for Peace 2015-2018)

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Approach

The RAP-approach has developed considerably from the first activities initiated in 2013 and until now. The initial idea was to work with religious leaders, to train them and facilitate transformative experiences, enabling them to contribute more effectively to peacebuilding. Everything builds on their role as religious leaders and RAP supports participants in exploring differing interpretations of Quranic scriptures in relation to peacebuilding related issues.

Innovation, inclusivity and transformation are key characteristics of the RAP-approach, including exposure visits for religious leaders to other countries, widespread training in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, action plans for every participant and developing a strategy for the network. Every step has been carefully developed based on experiences and feedback from participants. A committed and diverse team of facilitators and organisers have pushed the program further from one step to the next in close cooperation with the funder, the British Embassy of Kabul (BEK). Short term funding has provided opportunities for every new step, but made long term planning difficult. Planning and implementing short-term activities while maintaining a long time perspective is demanding for the organisers and requires high degree of flexibility, commitment and conviction. NCA as the responsible agency has the capacity and experience that is needed to handle a project of this size and nature.

It is remarkable that an established international humanitarian organization is the leading agency of the RAP-project that is highly experiential in its nature. NCA and SDO gives legitimacy to RAP from different positions; NCA as a well reputed international organization and SDO as a national organization with good reputation for its work in districts all over Afghanistan on development and peacebuilding. Innovation in methods and expertise on international peacebuilding is added from MWTC.

The learning environment rely on group composition and exceptional facilitators able to manage a group exposed to challenging experiences that they did earlier not know existed. Participants are included in decision making process and at the end of this project phase the shift of ownership to a representative board has been formalised. Combining international and local experience in facilitation has been a crucial asset allowing for bold challenges from an outsider with the knowledge and insights on the needs of participants from an insider. At the end of the project gathering the contributions from every member of the international team of facilitators Ian White from MWTC and Tamkin Hayauddin from SDO were remarkable on providing opportunities for an appropriate democratic process involving and including participants from all over Afghanistan.

RAP makes use of a multilevel approach to peacebuilding; Political and governmental level, institutional level and civil society and community level. (Lederach,1997) Sustainable change is only possible with change at all levels from grassroot to the top political level. There are religious leaders within all three levels. At civil society and community level, this is the largest group in society with least power. A lower number is at the institutional level and the smallest group at the top, where there is most power. "Change at community level is essential for restitching the social fabric torn by decades of violence. Religious leaders need to be networked at all levels to create the relationships within and between levels." (*Ian White*)

One of the RAP-participants explained the peacebuilding process in this way; "It should be a bottom up approach, start from the community, there should be dialogue between community based forums and the government to promote peacebuilding. These are the ordinary people. It is the government's responsibility, but there is not sufficient structure for this. In recent peace talks with opposition civil society is forgotten."

Educational approach The experiential and participatory learning methods applied are different from what RAP-participants are used to from their own education. Critical and analytical thinking is part of the educational approach for peace education. This is mostly welcomed as useful, inspiring and appropriate ways of involving people, although it takes time to introduce new ways of thinking and to adapt new approaches to resolving conflicts. There is also some resistance noted from participants that question the effect of such new methods. From the information we got through interviews and workshops we hear many examples of resolving conflict, but we do not have enough detailed information about the methods applied of resolving conflicts and to what extent they apply new skills. Participants share how they have changed their approach towards a more inclusive process listening to people and including their perspectives in a suggested solution rather than always taking authoritative decisions and making judgements on their behalf. Possibilities for sharing experiences and reflecting on how different methods of resolving conflicts work in practice would be beneficial for the participants and bring new insights to the program.

- **What has been the effectiveness of program efforts and its positive role in building peace?**

How the intended outcomes of this project phase is met with appropriate measures and response from the participants indicates effectiveness of the program.

Outcome 1: Strengthening the reach, effectiveness and sustainability of RAP members;

Results for participants

Among RAP-participants there is clear indication of *increased knowledge, improved skills and change in attitude, new perspectives and new ways of performance*. These are all acknowledged as vital qualifications for peacebuilders.

Increased knowledge and improved skills

The modelling by facilitators of learning of new participatory teaching methods has changed the way participants work in their communities and with their students. They have also increased their knowledge of peace and peacebuilding and they have reported that this motivates them and makes them better suited to teach and preach about peace. An impact of the trainings is that participants say they have always wanted peace, but earlier they did not know what to do to promote peace.

“Like all Afghans I am interested in peace. From SDO workshop I learned the scientific methods, I started from family, conflicts between families on marriage, by using methods of understanding I solved the problem, I have written article in magazine and competition by question and answer in schools.” *(female, Herat)*

Empowerment

Most of the participants also report on empowerment, through training and conducting planned activities they realize that they can make a change through own behavior and performance.

“I always work for peacebuilding, what I learn here makes me strong. Now I am going the right way. We resolve cases in Ulema Council” *(RAP-participant, male)*

By putting plans into action, participants explore their own new capabilities and limitations. This makes them more conscious of how they can realistically contribute to peacebuilding and what kind of support and capacity building they need. Especially those who have had the chance to participate in study and dialogue visits abroad have gained new perspectives and some of them report that they have changed their performance and way of behavior. Among participants that have attended training workshops in peacebuilding and conflict transformation there are reports on similar changes. The trainings have challenged them personally and pushed them to work on their own prejudices and behavior they see as inappropriate.

Solidarity across regions and ethnic divides

The opportunity to meet and engage with Ulema from all over Afghanistan gives new dimensions to their work. At the focus group workshops the participants expressed their appreciation for the possibility to meet again and to hear their colleagues from other districts tell about their achievements and challenges.

From group work they reported that they support each other and learn from each other across regions and ethnic divide. Some of them had been in contact by telephone and visits and keep each other updated on Facebook. Now they want to include more Ulema from more hard to reach communities to give them the opportunity to include others in the network. The experience of being part of a large group of more than four hundred religious leaders all over Afghanistan was highlighted and talked about as something that gives strength to meet daily challenges. This augers well for the sustainability of the RAP network.

New perspectives and new ways of behaving

There are many examples of participants having new perspectives and new ways of performance. One of the trainers shared a story of an influential Olim after participating in RAP-activities;

“International visits that RAP organised have strong influence, one Mullah who preaches in the Blue Mosque in Mazar, he changed so much, before he was very strict, more extremist, now he is more tolerant, kind and communicative. He is active in media and reaches out to thousands with his preaches.”

From violent to non-violent attitude and behavior

In focus group workshops we were told that in Afghanistan to admit mistakes is considered to be a sign of weakness. One of the participant insights challenges this understanding and within RAP a trust has been built between participants to be open on their change in attitude as well as behavior. Several RAP-participants tell stories about how they earlier did the wrong things and that they now have changed.

“I spent my life being discriminating against all Shia people. Now we have spent time and drank tea together, I realise I was wrong” (*Sunni participant on the visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina*)

Some teachers report that they have stopped to use violence against students and changed their behavior from an authoritative strict approach to a more inclusive style of communication, listening more to the needs of the students. This inclusive and participatory approach also serves to address marginalization and exclusion.

“These workshops changed me and my teaching methods. Before I said don’t speak, now I am permitting discussions, they become calm. Before I punished physically, I had the authority, they were scared of me, not anymore.” (*female teacher*)

The results for RAP-participants are noticeable in many ways, improved skills and knowledge, as well as change in attitudes and performance.

Increased motivation and empowerment are among the most important results. In a situation where many Afghans express that they do not have hopes for a future in or for Afghanistan it is of particular importance that religious leaders show commitment and motivation to lead people towards a more peaceful society. Not only can this approach encourage better relationships between protagonists in Afghanistan but can also serve to create a more positive climate which challenges the development of radical extremism.

Positive role in building peace

Based on their own understanding of peace, what is needed to build peace and their own capacity and network the participants have initiated a multitude of activities to resolve conflicts, promote a culture of peace and facilitate dialogue between different conflicting parties as described in the section about their action plans. All these activities are positive and necessary and perhaps most importantly complement the strategies of track 1 actors in the peace process. Most activities impact at civil society and community level. This as a result of prioritizing to reach a critical mass at this stage. Some of the participants are leaders of small and large institutions. Ulema in central mosques of large city centres, and principals of madrasas are actively participating in RAP and promoting their understanding of peace within their institutions. Even at top political level there are RAP-members. Recruitment to RAP from all the three levels of the peacebuilding pyramid assures influence in every level and the organisational structure with a leadership team as well as trainings and exposure visit recruited broadly provides interactions between the levels. Furthermore RAP is facilitating a coming together of Ulema from all levels of Afghan society and this inter level contact creates a network with a holistic view of the conflicts that exist in the country and informs the actions they may take.

Most initiatives were successful, a few failed

Most participants reported essentially of successful activities. The cases that were not so successful were situations that came out of control because of; “discrimination and violence, some families don’t give permission and are doubtful about the program, threats from opponents and warlords and situations where head of village intervenes. Some seminars were reported not so successful because of lack of time, lack of funding, lack of knowledge among certain groups, these were nomads and rural people. In planned peace negotiations there were cases where opposition didn’t come.”

(participants at focus group workshops in Herat and Mazar)

Here is one example of an initiative for peace negotiation that was not successful due to intervention by local government and police;

“I have invited people, they have conditions from government, when they come to council meetings, they are accused of other things, government break promise of not arresting them. One person had relation with opposition group, we promised to come back. After 6 months army decided to arrest him and killed him and nephews in the house. High position people give instructions, government is not ready for peacebuilding. For more than ten years I have been in peace meetings. Earlier I had relation to Taliban, not now. During Taliban I was commander of police, after I became preacher of mosque, I introduced opposition from my contacts, they were ready for peace, suddenly government changed and arrested two of his friends. How I can invite for peace when they break the rules.” *(male, Herat)*

Outcome 2: Enabling the RAP network members to work to manage and resolve conflicts about resources, family or identity at community or provincial levels;

Resolving conflicts in the community to prevent violence

The report on action plan implementation indicates more than 200 resolved local conflicts, about 150 family conflicts, 39 resource conflicts and 28 tribal conflicts. Some cases of post murder reconciliation is reported as well. The stories of some of the cases were shared in the focus group workshops.

Tribal conflicts; “We were active also before, now we have more experience, and this makes us able to have success. I am from Bakwa district, there is no education in that district. A lot of war happened there. I talked to people in the mosque about the conflict. One example; In Bakwa, one person from one tribe killed wrong person from another tribe, someone who looked like the one he was intending to kill. It caused bad situation. I invited those tribes and they come and they accept. I was able to reconcile them. The tribes paid for his recovery. Always I tell to go to reconciliation” *(male, Herat)*

“As an Olim I was active in peace and reconciliation, I have become more and more interested and active. There are a lot of problems, some are not so big and started small in family, we also try to solve them. I will give some examples; There was a big dispute between two tribes that wanted to kill each other, one group became afraid and left the area. I talked to both sides, the refugees came back, the dispute was who should be the lord of the village.” *(male, Mazar)*

Conflicts over resources; “In Saripol I am a preacher and also a deputy in community council, we are involved in social and family problems. In the city we had a conflict between those who wanted to develop the area and those who wanted to protect the mosque. Some Ulemas from this programme came and discuss with both sides, they gave something to each side, by negotiation the problem was solved and the result was given to the governor. If this negotiation didn’t happen there could have been violent conflict.”

“In these workshops I got positive experiences, always I try to solve the conflicts. Two families had land conflict from thirty years back. I mediated between the two sides, finally I went to solve the disputes between two tribes about land. As other maliks say we should have this kind of activities that are far from cities. This material should be distributed and people should be trained.” *(preacher in Nawrox province, teacher at madrasa)*

Prevent conflict; “We can avoid that young people join the insurgents. The point is that we could not be able to increase from 30 to 100 participants, it is difficult to generalize the message. Peace need good curriculum and good trainers. If we train Ulema it is very useful because they have access to all, ceremonies etc. With more capacity we could train more young people and avoid that they join the insurgents.” *(RAP-trainer)*

Outcome 3: Support RAP to support of the formal Track I peace process by connecting AOGs and Government and insurgents with formal peacebuilding structures.

Link to the peace process

There is no direct link between the official peace process at governmental level and this initiative. Although the acting interim head of the HPC while in that office met with resource group of the network and has enabled some local engagement of Ulema in RAP and acted generally in support of the initiative. In the group of RAP-members there are personalities that have the potential to take an active role also at the top level. But so far this opportunity has not presented itself and the timing has also not been regarded as appropriate as the national peace process has stagnated. There might be consultations in the various regions in Afghanistan, but the contact to f.ex. regional High Peace Councils are more sporadic than systematic. According to senior RAP-members there is a potential for more consultations including regional authorities and opposition and also a motivation among experienced Ulema to bring parties together. If the newly elected RAP board wants to give priority to get more involved in these processes they should also consider giving a selected group of people more targeted training on formal peace negotiations.

Reaching the opposition and preventing recruitment to Taliban

“Unfortunately high level actors in peace always consider political and talk to the armed community level is for post-war situation. We need to work on the war situation, to reach the opposition. During our workshops, day 4 or 5 we found that some of our participants are Taliban. They show cards, I am talib, but we do not disturb your program. In Faizabad and other regions we can work. They are part of the community, because we combine Peace and Religion they can accept, we hope that they come because in village people think anyone work with NGOs are pagan, when they participate they go back and give a good message.”

Ulema can talk with opposition groups

“We need more peace shuras where opposition groups are included. We should show that it is possible.” (*workshop Herat*)

“We know language of opposition and political leaders – both sides- people come to Ulema for resolving the disputes because government offices are corrupt, it increases the friendship of Ulema and its people.” (*workshop Mazar*)

“Ulema are so influential at the present time, there are two points; what the government wants from Ulema and the duties of ulema to society. Government want the guidance and role and the preach. It is our duty to deliver kindness and Islamic statements to the people. The point here is that we are lot of Ulema. At the same time opposition have statements from Ulema. People are confused about this.” (*workshop Mazar*)

“Ulema has a key role in peacebuilding, without them other actors cannot bring peace.” (*workshop, Herat*)

“We know the language of opposition and political leaders – both sides – people come to Ulema for solving the disputes. Because government offices are corrupt, it increases the friendship of Ulema and its people.” (*workshop, Mazar-i-Sharif*)

- What has been the contribution across the sectors?

Contribution across sectors can be seen through the cooperation with other institutions as media, schools, district and provincial councils and civil society initiatives. The advocacy campaigns for instance in Herat to counter violence against women and against corruption, are good examples of contribution across sectors. Similar campaigns have been organised in other places.

- **Is the relationship between the program costs and results reasonable?**

This project has been funded by British Embassy of Kabul (BEK) with a total sum of USD 610 000 (revised to 601 507) for the project period from 1st September 2015 to 30th March 2016. The budget shows reasonable relationship between program costs and planned activities. According to the RAP final economic report USD 457 682 was spent. The report shows under-expenditure of USD 143 825, a clear indication that the budgeted funds are not fully utilised.¹⁸ The post; “Support the implementation of advocacy plans and strategy in five regions”, budgeted to USD 15 000 is not used at all. For other posts as the “6-day-trainings” and “5 regional meetings” there is substantial underuse of funds.

This large deviation between budget and use of funds can be partially result of too short timeframe. It is a major achievement to organise most of the planned activities within 7 months. While trying to achieve quantity in this phase, the length of time for each training had to be reduced, therefore reducing the topics that could be covered. Other savings were made by adapting a value for money approach at all stages of the process. Choices made by participants on shared accommodation made the visit to Bosnia-Hercegovina less costly than budgeted, and for trainings, regional and national meetings there were savings on accomodation and food. The lower expenditure is also a result of awareness and follow up from organisers. Disbursement of mini-grants to implement regional action plans were for instance stopped when the religious actors were not able to produce financial document for spendings. (Note on Economic Report from NCA)

The stated need for quality trainings, mentoring, guidance and networking could benefit from more time and more staff resources for follow up. The number and range of activities are impressive, but they are also dispersed in numerous individual actions, involving others through cooperation, but not much coordinated. RAP-participants in the workshops asked for possibilities to meet regularly for exchange of experiences and mutual support. The budget does not seem to be a hinder for this, but the time allocated was not sufficient.

Economic issues proposed by participants were to have more funds for travel, maharams to travel with female participants, needs for more material, more trainings and more follow up/ mentoring. Special travel arrangements for security reasons can be expensive and there were complaints that the project did not cover extra costs. There was a strong request for RAP to pay for maharams to ensure female participation without that they would risk bad reputation in their communities.

For the action plan implementation, a closer follow up and guidance could have strengthened the program substantially. Recruitment of participants was an issue that was raised in interviews with implementing staff. In the economic report the budget line of recruitment is empty. If this means that budgets are not allocated for recruitment this can partly explain the reported challenges on finding the right participants for trainings and study visit. In some cases, where personal interviews would have been preferred selection was done after telephone calls.

¹⁸ See Appendix 4 - Note on Economic Report from NCA

Even with the deviation between budget and actual expenditure the results of all the activities that are documented in this report show that the funds have been used effectively for its purpose.

Conclusion: The relationship between program costs and results are reasonable. With a longer time frame the budgeted funds could have secured better quality for recruitment, trainings, follow up of action plans and networking. All the investments that are done in this period depends on the intended follow up in the terms of NCA and partners providing ongoing support to the RAP-network. If no further support is available to the network some of the investment made will not yield the substantial change that is intended. Continued engagement with RAP will give its strength and produce a healthy return on the investment made.

- **Have the most efficient approaches been used during the implementation of the activities?**

After two years of involving a limited group of 50 religious leaders in the Mobilising Religious Actors for Peace – program through 2013 and 2014 activities were speeded up dramatically in the 3rd phase starting from October 2015 with the aim of *reaching a critical mass* of religious leaders. A target of more than 400 was set and achieved although the critical mass required to create sustainable change remains an unknown quantity. This shift required an intensive phase of organizing trainings within a short period of time demanding effective and proper measures of administration and training capacity. Given the priority to reach a large amount of religious leaders in short time, the approach of preparing a resource group as trainers together with more experienced ones, proved efficient. Recruitment of participants was done together with local and central authorities. Because of short timeframe it was not possible to interview all applicants personally. Some interviews were done by telephone. For follow up on action plans SDO also used phone interviews. Feedback through telephone does not give the same quality of information as personal meetings, but it is an effective way to get in touch with a large number of people in short time. By using effective ways of communication SDO managed to report sufficiently on activities. The quality of information and feedback would however have been better if there was more time to interact with the participants.

Recruitment was generally completed successfully to all activities. According to staff reports there were however some mistakes in recruitment with the result that a few participants not qualified or sufficiently motivated were included. This caused initial additional work for facilitators in some of the training workshops. Recruitment for the study visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina was also not optimal due to time constraints, in this case it was more a question of representation from all relevant groups. To find the right candidates for an international visit is even more crucial than for a regional training course. The selection process was done basically by SDO and NCA, but the donor British Embassy in Kabul did also have preferences for specific candidates. Many actors in the selection complicated the process. Time for preparations for the visit was short for participants as well as for organisers. To make a study visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina for 20 religious leaders, some of them without any international experience and providing an appropriate program for them is a major logistic challenge. From reports and participants' narratives about this visit it seemed to be organised appropriately and efficiently. From what we have seen there is evidence to conclude that efficient approaches for recruitment, implementation and follow up are applied.

There is also an **adequate organisational structure** in place with NCA as the responsible agency with its professional administrative capacity and longterm experience from development work in Afghanistan, combined with SDOs staff in Kabul and their staff at the regional centres. SDO is a wellknown national NGO with good reputation and experienced trainers in peacebuilding. Through this project phase they have proved that they can implement trainings in short time with the support of MWTC and NCA. For some of the training for trainers workshops SDO-staff facilitated together with facilitator from NCA and/or the international facilitator from MWTC. They seem to complete each other perfectly combining local and international approaches and experiences. The support of MWTC allowed innovative methods and challenged perceptions within an accepted framework. The program is designed to reinforce the participant faith in Islam while challenging traditional practices and some interpretations of the quranic scriptures.

IMPACT

- **What is the impact of the program on the participants and wider peace building?**

To see whether there is a bridge between the participants' perceptions of peace and the actions they have selected to promote peace we asked questions on their understanding of peace at the first session of the dialogue focus group workshops.

Perceptions about peace, peacebuilding and threats against peace

The overall aim of RAP is to contribute to sustainable peace in Afghanistan. To understand how this aim is perceived by the participants we posed general questions in the workshops about their understanding of peace, threats against peace, conditions for peacebuilding and potential for religious leaders; What is peace? What are the main threats against peace in your community? What is needed to build peace? and What are the most important roles of religious leaders (male and female)?

The answers to the questions presented here are abstracts from the response given in four workshops held for the evaluation in Herat and Mazar.

What is peace?

"Peace means security, safety, ceasefire, absence of war and violence in all aspects. Peace is a contract to remove conflict and enemies between two parties. It should be satisfying for both parties. And it should not start again. Peace is according to what Allah said; bring reconciliation, remove factors of desperation and bring the factors of reconciliation and friendship. Peace has two elements; removing/ elimination of enemy factors and bringing friendship. Peace is goodness, if we have goodness we have a peaceful society. Peace is safe environment, it is not only the absence of war, rights of all people should be respected, then they have a good life."

What are the main threats against peace in your community?

"Main threats against peace in Afghanistan are poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, foreign culture by media, intervention of foreigners/ foreign countries, intervention of violent people from neighbor countries. Prejudice and discrimination, conflict and violence, non-implementation of existing law, absence of justice, absence of responsibility, impose opinion towards others, bad customs and all kinds of prejudice. At the personal level; selfishness, jealousy, non-acceptance of each other.

Corruption, government don't pay attention to qualifications, Less presence of Ulema in peace process, people who are not qualified are in power. Unemployment, pressure of warlords or strong persons and violence. Corruption is the main reason for absence of peace. Absence of justice, selfishness, ignorance, corrupocracy (nepotism), oppression, absence of judicial advocacy, unimplementation of Islamic law, seeking discrimination and some groups oppress others, no implementation of social justice. Intervention from outside. Ethnic parties and regional disputes. If we do not solve the problems we will have more poverty, displacement, sudden mortality, mental problems, family without person to take care. Why we didn't have peace; Islamic peace and law was neglected. Because of pressure of warlords or strong persons and violence."

What is needed to build peace in Afghanistan?

"Understanding among people for the importance and value of peace, motivation for peacebuilding and to accept each other. Increased awareness among people about the benefits of peace and the disadvantage of war. A strong government that is well informed and performing the law. Elimination of war, creating working committees for peace by elite Ulema, efforts for Ulema in the building of peace. We need famous, honest leaders understanding the value of peace and reporting this through media and continuous efforts for solving conflicts between both sides of the conflict. Ulema should be beginners of and in front of peace process. The rule of Koran, Ulema is obedience to the God, and in Islamic society Ulema is instead of the Prophet. People should respect the rights of each other."

Broad understanding of peace

These definitions and perceptions are taken directly from participants own wording provides an understanding of the diversity of aspects that are associated with the concept of peace. From this broad understanding of peace, including all levels and aspects of society, presented by the participants we can easily understand the multitude of actions implemented by their own initiative. RAP has provided the training, but also the framework to see that they all can make contributions to peace through local actions.

Gender

Most participants emphasize the important role of women in peacebuilding while it is often stressed that male and female religious leaders have different roles and responsibilities. At the same time do they insist that this does not imply that one is more important than the other, it is rather a question of complementing each other. Cooperation between men and women in trainings, meetings and exposure visits is a new experience for many religious leaders. Women are used to listening to men, but men are not as used to listening to women in public space. Those who travelled to Bosnia-Herzegovina report on several examples of a transformative experience. Both female and male participants reflected on how women in Bosnia-Herzegovina play an important role and on their independence. One Olim said that when he came home from Bosnia-Herzegovina he opened his mosque for women. This is one of a few examples of how men on their own initiative include women directly in religious and social activities. What is more common among the men is to speak up about women's rights. Among advocacy points agreed upon in the program are against violence against women; domestic violence and harassment, forced marriage and bad practices. In the RAP- program women are trained, but there are not yet many female trainers. We also didn't see women as leaders in the organisational committee. Successfully including a substantial group of female religious leaders

to interact with male religious leaders gives a good starting point for further progress in recruiting more women at a later stage.

What are the different roles of female and male religious leaders?

Male and female religious leaders have different roles and responsibilities. There are no female Mullahs, but there are many female religious teachers and principals. Some of them teach in madrasas (religious schools) and some in public schools and universities. The following answers to these questions presented here are quotes from worksops in Herat and Mazar;

“As lecturers in madrasa and in school they can speak about peace and play an influential role. Mothers have more influence on children. When women speak with her students, because they are kind and emotional, students and children accept more, if men speak they do not have the same influence.” *(male)*

“The roles of male and female religious leaders are different. Men are the Mullahs or Ulema who preach from mosques and pulpets and are visible on TV and other media, whereas women have influence in families and schools. Most of the female religious leaders in this project are teachers and principals.” *(male)*

“Mothers have more influence on children, when women speak with her students, because they are kind an emotional, students and children accept more, if men speak they do not have the same influence.” *(male)*

“People accept the preach of Ulema, men have key role they are head of family, they are present in media without any problem, men can go everywhere also to remote areas, women cannot do their duties in these areas, especially not without maharam. Men have more knowledge about Islam than women, regarding to the role of women there are lots of limitations.” *(female)*

“Three roles for women: family, as mothers they have to train the children. From the family they have a key role on society. The 2nd is that they have role in community, madrasas, in family cases they have key role because they can understand problems of women.” *(female)*

“Our society is a traditional society, Ulema has a key role, ulema (men) can perform their duties freely, they can go everywhere.” *(female)*

“We should consider both; awareness of women must increase, awareness of ulema must increase, we cannot say that sharia is against womens rights. Their rights must be understood within sharia.” *(male)*

Wedding banquets give female religious leaders the possibility to give a speech to a large group of women and girls. The tradition of having large wedding parties has escalated in recent years to dimensions that creates economic problems and conflicts within families. It takes courage to address this problem in a wedding party as reported from a female RAP-participant. In resolving family conflicts female RAP-members have managed to prevent early marriage and divorce. In Herat one of the female participants was engaged in advocacy against violence, made billboard posters and wrote articles. Assuming more training, mentoring and coordination there is potential for more coordinated activities to include women in peacebuilding activities.

“If women want they can get a key role in family and in society. Women can share information during celebrations, weddings and all this. In Balkh province and a little in other provinces in wedding celebration instead of music or dance women have a preach for female participants.

In some wedding celebrations there are large expenditures, it brings conflict, some people come and speak about this during the wedding. This preaching in weddings become a pattern, it is useful.”
(female, Mazar-i-Sharif)

Context – perception of current challenges and opportunities

The overall impression is that RAP-participants manage to see options and opportunities for positive change towards a more stable and peaceful society despite the difficult situation they are working in. A conditional optimism is also present among stakeholders.

This assessment by one of the external observers indicates that there are alternatives to seeing the situation in Afghanistan as basically hopeless.

“We now have good opportunities; people are tired of war, government is weak, but people resist to join military, people want safety. One challenge is that people didn’t experience peace, they don’t know and they expect others to bring peace. Some people have interest of the war to continue. After many decades of war it takes time to eliminate enemies. Peace is affected by politics. People look to government, they lost their trust in government and others. People lost hope, they tend to think that what we have is peace. Increasing awareness is done by civil society and NGOs, but some have lost trust in that. Dreaming for money. Civil society are also seen as someone who misuse funds.”

Another observation by an external observer is about how restriction of movement because of war has influence on people’s perception of each other;

“Before there was movement, now these movements are very limited, the people are not aware of each other cultures. If we again start moving from east to west and north to south between communities it will help towards stability. The political leaders have divided the people, before people went to Jalalabad in winter and to Mazar for Nawroz.”

RAP-participants have suggested what this observer is proposing, to start moving more between communities, they propose that RAP-delegations should visit other parts of Afghanistan to learn from each other’s achievements and challenges for the participants to have a better understanding of working conditions for religious leaders in other regions. This was a recommendation also in the evaluation from 2014 proposed to be implemented in the next three year plans for RAP.

- Is there evidence that the program is having an impact?

There is evidence documented in this report that the progra brings positive change for participants, strengthening their capacity, skills and motivation and even changing their perceptions, attitudes and behavior making them more prepared to contribute to sustainable peace.

Some of the activities are reported to have prevented violence and there are several cases of resolving conflicts in families and in communities, even between violent groups. Participants have been effective in awareness raising and motivation reaching many thousand people¹⁹ on issues that needs to be dealt with to reach the overall aim of contributing to a sustainable peace.

¹⁹ In the survey we had a question about how many people they reached out to

There are indications of preparing the ground for RAP to come in position to influence peace talks between government and opposition in the future. The work that initiated on the grassroots and within institutions has already made change in families, in schools and in local communities.

SUSTAINABILITY;

Is there evidence that the results of the program can be sustained? To what extent has the program established processes and systems that are likely to support the continued implementation of the program?

The skills, knowledge and change of attitudes and behavior of participants has added to their competence and will be applied also in the future. The more they have possibilities for practicing, networking, sharing of experiences and additional training in the future, the more likely it is that this part of the program will be sustained.

The program has established processes and systems that will support the continued implementation of the program through the newly elected board, the strategic plan and terms of reference for board members elected for the regional board and for the central board. The proposed organisational structure includes continued support of NCA, SDO and MWTC. Without their support in the years to come it is however not likely that all elements of the program can be sustained unless other actors come in and offer their support. There is some evidence that the personal change created at individual level will sustain but this will only be tested through time. At the end of project gathering this was made clear by those participants that spoke up on this issue. Funding needs to be secured preferably for a longer period of time than what was the case for this phase of the program.

What it means in practical terms to be truly sustainable in the unpredictable environment of Afghanistan is not self-evident. We have learned that among all institutions in the country the mosques and religious schools are perceived as the most stable and durable. It is also well known that religious leaders have considerable trust within communities. RAP-initiatives have in this context proven to respond adequately to main challenges in Afghan society within an accepted Islamic understanding.

The seven strategic objectives agreed upon at the end of project gathering confirms the commitment and provides a direction towards sustainability. The 5th paragraph is specifically addressing the issue of sustainability; "Facilitating the development and sustainability of RAP and encouraging cooperation within and between RAP-members, the Resource Group and the Core Group" while the other paragraphs support sustainability by including issues that are needed to be addressed to achieve the overall goal of the program to contribute to sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

Conditions for sustainability; provided funding and with continued technical and administrative support there are good chances for the RAP-network to be not only sustainable, but also to develop into a strong independent body that can play a vital role to build peace in Afghanistan on their own terms based on Islamic values rooted in religious institutions that will survive new years of unpredictability.

Four out of forty reported that they reach out to more than 1000 people, seven reported between 350 and 1000

For the network to be sustainable issues of conflict sensitivity needs to be addressed as religious leaders are influential and vulnerable at the same time. According to reports from UNAMA the risk of attacks is higher for religious leaders who are seen as affiliated with the government. Generally in Afghanistan working with internationals provokes some of the armed opposition groups (AOGs). Religious leaders in RAP appreciate international support and have good experiences from cooperation with foreigners. They are in position to share the positive sides of international cooperation and can help to reduce fears among people for internationals. Nevertheless threats and attacks from AOGs continue in Afghanistan and must be taken seriously by all partners involved in RAP. This point is made on a general note. NCA, SDO and MWTC are all working professionally in the field of conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding. The project would thus be in safe hands.

RAP-members report that they have received threats and because of this need to take special security measures when travelling.²⁰ Even if they are threatened and they feel that their life is in danger there are RAP-members who report that they prefer to continue to work for peace and reconciliation. Special travel arrangements can be required for them to participate in some of the activities. When RAP becomes better known and with profiled leading figures they will also be more visible for armed opposition groups. Risk assessments must be included in all measures for sustainability and adequate measures should be taken to prevent RAP-members from being targeted as a result of their efforts to promote peace.

CONCLUSIONS

Within seven months in 2015 and 2016 RAP worked intensively, through a range of varied activities, to contribute to sustainable peace in Afghanistan. This was done through the three interconnected elements;

- strengthening the reach, effectiveness and sustainability of RAP members;
- enabling the RAP network members to work to manage and resolve conflicts about resources, family or identity at community or provincial levels;
- support RAP to support of the formal Track I²¹ peace process by connecting AOGs and Government and insurgents with formal peacebuilding structures.

In this report there is evidence to support findings that the first two of the interconnected elements are met through an immense effort of varied activities at individual and organisational level.

At individual level for the RAP network members, there has been major achievements of reaching out to a large number with trainings and providing opportunities for them to organise activities. The participants want to continue this work and have expectations for follow up.

At organisational level a structure is in place with a democratically elected board with the task of implementing an ambitious strategy decided by a group of religious leaders, some of them holding influential positions. The new structures implies continued support from NCA, SDO and MWTC.

²⁰ The reported threats have not been identified as threats caused by RAP participation.

²¹ : Track 1 diplomacy: Official discussions typically involving high-level political and military leaders and focusing on cease-fires, peace talks, and treaties and other agreements.

There is now a foundation to build on for the next phase to work more targeted towards the third intended outcome of contributing to the formal peace process. Already work is being done to prepare people to support a peace process, by training and awareness raising about the importance of peace. This is however challenging in a situation with steadily reduced trust in the present government among Afghans.

Gender aspects are already considered through the program and there is a fair representation of women within the newly elected leadership of RAP. The next step should be to provide options for female RAP-members to be trained as trainers and to be included in peace talks regionally and eventually nationally.

Working towards sustainable peace in Afghanistan is a truly challenging task when the context is unpredictable and few other structures can be regarded as fully sustainable. Rooted in the religious sphere in a Muslim country where the strong position of religious leaders is of the most sustainable this program has a strong potential for relative sustainability.

Some of the success factors of this program are;

Competent, flexible and motivated team of organisers and facilitators composed of Ian White, Hayauddin Tamkin, Aziz Naderi, regional SDO-trainers and resource group members. The composition of the team including both international and local expertise is crucial.

Longterm commitment; Ian White and Tamkin have stayed committed from the beginning through organising and leading all exposure visits (earlier to Malaysia and Turkey, and now to Bosnia-Herzegovina) and been responsible for trainings of resource group and gatherings. The participants know them and they are deeply trusted. Trust built through many years gives the necessary authority to deal with sensitive issues to bridge divides and reconcile.

Neutrality; organisers and facilitators are perceived as neutral without vested interest on any side of fault lines of the major conflict in Afghanistan between opposition and government or other conflicts that the religious leaders are working on.

Strategic recommendations

Continuation

All activities in the 3rd phase are a preparation for the next. Without follow up this investment will not be fully utilised. The need for RAP has been proven through the performance of its members. The people of Afghanistan needs peace and the RAP-approach makes an important contribution enabling religious leaders to take the lead in promoting peace on premises acceptable to the Afghan population. Everyone that we have spoken to within and outside RAP recommends a continuation of the project. There is a need for follow up work soon so that momentum is not lost. Participants need to utilize their new skills and understandings or they may lose them.

Consolidation

After mobilising more than 400 participants the first priority should be to consolidate and ensure structures for them to be motivated to continue the work. A leadership structure is already in place. Not to lose momentum the first meeting should be called as soon as possible once funding for the

next phase is clarified. Regular regional meetings is suggested to share experiences and for follow up training and mentoring. Several participants asked for opportunities to meet more frequently.

Commitment and timeline

Peacebuilding is a longterm process. Short term project intervals in the first phases should be replaced by longer term commitment, 3 – 5 years. For funding a 3-year period with possibilities of extension would be preferable. The program will need external support to continue.

Continue process of institutionalising ownership

With the new structure for RAP in place there is a foundation for institutionalizing ownership of the religious leaders themselves. This process should be given the possibility to develop with continued support from the organisers until now; SDO, NCA and MWTC. The trust that has been built with of the key actors of this project should be utilized further. This will be crucial for the success of the next phase. While more autonomy should be given to RAP network, it is important to continue to include some external input. External facilitators can often present challenges that will not otherwise be presented as people have avoidance tendencies.

Strategic assessments

For RAP-actions to be of strategic importance they should be coordinated and have a closer follow up looking into how the initiatives can have a broader impact. The RAP-network and its newly elected board should consider how to connect formally or informally to institutions such as Ministry of Haj and Religious Affairs, High Peace Council and educational institutions. RAP, being an independent network, should continue to connect to influential institutions and when desirable formalize relationships to secure necessary support and commitment.

Operational recommendations

Gender

The number of female participants should be increased in the program on all levels. More female trainers will motivate greater female participation. The request for maharams to follow female participants for trainings and meetings is a repeated demand from men and women in the project. Including maharams will ensure continued and increased female participation. The strong request for maharams by participants should be handled sensitively by inviting to a dialogue with donors, supporters and the newly elected board to see if it is possible to reach common understanding and practical solutions.

Regular regional meetings

In every region there should be regularly meetings for RAP-participants for them to share experiences and have additional training. This point was emphasized in the evaluation workshops.

Reaching out to remote areas

RAP-participants from the districts are concerned about the need to share their experiences and insights with people who live in more remote areas than themselves. This is an opportunity for participants to transform their communities and constituencies. Efforts should be made to reach out further to more communities by training Mullahs from far away districts. RAP-members can also travel and share messages and material with people in rural communities. Security is a challenge in some places, the RAP-members know where they can go and what chances they are willing to take.

Continued training and mentoring

With an ambition to play a more active role in the peace process a selected group of people should be given targeted training on formal peace negotiations. Workshop trainers need more capacity building as well to strengthen their analytical skills and improve their performance as trainers. The need for workshops in hard to reach regions has been stressed by participants. To meet this need more trainers must be qualified.

Exposure visits abroad and within Afghanistan

Participants are strongly motivated and get new perspectives needed for constructive approaches through exposure visits. It was suggested in the workshop gatherings that RAP-members visit each other to get a better understanding of achievements and challenges in other parts of Afghanistan.

Possibilities for RAP-delegations to visit other parts of Afghanistan should be explored. In addition, exposure visits abroad should continue. Inviting Muslims from other conflict areas to share their experiences would also be a contribution to widening perspectives for peaceful solutions.

International dialogue study visits should remain as they create space for new types of interactions and exposes them to perspectives on peace and Islam that are not freely available in Afghanistan.

Monitoring and evaluation

Initiatives by RAP members represent a wide range of activities that deserve more attention. To be able to develop the program in line with the overall aims it would be beneficial to invest more in following processes initiated by RAP-members. There is a need for documentation to see what goes on in the field. The program should consider to train field researchers to be included in teams for workshop trainings. These gatherings give unique access to stories and examples of best practices. Some examples are reported by trainers and organisers. More detailed descriptions would be beneficial to understand more of local challenges and how they are resolved. To include action research following this project would

Conflict Analysis – combining acquired knowledge from RAP with contemporary research

Conflict interventions rely on a good understanding of the specific situation. Those who are part of and work in the community have firsthand information. They are also the ones who have to live with the consequences. Their assessments are therefore particularly valuable. In the case of RAP they are the ones who will carry out planned activities and will naturally safeguard actions according to their perception and knowledge of threat. Community and regional SWOT analysis and conflict mapping by RAP-members could feed into a broader and more systematic conflict analysis for the regions RAP work in. Religious leaders who sometimes operate in isolated communities and hard to reach areas do not necessarily have access to recent research on conflict assessments in their region. Cooperation with relevant research institutions should be explored for a systematic approach to make sure that RAP is in line with available knowledge. This kind of cooperation can also open doors for contributions from RAP on their new insights that come as a result of RAP-initiatives and performance.

Include Conflict Sensitivity

The more successful RAP-initiatives are, the more visible they will be and participants can become more vulnerable to attacks. As other programs RAP can become a target for insurgents. “Any project in a conflict-prone region will inevitably have an impact on the peace and conflict environment – positive or negative, direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional”. (Bush, K 1998 in How to Guide to conflict sensitivity 2012)

To avoid unintentional and unwanted effects of the program there should be a plan to include assessments for conflict sensitivity. This is important to prevent direct violence against members and against the program. Threats may affect profiled as well as less profiled members and the program as such. An outspoken policy with organisational follow up on conflict sensitivity will contribute to trustbuilding within RAP and with external supporting institutions. In RAP-programming there are already measures for conflict sensitivity as an integral part of approach and priorities; inclusion of different groups etc. Who RAP affiliates with can become an issue for judgment on the reliability and independence of RAP.

Non Violence and Islam

Explore possibilities for cooperation with other peace initiatives for training and research. External observers suggested that RAP-members should be exposed to the ideas of Pacha Khan who worked with Mahatma Gandhi and made a Nonviolent interpretation of Islam. There is a Pacha Khan Research Centre in Kandahar that hope to train people for non-violence. This and other learning opportunities could be considered for delivering additional training and/ or as cooperative partners. A peace study curriculum is recently approved by Ministry of Education and courses are provided at University of Herat and Nangarhar.

DOCUMENTS AND LITERATURE

Internal Documents;

- Terms of reference for the Evaluation
- Mobilising Religious Actors for Peace, evaluation report December 2014
- Cumulative report on 15 peacebuilding and conflict transformation workshops to 414 RAP participants, 2016
- List of participants
- RAP Strategic plan
- RAP Internal Discussion Paper
- Application to British embassy for this phase
- Educational material used in trainings
- PP-Presentations from Ian Whyte
- Action plans for participants
- Summary Report on the Action Plan Implementation of the Religious Actors for Peace (RAP)
- Islam, Leadership and Peace Building – An Exposure Visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina 22nd February – 3rd March 2016, Information for participants

Literature;

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People we talked to

Interviews with participants at RAP-gathering in Kabul (7),

RAP-members including trainers in Herat (4), RAP-members including trainers in Mazar (4)

Ian White, facilitator, MWTC

Padraig MacCarthy, Country Representative NCA Afghanistan

Aziz Naderi, Team Leader – Peacebuilding, NCA Afghanistan

Hayauddin Tamkin, Program Coordinator/ facilitator SDO

Mr. Stanekzai, Head of SDO Herat

Mr Broman, Head of SDO Mazar-i-Sharif

Minister of Haj and Religious Affairs

Deputy Minister of Haj and Religious Affairs

Regional High Peace Council, Herat

High Peace Council, Kabul

SDOE, Sada organization, Herat

WASA – womens organization, Herat

Dr. Shapoor Mayor, Asciana, Mazar-i-Sharif

Munibollah Sahibzadeh, Afghan Women Educational Center, Mazar-i-Sharif

Noorullah Navayee, Centre for Peace Studies, University of Kabul

Hamidullah Natiq, United States Institute of Peace (USIP)

Appendix

- 1) Terms of Reference for the Evaluation
- 2) Questions for survey and focus group questions
- 3) Strategic Plan for Religious Actors for Peace 2015-2018
- 4) Note on Economic Report from NCA
- 5) New structure of RAP – model by Ian White
- 6) Illustrations; Map of Afghanistan to show that the whole country is covered

Evaluation of “Religious Actors for Peace 2015 – 2016”
Terms of Reference

1. Context and Programme Background

There are many causes to the problems in Afghanistan linked to conflicts, insecurity, weak governance, poverty and underdevelopment. The presence and threat of structural and open violent conflicts is an area of concern. The conflict situation at both local and national levels is inflicting terrible pain and pressure on most Afghans. In Afghan context, the protracted social conflict involving government and international forces and the insurgency, primarily of the Taliban, has intensified and escalated in the recent year. Local observations by NCA and partners strongly indicate that the position of religious actors in Afghan society can either enable or disable actors who wish to encourage alternative approaches to the management of the violent conflict. The religious actors have respect and reach within their communities and need to be mobilised to encourage peace. A significant weakness in a lot of current peace building work is the lack of participation by women and the failure to integrate the efforts of women into wider national strategies. Women have worked hard and invested considerable efforts to actively engage in peace building at all levels. However there is still considerable resistance among many traditional and religious leaders to this and a lot of work is required to address this deficit.

NCA has been working with the Afghan people for over 30 years, engaged in long-term development, humanitarian support and advocacy activities. This long presence has allowed NCA to build solid partnerships and relationships with national civil society organizations including NCA partners, government agencies and institutions at the national and local level. Focus on improved livelihoods through support to agriculture and income generating activities, access to renewable energy, access to water and sanitation, peace building initiatives and the empowerment of women has been at the core of NCA's engagement. Based on its commitment to and length of service in the country together with the well documented quality of its work and its ability to access hard to reach communities, NCA is seen as a respected development actor in Afghanistan.

Religious Actors for Peace (RAP) is a seven month project aiming to contribute to sustainable peace in Afghanistan. The RAP is a continuation of the two earlier phases of the project “Mobilizing Religious Actors for Peace, MRAP) completed in 2013 and 2014 respectively. The evaluation report of the previous is available. . Under the RAP project, in September 2015, the core group of the RAP developed a strategic plan to guide the RAP's operations. The strategic planning process recognized the need for expanding the RAP membership and identifying 15 members as a resource group. From September 2015- March 2016, 414 religious actors, among them 88 women, were identified and targeted from all 34 provinces of the country. The religious actors participated in a six day peacebuilding and conflict transformation workshop in 7 regions. They developed individual action plans to resolve conflicts, promote a culture of peace, and facilitate dialogue between different conflicting parties. The RAP members jointly identified advocacy issues in each region during their regional meetings and selected a volunteer committee to ensure the implementation of their advocacy strategy and plan. In February 2016, a selected group of 20 RAP members will attend an exposure visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina to learn from the experiences of post-war reconstruction and peacebuilding. An end of project gathering is planned in March 2016 with participants from core and resource group and selected regional committees to assess the effectiveness of religious' leaders' mobilization for peace.

NCA is responsible for this project, while Sanayee Development Organization (SDO) is the implementing partner and Miller White Training and Consulting (MWTC) provides technical assistance and support. NCA,

MWTC and SDO have established a project group which oversees and provides guidance to the operations and implementation of the project. This project has been funded by the Royal British Embassy in Afghanistan with a total amount of **USD 610000**. The evaluation report will be used by the involved parties; Royal British Embassy, NCA; SDO and MWTC.

2. Purpose of the Evaluation

NCA seeks to conduct an external evaluation of the project “Religious Actors for Peace”. The purpose of conducting an external evaluation is to provide an independent assessment of the progress and performance of the programme to date against targets and comment on what has worked and why and what has not worked and why. Specific objectives of the evaluation include;

- To assess the effectiveness of the project and the extent to which it has achieved planned outcomes and objectives
- To analyse the project’s wider impact and contribution to peacebuilding in Afghanistan
- To identify best practise and advise how the programme could be strengthened to inform future programming, wider organisational learning and overall policy
- To make recommendations (at both operational and strategic level) regarding the future development the programme
- To make recommendations on how to strengthen women’s participation in the program

3. Implementing Stakeholders

Stakeholder participation is fundamental for NCA evaluations. The consultant is expected to conduct a participatory evaluation with meaningful involvement of program partners, right holders and other relevant stakeholders. Stakeholder participation is to be an integral component of evaluation design and planning; information collection; the development of findings; evaluation reporting and results dissemination.

Summary of stakeholders to be consulted:

Relevant Stakeholders
Ministry of Religious Affairs of GoIRA
High Peace Council - Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme Secretariat
NCA staff
The British Embassy in Afghanistan
Sanayee Development Organization (SDO)
Miller White Training and Consulting (MWTC)
Religious Actors (male and female)

4. Expected Output

The evaluation will result in an English report within the length of 15-20 pages; excluding appendices one page recommendations, 3 pages executive summary and maximum 16 pages presentation of the findings – outlining as well the overall evaluation methods, their appropriateness and evaluation constraints faced, if any. The annexes should contain any literature consulted, data collection instruments, the ToR, list of interviewees and any additional information required.

Prior to finalizing the evaluation report, the evaluator will submit a draft to NCA for comments and inputs.

5. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation methodology will be proposed by the evaluator. **NCA Afghanistan may recruit a national consultant to assist the evaluator with data collection, translation, and interpretation should the evaluator require.** Furthermore, the evaluator will prepare an inception report prior to the commencement of the evaluation field work. The inception report will present the proposed evaluation methodology, an evaluation matrix and instruments that will be used for the purpose of data collection in the field and evaluation timetable.

6. Evaluation Scope and Questions

While all OECD/DAC five criteria for evaluation are pertinent, the evaluation would focus on effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Addressing the evaluation purpose will require that the consultant to provide answers to the following specific questions – which could be refined in the inception report:

- *Effectiveness:* What has been the effectiveness of programme efforts and its positive role in building sustainable peace? What has been the contribution of programme across other sectors?
- *Efficiency:* Is the relationship between the program costs and results reasonable? Have the most efficient approaches been used during the implementation of the activities?
- *Impact:* What is the impact of the programme on the participants and wider peacebuilding? Is there evidence that the programme is having an impact (Positive/negative, intended or unintended) on key issues and conflict drivers?
- *Sustainability:* Is there evidence that the results of the programme can be sustained? To what extent has the program established processes and systems that are likely to support the continued implementation of the program? Has the project reached a critical mass of religious actors? What are the challenges and advantages of such a number of participants for the sustainability of the network?

Additional issues to be addressed by the evaluation

- *Gender aspects:* To what extent were gender aspects considered throughout the program?
- *Accountability:* To the extent not responded to above, to what extent does the project live up to accountability principles, in particular in relation to sharing of information, participation, and handling complaints, provided a complaint system is in place? To what extent have the involved partners followed up key accountability standards mentioned above with rights holders?
- *Networking and bridge building:* To what extent has the project encouraged (positive) relations between the different stakeholders (mentioned above under implementing stakeholders) on the one hand, and local/national government authorities on the other hand?
- Adequacy of management arrangements, compliance with accountability principles and monitoring systems in place.
- *NCA's added value:* What is the added value of NCA under this program?
- Make analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of the program –also related to programming risks- and identify key learning points emerging.

Appendix nr. 2

Questionnaire for RAP – participants at End of Project gathering in Kabul

1.) What are the topics and messages from Religious Actors for Peace (RAP) – project that you have delivered to the people in your region?

2.) What are the activities you have conducted?

Please describe **activities** to promote peacebuilding and conflict transformation in Afghanistan.

a) What was successful?

Please explain why you think it was successful

b) What was not so successful?

Please explain why you think it was not so successful

3.) How many people participated in or benefitted from the activities?

4.) What do you think is the most important role for religious leaders to promote peace in Afghanistan?

5.) What can Religious Actors for Peace do to improve the situation in your region?
How would you like to contribute?

Dialogue workshops in Herat and Mazar

Presentation of Dialogue Methodology;

- Ask open ended questions
- Listen actively
- Show interest
- Do not judge
- Reflect on the response
- Talk on behalf of yourself
- Be frank about your own opinion
- Do not expect agreement

Workshop questions

1) What is peace?

What is needed to build peace?

What are the main threats against peace in your community?

2) Role of religious leaders in peacebuilding

What is the role of male religious leaders?

What is the role of female religious leaders?

3) What are the activities you have conducted?

What was successful?

What was not so successful?

Appendix 3. Revised Strategic Plan.

“Peace building is an obligation from Allah”.

Religious Actors for Peace (RAP)

Final Strategic Plan.

2015-2018

1.0 Introduction.

The Religious Actors for Peace (RAP) initiative recognises and mobilizes the influence, potential and desire of religious leaders and actors to play a key role in peace building at all levels throughout Afghanistan. This strategic plan is a result of a three day meeting between a representatives (core) group of religious leaders, most of whom were elected and represent the 50 strong membership of the RAP network. The strategic planning meeting took place in Kabul 11th – 14th of October 2015 and was facilitated by NCA, SDO and CPC. The plan was produced to provide a disciplined approach to the management and development of RAP over the next three years.

2.0 Background and history

The network of Religious Actors for Peace (RAP) is a natural extension of a programme called Mobilising Religious Actors for Peace (MRAP) which engaged 50 Religious Leaders in basic training in peace building within Afghanistan as well as exposure/dialogue visits to either Malaysia or Turkey. The 50 Religious Leaders hosted an open conference November 2014 which was open to the public, diplomats, NGOs and government officials which addressed the issue of the involvement of Islamic Clerics and scholars in peace building. This conference provided them with a platform to share the learning from the training and study/dialogue visits they had undertaken with a wider influential audience.

In September 2015, 9 religious leaders joined with the existing 50 members. These new members together with a number of existing members constitute the resource group of RAP. The first task of the core group is the training a further 400 religious leaders from throughout Afghanistan through regional events. They will also play a key role as RAP organises itself both regionally and nationally.

3.0 Management and staff.

RAP has a leadership team which is called the Core Group and which has been elected by the membership to provide leadership and direction to the network. The network presently employs no staff and is heavily reliant upon SDO and NCA for the convening of meetings and events.

4.0 Organisational Vision

The vision of RAP is:

“An Afghanistan which is free from ethnic and religious hatred where the work of Religious Leaders brings peace within and between religious and ethnic groups through the promotion of Islamic studies and practical peace building actions at all levels of society”.

5.0 Values of RAP.

The values of RAP are underpinned by the peaceful teachings of the holy scriptures of the Quran and the examples set by the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) and include:

- Specialization.
- Respect for difference.
- Non-violence.

6.0 SWOT Analysis.

National Analysis	Individual Analysis
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep knowledge of Islamic teaching. • Growing knowledge of practical peace building. • Mutual support among members. • Respect for each other's ideas and opinions. • Shared commitment to peace building processes. • Increasingly strong relationships between members of the RAP network. • Wide geographical spread of members. 	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from international bodies on peace building. • Support from Islamic countries on peace building and conflict management experiences. • The prominent role of other Islamic peace builders around the world.
<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of decision making opportunities for members. • Need for more communication between members and partners (NCA/SDO). • Lack of staff for co-ordination and project development. • Lack of common group identity. • 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of support from Government. • Threats by opposition members. • Opposition from other religious actors. • Ethnic and religious prejudice. • Lack of female participants for exposure visits without muharam.
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of well-respected and positioned Ulema in the communities and society. • People's trust on Ulema • All Educational institutions • Good relations of the RAP members • Ability of the Ulema to convene in a place and share their ideas • Friday Prayers is a good opportunity to share ideas and promote peace. 	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media and publications • Civil movements for peace • Technical and financial support of NGOs • Technical and financial support of (private sector) traders, businessmen • Support from the government and other state institutions • Regular international exposure visits
<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of facilities. • Lack of agreement/ acceptance. • Lack of participants/ members. • Ethnic conflicts within RAP. 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of security • Lack of responsibility of security forces. • Existence of drug dealers and smugglers. • Political and military disturbances. • Slow performances from judicial and justice sectors • Cultural influence of outsiders and outside agencies.

7.0 Strategic Objectives (SO).

SO 1. To advocate for and act to address the root causes of violent conflict.

SO 2. To reduce discrimination of all kinds.

SO 3. To improve the level of trust within and between religious, ethnic and political groups.

SO 4. Contribute to institutionalising the peace process particularly at community level.

SO 5. Facilitating the development and sustainability of RAP and encouraging co-operation within and between RAP members, the Resource Group and the Core Group.

SO 6. Promoting support for the Rule of Law.

SO 7. Increase people's awareness about and support for peace.

8.0 Specific Objectives

<u>Strategic objective</u>	<u>Specific objectives.</u>
SO 1	<p style="text-align: center;">SO 1. To advocate for and act to address the root causes of violent conflict.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The creation of religious centres which serve the community in many ways as well as act as a location for religious practice. 2. The cooperation of group members with the core group to strengthen RAP and extend the reach of the RAP network. 3. Using audio, picture and broadcast media. 4. Using religious ceremonies to spread messages of peace. 5. Improving and strengthening education in accordance with Islamic principles and teaching related to peace. 6. Improving economic conditions and employment opportunities. 7. Reforming politics 8. Improving psycho-social services particularly for victims of violence. 9. Fight against non-religious cultures and norms. 10. Fair implementation of the law. 11. Finding ways for current country's conflict resolution <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Finding out root causes of war <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By communicating with external dimension - Communicating with surrounding nations - Seeking help from international communities - Seeking help from Islamic nations b) Seeking roots of internally conflicts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communicating with Afghan nation - Seeking help from elders and religious actors - Bringing changes in laws that cause conflicts, this action will be based on national and religious understanding.

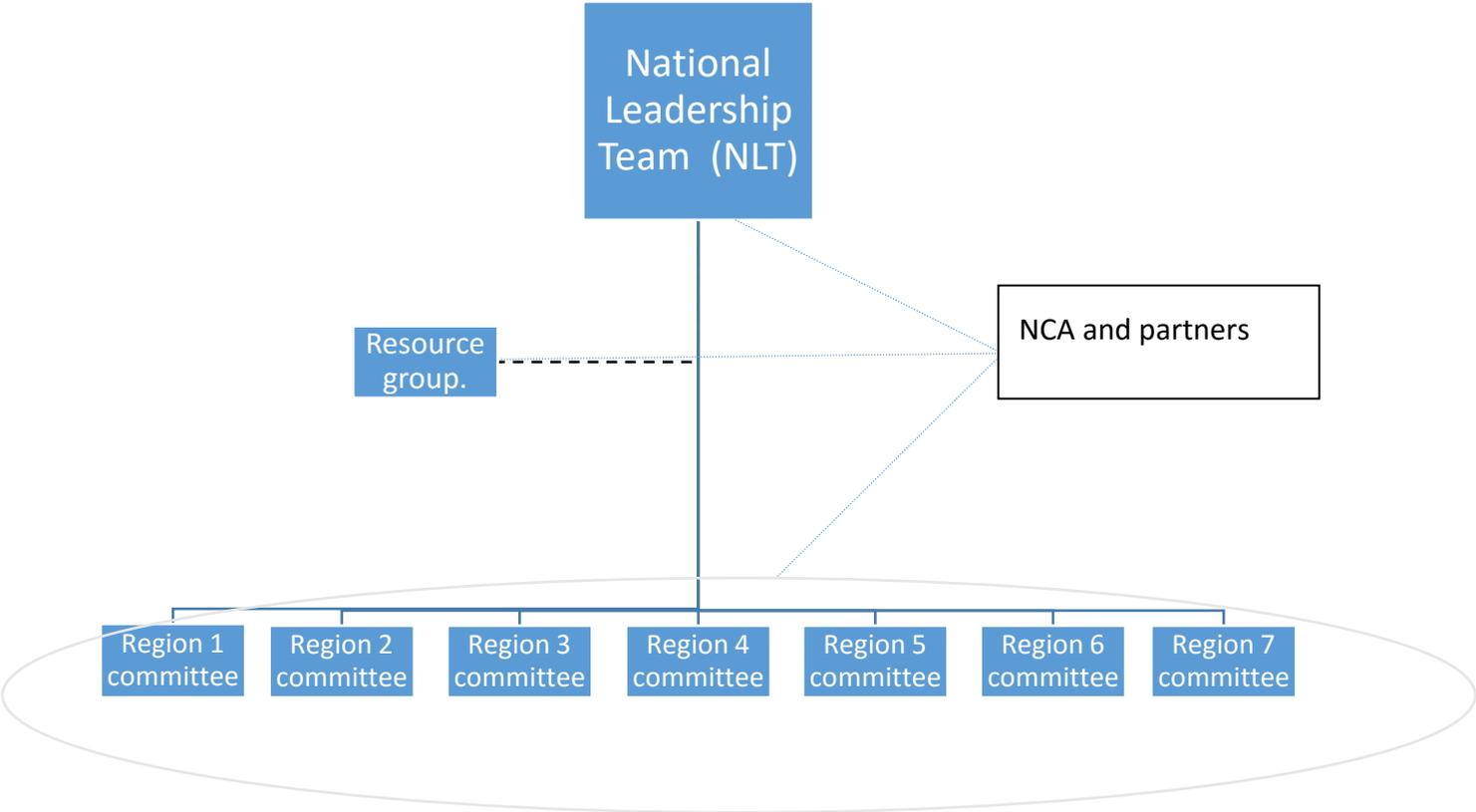
SO 2	<p>SO 2. Increase people’s awareness about and support for peace</p>
SO 3	<p>SO 3. Promoting support for the Rule of Law.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To conduct talks and seminars in issues of peace for local audiences. 2. Encourage and facilitate schools and madrassas to devote more time to study of peace. 3. Use the social media to broadcast talks and messages of peace and violence reduction. 4. Conduct seminars on peace and violence reduction for specific sectoral audiences. 5. In general day to day affairs RAP members should use every opportunity to promote peace. Using posters and stickers to sensitise the wider community on issues of peace.
SO 4	<p>SO 4. To reduce discrimination of all kinds.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As individual citizens, everyone should be aware of the laws of the state through education in schools, madrassas and the Mosque, and should be aware of their responsibility to abide by it. 2. Spreading awareness for people about the importance of policy and Islamic law 3. Through understanding and accepting each other 4. Helping each other in understanding the law and policy <p>Upon ignorance toward the law implementation, people should not stay quite but to make them support our policy and Islamic law</p>
SO 5	<p>SO 4. To reduce discrimination of all kinds.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through communication including use of the media to promote equality and reduce discrimination. 2. Through the removal of ignorance, prejudice and discrimination between religious and ethnic groups. 3. The appropriate behaviour of RAP members will set an example to others to treat every citizen equally within the teachings of the Quran and prophetic traditions. 4. Through the promotion of a culture of peace, tolerance and equality of opportunity will grow and discrimination will reduce. <p>Schools and Madrassas will be encouraged and facilitated to teach equality of opportunity for all Afghans.</p>
SO 5	<p>SO 5. To improve the level of trust within and between religious, ethnic and political groups.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using religious studies and lectures in schools, madrassas and the mosque to reduce religious and ethnic hatreds by conveying messages of peace from the Holy Quran and prophetic traditions. 2. Using Friday prayers to encourage more inter-ethnic and inter religious co-operation and respect. 3. Building relationships between different ethnic and religious groups using the relationships and networks that exist between RAP members and ethnic or religious institutions in the country. 4. Using the media to disseminate messages of tolerance for all ethnic and religious groups. 5. Setting an example through RAP members respect for the opinion and ideas of other ethnic and religious groups.

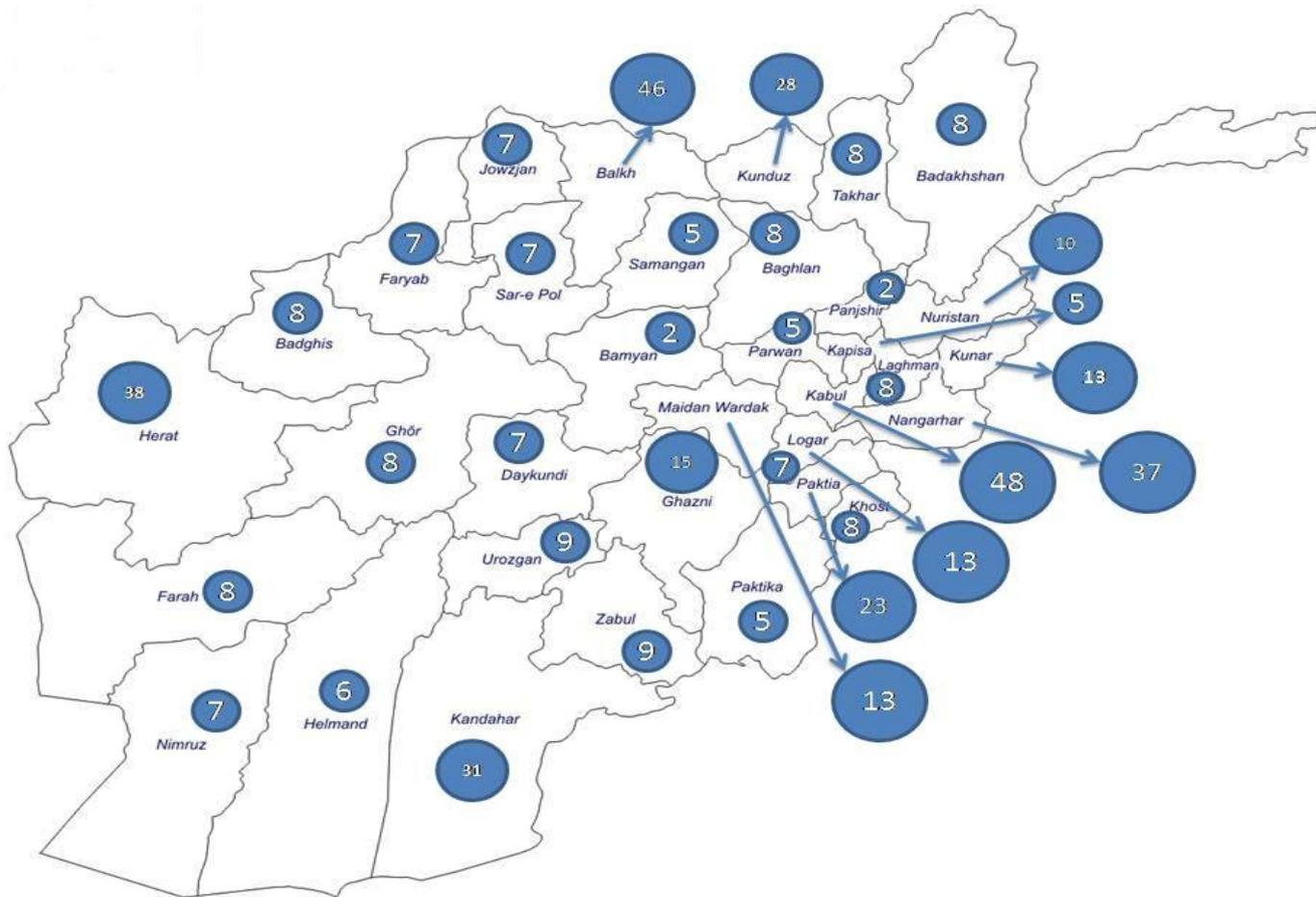
SO 6	<p data-bbox="472 192 1445 226">SO 6. Contribute to institutionalising the peace process particularly at community level.</p> <ol data-bbox="376 259 1366 383" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="376 259 1366 315">1. By interacting with Ministry of Haj and Religious Affairs, HPC, PPC, Ulema Councils and introducing them to our community. <li data-bbox="376 327 1366 383">2. By preaching at Friday prayers about religious and social gatherings, progress, and achievements of the peace process.
SO 7	<p data-bbox="424 481 1437 537">SO 7. Facilitating the development and sustainability of RAP and encouraging co-operation within and between RAP members, the Resource Group and the Core Group.</p> <ol data-bbox="376 548 1461 990" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="376 548 1461 604">1. More frequent meetings and gatherings between RAP members within the financial constraints of SDO/NCA. <li data-bbox="376 616 1461 705">2. Support and strengthen the capacity of RAP Network members to access to the networks and institutions which will enable them to spread and establish a culture of peace among the people. <li data-bbox="376 716 1461 739">3. Continuation of training workshops. <li data-bbox="376 750 1461 795">4. Providing opportunities for the sharing of learning between RAP members across the provinces and regions. <li data-bbox="376 806 1461 862">5. The core group should have a clear set of responsibilities and should formalise the operational procedures of the RAP network. <li data-bbox="376 873 1461 929">6. More autonomy should be given to RAP through the employment of a small staff team to provide support and co-ordination to the network. <li data-bbox="376 940 1461 990">7. Financial support from supporting organizations. Institutionalization of institutes for peace building and conflict resolution.

Note on Economic report from NCA

Was the project completed on Budget?		
Planned total Cost	Actual Total Cost	Variance (<i>difference between planned and actual costs</i>)
USD 601507 (Based on revised budget)	USD 457682	USD 143825
Please explain any variance in planned and actual expenditure, where the difference is greater than 5%		
<p>Below are some of the reasons for budget under-expenditure. Most of the savings were made in completed activities. Only one activity was stopped in March 2016.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Single bed accommodation were planned for all participants attending trainings, regional and national meetings. However, all participants were provided with double occupancy rooms that save at least 40% of the planned costs in all in country accommodation budget lines. Also, 50% of the target beneficiaries were budgeted to have accommodation when attending meetings in regions but some of them chose to stay with their relatives and didn't require accommodation. 2. Food cost during the training and regional meetings were budgeted for best food available. However, only average food was available. This also reduced the overall budget. 3. During the exposure visit in Bosnia: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Most of the participants travelled by road to Kabul before leaving to Bosnia. b. The exposure visit was completed one day before the actual plan. c. Interpreter was hired from Bosnia saving travel and accommodation costs of one person. d. Some saving was made in choosing local transportation in Bosnia. e. Cheaper hotel accommodation was negotiated than originally anticipated. 4: Most of the action plan follow up was carried out by phone. 5: Disbursement of mini grants were stopped after we learned that religious actors were not able to produce financial documents for spending their designated mini grant to implement their regional advocacy plans. Only some activities were allowed to take place that could be financially verified. 		

Appendix 5





Appendix 6

The Geographical Reach of Religious Actors for Peace (RAP) in 2016

This Map of Afghanistan with all the provinces indicating the number of RAP-participants in each place, is from Ian Whites, MWTC

