



**Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**  
**Independent Directorate of Local Governance**  
**DISTRICT DELIVERY PROGRAM**

**INITIAL LESSONS LEARNED**

This paper attempts to analyze the initial lessons learned after the launch of DDP in the districts of Nad Ali and Marja in Helmand. The analysis covers four major areas of program governance: organization, vision, leadership and stakeholder engagement, benefits realization management, and planning and control. The analysis is based on direct observations made during IDLG field missions to Kandahar, Nad Ali and Marja as well as a number of discussions held with various stakeholders during regular DDP planning meetings and a conference held at the UK Embassy on 11 April 2010.

The summary of the lessons learned is given below followed by more detailed description.

<b>Area</b>	<b>Lessons learned</b>
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <i>Strong central team is required to implement the program</i></li> <li>□ <i>Leading role of the PGO in DDP implementation on the ground through the Sectoral Services Division</i></li> <li>□ <i>Effective coordination mechanisms at the provincial and district level should be established</i></li> </ul>
Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <i>DDP should be put in the wider context of the Subnational Governance Policy</i></li> <li>□ <i>DDP should be considered as a catalyzer for the existing national service delivery programs rather than a standalone program</i></li> </ul>
Leadership and Stakeholder Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <i>Local population should be engaged from the beginning</i></li> <li>□ <i>Direct engagement of high-level government officials is useful for addressing existing challenges and bottlenecks</i></li> <li>□ <i>Coordination with donors and ISAF is critical for implementation</i></li> <li>□ <i>Strategic communication is at the heart of DDP</i></li> </ul>
Benefits Realization Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <i>The structure and staffing levels for the district administration should be made clear and government recruitment should be prioritized</i></li> <li>□ <i>DDP implementation requires adequate local capacities</i></li> <li>□ <i>The training in five common functions is important but further tailored training is required</i></li> <li>□ <i>Adequate engagement of the security sector is a critical condition for the DDP success</i></li> </ul>
Planning and Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <i>As much as possible should be completed prior to securing the district (launching DDP implementation)</i></li> <li>□ <i>District assessments must be coordinated and linked</i></li> <li>□ <i>Clearly defined budget envelope is required for meaningful DDP planning</i></li> <li>□ <i>District Development Plans, where they exist, may need revision</i></li> </ul>

## **1. Organization**

- 1.1 ***Strong central team is required to implement the program.*** DDP involves coordination and cooperation between many agencies at the national, provincial and district levels. A strong centralized monitoring capacity is required to track implementation progress and to take timely corrective and preventive actions. All this required a strong central team with good connections to the implementing ministries, donors and other stakeholders. IDLG has already started establishing the DDP Secretariat for this purpose. At the same time, the Secretariat should not substitute the local authorities, particularly the Provincial Governor's Office, which has the leading role in DDP. The bare minimum of expertise required from the DDP Secretariat (and PRTs) is two subnational governance experts and one subnational public financial management advisor.
- 1.2 ***Leading role of the PGO in DDP implementation on the ground through the Sectoral Services Division.*** DDP provides an opportunity for the Governor's Office to develop its capacities to plan, direct and coordinate local development and service delivery. All efforts on the ground should be coordinated through the Sectoral Services Division at the Governor's Office. To ensure that the PGO leads, it must be exposed to the DDP prior to the actual launch of the program. The first visit of the DDP Secretariat should be internal and focused on the PGO, particularly its Sectoral Services Division, to ensure that they develop a good understanding of the program and their roles in its implementation before the launch of DDP. A DDP Team headed by the provincial Executive Director or Head of the Sectoral Services Division should be formed in each PGO.
- 1.3 ***Effective coordination mechanisms at the provincial and district level should be established.*** There is a need to strengthen coordination mechanisms at the sub-national level, such as the Provincial Development Committee (PDC), Provincial Administrative Assembly (PAA) and the District Administrative Assembly (DAA). In particular, the PDC has an important role in presenting unfunded requirements to donors. Donors and PRTs are important players at the subnational level. Their participation in the work of these bodies and support in the form of technical expertise will improve coordination and will make the government more effective.

## **2. Vision**

- 2.1 ***DDP should be put in the wider context of the Subnational Governance Policy.*** DDP is an opportunity to introduce and test some provisions of the Subnational Governance Policy and prepare the provincial and district authorities for full implementation of the Policy, such as provincial (and district) planning within a specific envelope. Therefore, efforts should be made to align DDP implementation with the SNG Policy arrangements.
- 2.2 ***DDP should be considered as a catalyzer for the existing national service delivery programs rather than a standalone program.*** Careful consideration should be given during the planning and implementation stages of the DDP how to support and bring to the district the existing service delivery programs run by the ministries. To the extent possible, DDP should focus on the extension of the existing programs to the district (public administration reform, healthcare, education and so on), using the available funds, rather than designing new projects.

## **3. Leadership and Stakeholder Engagement**

- 3.1 **Local population should be engaged from the beginning.** It is important that goals and objectives of DDP be shared with the population at an early stage, that the population through their elected representatives (ASOP shura and other bodies) be involved in all stages of DDP, including planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. A representative shura should be established as early in the process as possible. Shuras have an important role to play in verifying the baseline of service delivery and security (and they can help improve community security), but they need to be educated about the modalities of their engagement, including planning guidelines, strategic communication and so on. Public consultation and decision-making points should be identified to make sure that the public and ASOP shura are involved at the critical junctures of the program development.
- 3.2 **Direct engagement of high-level government officials is useful for addressing existing challenges and bottlenecks.** Our experience shows that one visit by a Minister or Deputy Minister can resolve problems which the provincial authorities haven't been able to resolve for weeks or months. A program of visits will be developed for each DDP district to ensure a steady and regular flow of high-level officials.
- 3.3 **Coordination with donors and ISAF is critical for implementation.** Most importantly, donors provide funding for DDP implementation but they also have other resources, such as expertise, transportation facilities and so on, which the Government may be lacking at the moment. Unless funding is secured on time, delivery of services and project implementation will be delayed and the momentum will be lost. Other resources owned by the donors and ISAF may play a significant role in facilitating government deployment and operation in the district. Consistency in donor support is very important. We have encountered situations where the same donor organization was represented by different people at different events, who did not know about the commitments made by their organization earlier.
- 3.4 **Strategic communication is at the heart of DDP.** DDP requires a continuous stream of time-adjusted strategic messages at the national, provincial and district levels. The DDP experience in Marja shows that government activities and achievements are not adequately communicated to the people. People remain largely unaware of the government's efforts and become susceptible to anti-government propaganda. Effective strategic communication requires unity of efforts by all stakeholders and the use of various techniques and means. ISAF can contribute to this task. Yet another important contribution by the military may be measuring the effects of strategic communication through their sources on the ground.

#### **4. Benefits realization management**

- 4.1 **The structure and staffing levels for the district administration should be made clear and government recruitment should be prioritized.** There is a need for the approved structure and staffing levels for the district administration agreed between the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) and the relevant line ministries at the central and provincial levels. Recruitment for the district administration should be more focused and prioritized in terms of the sectors and positions to be recruited first, with the others to follow. This will allow the government to concentrate its limited resources on a few key positions and will expedite the recruitment process.
- 4.2 **DDP implementation requires adequate local capacities.** This concerns particularly the Provincial and District Governor's Offices. Sustained capacity development efforts should be taken to develop the capacities of the PGO and DGO in longer-term and

short-term planning, situation assessment and gap analysis, application of service delivery standards, coordination and reporting. Where there is on-budget investment funds available (as in Helmand), support will be required to increase project management, procurement and monitoring and evaluation capacity (particularly in DGOs). The District Operating Manual may be the relevant tool for initial capacity building in these areas at the district level. A rapid capacity needs assessment may be conducted to identify capacity gaps and a training program may be devised and delivered to the PGO to facilitate DDP implementation. At the same time, other stakeholders should not be forgotten: there is also a lack of clarity in provincial line departments about what they are supposed to deliver, and they also need support to clarify their mandates. The Secretariat, donor organizations and PRTs will all contribute to local capacity development in the above areas. The ASOP project management team can also provide some valuable contribution to capacity development for the District shura.

- 4.3 ***The training in five common functions is important but further tailored training is required.*** The Civil Service Institute is responsible for delivering the training in five common functions to the existing and newly recruited staff. However, this training should be tailored to the conditions and requirements of a particular district. In addition, civil servants are likely to need training in specialized areas related to service delivery functions. Also, a system of on-the-job training and coaching should be designed and implemented, particularly for less experienced staff.
- 4.4 ***Adequate engagement of the security sector is a critical condition for the DDP success.*** The Ministry of Interior must be bound in the process to provide adequate security conditions for civil servants to enable the launch of public services. Also, Mol has the responsibility to make sure that population has adequate access to public facilities. Coordination with the Mol at the provincial and district level should be organized in a way to ensure that each planned improvement in governance and service delivery is realistic from the security point of view and supported by relevant security measures, if necessary.

## **5. Planning and control**

- 5.1 ***There should be a two-track DDP implementation process for various districts.*** DDP districts differ significantly by their security situation, presence of government, economic development and so on. There should be at least two different DDP implementation tracks: one for recently secured and underdeveloped districts and the other for relatively secure and developed districts.
- 5.2 ***As much as possible should be completed prior to securing the district (launching DDP implementation).*** Tashkeel verification, staff recruitment and training, procurement of facilities and equipment for the district administration, pre-assessment and development of draft delivery packages should be completed before the district is secured (or before the DDP is officially launched) to ensure speedy deployment of the district administration and launch of service delivery.
- 5.3 ***District assessments must be coordinated and linked.*** ISAF efforts to institute a system of regular assessments in critical districts are much appreciated. However, any such assessments at the provincial or district level must be agreed and aligned with the existing performance measurements systems used by the Government. IDLG is introducing a Provincial Performance Measurement System to be conducted annually and has recently developed a district assessment framework for the DDP districts. Military systems, to the extent possible, must be integrated and feed into the

Government assessment systems to avoid duplication and develop capacities in monitoring and evaluation at the subnational level.

- 5.4 **Clearly defined budget envelope is required for meaningful DDP planning.** Without such an envelope, DDP planning risks to turn into another wish list exercise. Unrealistic planning carries with it the risk of creating unrealistic expectations and undermining the entire program. It is important that line ministries and the district shura have clear financial guidelines for DDP planning. In addition, certain parameters will need to be established for projects proposals, such as scope and budget limits. Such an approach will also contribute to greater transparency and accountability.
- 5.5 **District Development Plans may need revision.** District Development Plans, where they exist, are likely to need revision for three main reasons: to bring them within the set budget envelope for DDP, to align them with the existing service delivery programs and ministerial plans, and to update them.