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|  | Capacity Development for Natural Resource Management | |
|  | Managing Afghanistan’s Rangelands and Forest Resources:  An Assessment of Institutional and Technical Capacity Constraints | |
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Managing Afghanistan’s

Rangelands and Forest Resources

An Assessment of Institutional and   
Technical Capacity Constraints

Kabul, June 2018

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# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **ADB** | Asian Development Bank |
| **ANDMA** | Afghanistan National Disaster Management Agency |
| **ARAZI** | Afghanistan Independent Land Authority |
| **CDC** | Community development council |
| **DACAAR** | Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refuges |
| **DAIL** | Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock |
| **GD-NRM** | MAIL’s General Directorate of Natural Resource Management |
| **EIA** | Environmental Impact Assessment |
| **ENR** | Environment & Natural Resources |
| **EU** | European Union |
| **FAO** | Food and Agriculture Organization |
| **FAO-AF** | FAO Afghanistan Country Office |
| **FRC** | Farmers Resource Center |
| **GEF** | Global Environment Facility |
| **GCF** | Green Climate Fund |
| **GHG** | Greenhouse Gas |
| **GIZ** | Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH or GIZ (in short) is a German development agency |
| **HOO** | High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption |
| **IASC** | Integrated Agricultural Service Centre |
| **ICT** | Information and Communications Technology |
| **ISA** | Investment Support Agency |
| **MADERA** | Mission d’Aide au Développement des Economies Rurales en Afghanistan |
| **MAIL** | Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock |
| **MRRD** | Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development |
| **MEW** | Ministry of Energy and Water |
| **MOBTA** | Ministry of Border and Tribal Affairs |
| **MOCN** | Ministry of Counter-Narcotics |
| **MOD** | Ministry of Defense |
| **MOF** | Ministry of Finance |
| **MOI** | Ministry of Interior Affairs |
| **MOJ** | Ministry of Justice |
| **MOMP** | Ministry of Mines and Petroleum |
| **MRRD** | Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation & Development |
| **NDC** | Nationally Determined Contributions |
| **NEPA** | National Environmental Protection Agency |
| **NCADPP** | National Comprehensive Agriculture Development Priority Program |
| **NGO** | Non-Governmental Organization |
| **NRM** | Natural Resources Management |
| **PROFOR** | Program on Forests (World Bank) |
| **RMA** | Rangeland Management Association |
| **SDC** | Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation |
| **SOE** | State-Owned Enterprise |
| **UN** | United Nations |
| **UNFCCC** | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| **UNDP** | United Nations Development Programme |
| **UNEP** | UN Environment (formerly United Nations Environment Programme) |
| **USAID** | United States Agency for International Development |
| **WBG** | World Bank Group |
| **WTO** | World Trade Organization |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government of Afghanistan is giving agriculture and natural resources management top priority in the country’s development. The National Natural Resource Management Strategy 2017–2021 (NRM Strategy), prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), in collaboration with other agencies and partners, calls for community-based management of the natural resources in Afghanistan. While restoring the resource base (rangelands and forest resources), is important for the rural economy, the Strategy also aims to generate employment to the tune of around 16.7 million man-days of unskilled labor and 1,500 skilled jobs over the course of 5 years, thus benefitting more than a million households. The Strategy’s successful implementation is dependent on enhancing capacity of the MAIL, as it places the ministry in a leading role for implementation of natural resources management programs, in partnership with stakeholders and the private sector.

**Approach**

An assessment of the capacity needs to implement the NRM Strategy requires that specific benchmarks and indicators are developed to determine status and identify gaps in local capacity for NRM management. Accordingly, MAIL and the World Bank worked collaboratively to develop these benchmarks through a participatory assessment using an internationally recognized forest governance assessment tool (PROFOR), duly customized and adapted to the Afghanistan conditions. The NRM Capacity Assessment Workshop involved about seventy people, representing national and provincial agencies concerned with NRM, development partners, NGOs, academics, and others, with a special focus on *Paktia, Paktika, Kunar, Nooristan, Samangan* and *Badghis* provinces. It served as the basis for assessing capacity development needs against 45 benchmark indicators. Stakeholder consultations were also conducted at the national and provincial level to identify stakeholders that influence decision-making, management, and use of rangelands and forests. Government officers, key partners, and donors were consulted and an online poll, to better understand the relative influence of various stakeholders, was carried out.

Table 1: Summary of Quality Scores

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Capacity Category** |  | **Average Score** |
| ***A. Institutional*** | | |
| Laws |  | 2.0 |
| Policies |  | 2.5 |
| Coordination & Structure |  | 3.3 |
| Transparency and Accountability |  | 1.7 |
| Rule of Law |  | 2.3 |
| ***B. Technical*** | | |
| Administration of government |  | 2.5 |
| Land and resource management |  | 2.8 |
| Stakeholder relations, training, & research | | 2.7 |
| Enforcement and disputes |  | 2.0 |

**Results**

On the one hand, the assessment reconfirmed the capacity development needs and activities planned as part of objective 4 of the NRM strategy. On the other, it provided additional granularity on what is required, and helped prioritize the proposed activities.

This assessment, consisting of 45 indicators, grouped into 9 categories, examined MAIL’s institutional and technical capacity; the overall results were suboptimal in all 9 categories. Table 1 shows consolidated indices for each category based on these indicators. Indicators were scored by consensus on a scale of one (*poor* rating, indicating strong disagreement with the statement or strong need for improvement) to five (*good* rating, indicating strong agreement with the statement or no need for improvement). Group average scores vary between 2.0 and 3.3. No indicator received the maximum of five on the scale. The next two sections describe the details of the assessment results.

***Institutional Capacity***

Institutional capacity includes sound policies and laws, good institutional arrangements, effective allocation of human and physical resources, and appropriate coordination among the various arms of government.

*Laws and policies*: The identified areas for improvement include access of people to rangelands and forest resources, business freedom within the sector, congruence between the ownership rights under the law with people’s expectations and traditional ideas, consistency of basic laws governing land ownership with the new NRM Strategy, and the quality of the rangelands law.

*Coordination & structure*: Areas for improvement include horizontal cooperation of main NRM-related ministries (MAIL, Ministry of Energy and Water, NEPA, Finance, Justice) on natural resources matters, vertical cooperation of the national, provincial, and municipal governments with each other, and vertical cooperation within the MAIL headquarters and provincial offices.

*Transparency and accountability*: Areas for improvement include regular independent audits and methods for spotting wastage of resources, corrupt and illegal activities in MAIL and other natural resources agencies, access of the agencies and stakeholders outside of government to information and to decision-making processes in the management of rangelands and forests, and finally, consultations and involvement of the stakeholders who are likely to be affected by those decisions.

*Rule of Law*: Areas for improvement include anti-corruption measures in the management of natural resources, ability of courts or other decision-making bodies for fair and well-informed resolution of disputes over natural resources and limiting of the involvement of politicians in natural resources management decisions that are purely technical in nature.

***Technical Capacity***

Technical capacity includes both human capacity (resource management skills, organizational management skills, social outreach skills, law enforcement and anti-corruption skills, and research and education skills) and physical capacity (information technology, communications equipment, vehicles, and offices).

*Administration of government*: Areas for improvement include demarcating the appropriate staff levels and budgets for natural resources management in the headquarters, provincial, and district offices, enhancing skills of mid-level managers necessary for planning, budgeting, and overseeing the work of a team, recruiting qualified staff, and ensuring adequacy of required equipment for them to do their jobs, as well as developing proper coordination between governmental agencies and donors to make long-term improvements in resource management.

*Land and resource management*: Areas for improvement include skills in surveying, mapping, boundary marking and, otherwise, identifying the land ownership or use rights, improving agencies’ skills to monitor and evaluate management activities, and enhancing the government’s commitment, skills, and resources to address problems with land use, tenure, and titling.

*Stakeholder relations, training, and research*: Areas for improvement include building research capacity to fill knowledge gaps as well as improving the social skills of staff so as to help them maintain good relationships with stakeholders, besides expanding efforts to consult with stakeholders and increasing ability to train enough NRM professionals.

*Enforcement and disputes*: Identified areas for improvement include effectiveness in preventing, detecting and prosecuting violations of the natural resources laws and in collecting and distributing the revenue due from the use or harvest of resources.

Additional priority areas for reforms were also identified by the experts. In terms of institutional capacity, priority areas for reforms include improvement of the laws, harmonizing and building consistency between the NRM Strategy and other sectors’ policies, developing better horizontal coordination between the ministries, improving MAIL’s vertical structure and division of authority, instituting anti-corruption measures, and improving the skills of high-level administrators.

Even greater prioritization is required in the following areas of MAIL’s technical capacity: coordination between government and donors, better capacity and skills for resource inventory, planning and management, resolving land tenure issues, capacity to deal with disasters, better enforcement of the laws, and improvement of skills, training and relationships with communities and local stakeholders.

***Staffing***

The current structure and staffing of the MAIL’s General Directorate of Natural Resource Management in Kabul and provinces do not address the needs and essential functions of the Department. It is not responsive to the emerging priorities for daily management of Afghanistan’s natural resources and does not provide effective services to most of the population. Staffing of the NRM Directorate is not adequate (see Figure 4). From 536 staff employed by the NRM Directorate, 42 percent are at the central apparatus in Kabul (Table 5, p. 17); the remaining 32 percent of staff are in 33 province centers. From 367 districts in the country, only 134 districts have NRM staff, constituting the remaining 26 percent. A large number of districts and towns – 236 from the total of 402 in the country (59 percent) – do not have permanent NRM staff at all (Table 6).

***NRM Stakeholders***

Stakeholder analysis revealed that key players in the sector are diverse yet disconnected (see Figure 2), with many informal and formal actors in rural areas and a large number of Government actors that may influence NRM Strategy implementation. Civil society organizations came out as having a comparatively low level of influence, while insurgents are perceived to have a strong (and almost certainly negative) influence. Security and control issues, if not addressed, will affect the success of fieldwork.

The stakeholder analysis identified almost fifty actors in five categories: Government; International Development Partners; Civil Society; Local Actors; and Illegal Users and Disrupters. The identified stakeholders with the strongest influence were the Office of the President, MAIL, NEPA, and MRRD, and MEW (Government); livestock grazers, harvesters of resources, dealers and traders (local actors); insurgents, Taliban, and black-market traders and shippers (illegal users and disrupters); USAID, FAO, WB, and UNEP (donors); and the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas, Universities, and the Wildlife Conservation Society (civil society). The identified stakeholders with the least influence were: the courts, the Ministries of Justice and Defense, and the Commerce and Industry Association.

**Recommendations**

Taking into consideration the policy reviews, stakeholder analysis, identified baseline benchmarks of institutional and technical capacity, and priorities for reforms identified by the experts, a set of recommendations is proposed, mainly for the MAIL. These priority recommendations, summarized below, are expected to have the potential to address the capacity challenges identified by the report.

* 1. **Strengthening Rule of Law, Anti-Corruption Measures, and Dispute Resolution Mechanisms:** 
     + institute and make public regular independent audits of MAIL’s NRM activities, increase the wages of civil servants so that they do not need alternative sources of income, publicize corruption prosecutions
     + run education programs for rural communities about the laws and their legal rights, and provide mechanisms for them to report corrupt, illegal, and wasteful activities
     + improve coordination between MAIL and law enforcement agencies, strengthen prevention of illegal trans-boundary trade through linking with the Interpol’s Environmental Crime Network.
  2. **Improving Legal Framework:**
     + take up and complete the development, enactment and operationalization of priority policies and rules, most importantly, the Rangeland Law, and required additional bylaws; identify capacity and resources for their implementation and enforcement
     + address land tenure issues for better management and securing private investments in natural resources management, make land policies consistent and harmonized with national traditions, guarantee access of resource users to resources, and clarify and simplify policies for NRM-based private businesses.
  3. **Reorganizing and Strengthening the MAIL’s GD-NRM Department:**
     + increase number of staff and merit-based functionality at provincial and district levels for providing better technical support to farmers and communities, and establish internal staff oversight as well as rewards mechanisms and processes
     + establish a regular, comprehensive national inventory using a combination of remote sensing and permanent sample plots, and determine allowable use levels for the sustainable management and regeneration of rangelands and forest resources
     + enhance staff leadership and organizational skills of MAIL’s high-level management, and give field staff training in the necessary social and organizational skills to deal with stakeholders
     + establish a working group of natural resources professionals from across different agencies for drawing up a watershed level management plan and developing demonstration projects.
  4. **Working with Communities:** 
     + create user associations – forests and rangelands – for them to be able to better access resources and manage them sustainably; support this with capacity development efforts
     + connect small private businesses to the markets, thereby defining and incentivizing women’s participation in business development
     + consider an “apprentice ranger” approach for preparing trained natural resources managers in the field, employing youth and creating small businesses
     + create a national Feedback and Grievance Redressal Mechanism (FGRM) for reporting irregular rangelands and forest activities and the handling of related conflict resolution
  5. **Coordinating Collective Action:**

MAIL has a leadership role in addressing broader institutional issues in collaboration with other government agencies for more effective management of natural resources. It can:

* + - continue to bring together leadership from key ministries, donors, and other organized stakeholders for coordinating planned programs and projects
    - advocate for an integrated landscape management approach by bringing together key agencies (forests, rangelands, water, agriculture, land tenure, and rural development issues), identifying priority landscapes and watersheds, communities, organizing stakeholders and putting in place collaboration mechanisms
    - open the sector to applied research, academia and civil society; organize a professional society of Rural Development Professionals in Afghanistan for building capacity and networks that extends across departmental lines
    - improve engagement of donors by establishing a Donor Dialogue Group to better understand and coordinate joint investment activities in rangelands and forest management, and to strengthen capacity for projects’ integrity, procurement, financial management, implementation arrangements, environmental and social risk management, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

\*\*\*\*

# INTRODUCTION

1. Rangelands and forest resources carry significant developmental potential across Afghanistan. The country has been traditionally agricultural, with 30.2 million hectares of rangelands - five times larger than the entire area of Sri Lanka. Rangelands occupy up to 47 percent of the land area and are used by over 80 percent of Afghan households for sustenance and commercial agriculture. The country’s 1.8 million hectares of forest area is half of that in Nepal. However, both rangelands and forest resources are severely degraded and continue to decline. This decline threatens the livelihoods of rural communities that are highly dependent on these resources. Experts suggest that restoration of these resources, through an integrated rangelands, forests, and watersheds management approach, offers great potential for jobs creation, a raise in labor productivity, which will directly benefit women, the poor, the landless, and nomads, as well as reduction in poverty and food insecurity in rural areas.
2. The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), in collaboration with other agencies and partners, prepared the National Natural Resource Management Strategy (2017–2021) that calls for community-based management of the natural resources in Afghanistan through science-based interventions. The NRM Strategy envisages a significant amount of work with local communities and focuses on engaging, supporting and empowering them with custodianship, knowledge and extension services, along with investments in priority areas of agroforestry, afforestation, rangelands management, medicinal plants, biodiversity conservation, and value chains supporting jobs and economic production.
3. Support was requested by MAIL to conduct an assessment that would identify capacity constraints and suggest recommendations to address them. Responding to the MAIL’s request, the World Bank team, jointly with the MAIL’s General Directorate of Natural Resource Management, conducted a participatory capacity assessment via stakeholder consultations, a technical workshop and a high-level roundtable. Consultations and analysis of the NRM Strategy helped identify preliminary constraints that were further benchmarked through an internationally recognized assessment methodology and tool developed by the Program on Forests (PROFOR) and duly adapted to Afghanistan’s conditions (Chapter 1). The analysis of stakeholders influencing use of rangelands and forests, the findings of the assessment of MAIL’s capacity and the analysis of the identified capacity constraints are offered to strengthen these developmental challenges and needs (Chapter 2). Finally, Chapter 3 offers a list of recommendations for the MAIL to consider in its capacity development efforts.

# ASSESSING THE CAPACITY OF MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, IRRIGATION, AND LIVESTOCK (MAIL)

## Afghanistan’s NRM Strategy is Dependent on Enhanced Capacity

1. **The NRM Strategy is a comprehensive sectoral policy with significant and far-reaching environmental and economic benefits.** In outlining its four main objectives (Box 1), the NRM Strategy places a strong emphasis on improving and restoring forest (130,000 hectares), enhancing rangelands (500,000 hectares), enhancing rangelands and areas under medicinal plants (2,500 hectares), and combating desertification (20,000 hectares). In addition, seven additional protected areas will be declared, increasing the total protected area to 237,000 hectares and developing ten protected areas in total by 2021.
2. **The successful implementation of the NRM Strategy will contribute to the economic growth of the country, particularly in its rural areas**: it will generate employment to the tune of about 16.7 million man-days of unskilled labor and create 1,500 skilled jobs over the course of 5 years, impact more than a million households, and generate 30,000 forestry-related jobs. Restored pistachio forests will have the potential to generate an annual income of USD 713 million after 7–10 years. Similarly, forest plantations of *Chilghoza* pine will be able to generate annual production of about USD 356 million after 15 years of maturity.
3. **A detailed analysis of the Strategy’s activities indicates that their successful implementation hinges on significant improvement in capacity development.** The NRM Strategy recognizes the broader capacity gaps. At the central level, policies, institutions, and governance all require strengthening. Natural resources planning and management for maximization of economic returns, community-focused planning, project implementation and management, rights-based approaches to promote local enterprises, climate risk assessment and climate adaptation measures, science and research are the major categories where capacity needs to significantly increase, according to the Strategy.
4. **Each of the Strategy’s three core components[[1]](#footnote-2) require addressing specific capacity needs at the field level.** For example, for strategic objective 1 (forests), MAIL, through its provincial and district offices (Directorates of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock or DAILs) will have to deliver a cluster of activities aimed at strengthening or creating community-based institutions in forest management. Local Forest Management Associations will have to take the leading role in fruit and nut tree management, conservation, and production as a broader part of a potentially lucrative value chain. Similarly, for strategic objective 2 (rangelands), the strategy calls for community-based management of rangelands. This will be done through establishment of Rangeland Management Associations (RMAs), conservation of 210,000 hectares of rangelands, restoration of 205,000 hectares of rangelands through implementation of grazing principles and public awareness and awarding 420 small projects for income generation activities.

Box 1: The Strategy has four main objectives

* Promote community-based forest management that includes conservation, restoration, reforestation, afforestation, sustainable utilization & local-based value addition, and watershed improvement, creating resilient, climate-adapted, and sustainable economies for rural and peri-urban communities.
* Promote community-based management of rangelands and medicinal plants through strengthening community-based interventions, introducing good practices, and scaling up indigenous knowledge, creating better livelihoods for local and herder communities, controlling desertification, and mitigating and adapting to climate change.
* Practice co-management and conservation of protected areas to conserve biodiversity, promote ecotourism, and increase resilience to climate change.
* Develop institutional and human capacity development to build an enabling environment for achieving the expected outcomes of the national NRM Strategy.

## How the Capacity Assessment was Done

1. **The Strategy’s capacity development priorities required indicators and benchmarks to gauge progress in specific areas, including at the provincial level.** In order to validate the above-mentioned priority areas and to create a baseline of benchmarks for capacity development interventions at the national, sub-national, and local levels, MAIL, in close collaboration with the World Bank, organized and conducted an NRM Capacity Assessment Workshop. About seventy people participated, representing national and provincial agencies concerned with NRM, development partners, NGOs, academics, and others, with a special focus on *Paktia, Paktika, Kunar, Nooristan, Samangan* and *Badghis* provinces.

Box 2: Where has the PROFOR tool been used?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Country | Purpose & Use of Assessment | Suppor-ted by |
| Uganda  (May 2010) | Forestry seen as engine of growth in country’s five-year plan; thus, a need to improve forest governance. Uganda Forest Authority has failed to act on the findings. However, findings being used by CSOs and international donors. | PROFOR, WB |
| Kenya  (mid 2011) | To resolve governance related bottlenecks seen as obstructing the ongoing forest sector reforms. Policy brief submitted to government. A forest governance advisor appointed. Findings considered for baseline inclusion in REDD+ strategy. | Finland |
| Burkina Faso  (early 2012)  Carbon-FIP | To design forest governance components in its FIP investment plan. Findings disseminated widely. Top priorities for action identified and being considered for inclusion in FIP projects. | PROFOR, WB |
| Russia  (mid 2012) | To incorporate stakeholder inputs into the ongoing revision of its forest sector policy framework; to focus on solutions to cross-border illegal logging. Findings being incorporated in policy revision; next round of diagnostics under consideration; results discussed at international conference on illegal logging in 2012. | DFID, PROFOR, WB |
| Madagascar  (late 2012) | The Malagasy Nature Alliance seeks to provide the government with a vision for better forest governance. Dissemination of report and discussions with the government. | GIZ |
| Congo, DRC (late 2012) | The importance of good governance in achieving the objectives of REDD+. Dissemination of report and discussion on 12 action steps | CARPE-USAID, IUCN |
| Liberia (April 2013)  Carbon-FCPF | As input into the development of its REDD+ preparation plan and identifying indicators to monitor improvements in governance. Report and elements of an action plan completed. Governance indicators for inclusion in Liberia’s REDD+ M&E framework under finalization. | WB, PROFOR |
| Lao, PDR (Oct. 2014)  Carbon-FCPF | As input into the development of its REDD+ preparation plan. Report and elements of an action plan completed. | WB, PROFOR |
| Congo DRC  (March 2015) | Governance known to have problems, in particular regarding small-scale loggers. Report delivered to Ministry; results fed into larger WB study of the forest sector | WB, PROFOR |

1. **The Program on Forests (PROFOR) guidance and related tool for diagnosing strengths and weaknesses in forest governance[[2]](#footnote-3) was selected for the assessment** (Box 2)**.** The PROFOR tool consists of a set of indicators and a protocol for scoring the indicators. This approach to assessing forest governance was first tested in Uganda in 2010 and in Burkina Faso in 2011. Since then, the assessments have been conducted in a number of countries in Africa, Russia, and East Asia and have provided necessary information for the respective governments’ decision making (Box 2). The tool’s indicators are organized under three pillars: (i) how the building blocks of governance, such as laws, policies, and institutions appear on paper; (ii) how policy and implementing decisions are made; and (iii) how well governance functions in practice.
2. **The PROFOR’s tool was adapted to Afghanistan’s conditions and further customized to expand the assessment beyond forest governance.** Specifically, the frameworks and indicators for assessment of technical and institutional capacity were modified to reflect the expanded scope of the assessment that would cover both forests and rangelands. Afghanistan’s NRM Governance Assessment Plan was developed and vetted with the NRM Directorate and several national experts. The specific capacity assessment questionnaire was designed by the international experts of the World Bank, based upon the PROFOR tool, and with consultation with representatives from MAIL/GD-NRM. The assessment comprised a series of questions with 45 indicators.
3. **The next steps involved review and mapping of the proposed indicators against the NRM Strategy’s LogFrame** **outputs.** Each of the Strategy’s objectives and its outputs were considered for capacity development (technical and institutional) and relevant indicators were mapped against them. As a result, both forest-and rangelands-related objectives of the Strategy were fully covered with a range of specific technical and institutional indicators meant to be gauged during the NRM Capacity Assessment Workshop. The total of forty-five indicators was related to the Strategy’s outputs.
4. **The objective of the exercise was both to identify gaps in capacity and to produce a baseline to use when measuring improvements in capacity in the years to come.** First, the workshop participants were requested to report on the current level of capacity (baseline capacity) and the importance of developing capacity (priority of capacity development) for each question or theme. The workshop break-out groups scored each indicator by consensus on a scale of one (*poor* rating, indicating a strong disagreement with the statement or strong need for improvement) to five (*good* rating, indicating a strong agreement with the statement or no need for improvement). In the scoring, no indicator received a five. Second, the participants were asked to vote on the priority areas for reform. Each stakeholder at the workshop cast up to five votes to indicate his or her priorities for capacity building.
5. **Stakeholder mapping and analysis was done to better understand the interests of affected parties in Afghanistan.** The effort began with an interview of World Bank staff in the Afghanistan country office. The project consulted the literature to expand and refine the resulting stakeholder list and then, with the assistance of MAIL, conducted an opt-in online poll to better understand the relative influence of the various stakeholders.

# ANALYSIS OF THE KEY FINDINGS

## Stakeholders Landscape: Diverse, Complex and Disconnected

1. **The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) is the central ministry in charge of rangelands and forest resources.** MAIL has a general directorate for natural resources management, which is the main agency charged with implementing the new natural resources management strategy (Figure 1).

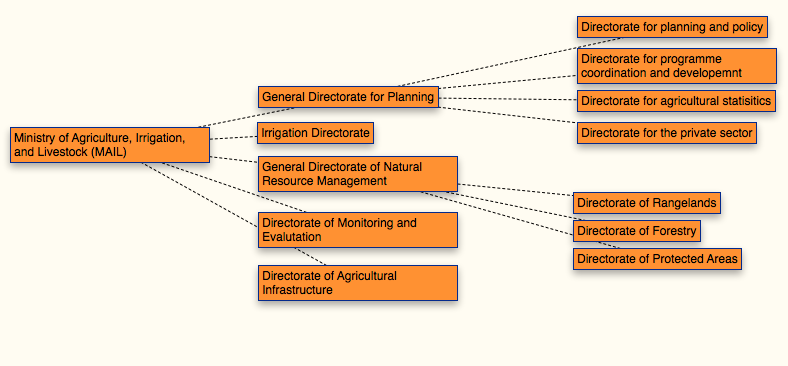


Figure 1: The Structure of MAIL

1. **As part of the assessment, a stakeholder analysis was conducted to better understand which other key players exist and how they influence and control the use of rangelands and forests in Afghanistan.** The analysis revealed the list of stakeholders involved in management and use of forests and rangelands resources, as well as their relative perception of influence on the successful implementation of the NRM Strategy. Specifically, within the constraints of the NRM implementation, almost fifty actors were identified (Figure 2).
2. **These stakeholders fall into five categories**: entities within the Government; International Development Partners; Civil Society actors, including NGOs, universities, and the media; Local actors and actors in the legal chain of commerce; and Illegal users and other disrupters. The identified stakeholders with the strongest influence are the Office of the President, MAIL, NEPA, and MRRD, and MEW on the Government side; livestock grazers, harvesters of forest and rangelands resources, dealers and traders among the local and chain-of-commerce actors; insurgents, Taliban, and black market traders and shippers on the side of disrupters; USAID, FAO, WB, and UNEP on the side of the donors; and finally International Center for Agricultural Research and in Dry areas, Universities and Wildlife Conservation Society among the educators and civil society. Although no less important, several stakeholders came up as relatively lower in perception of influence: namely, the courts, Ministry of Justice and Defense, and the Commerce and Industry Association.

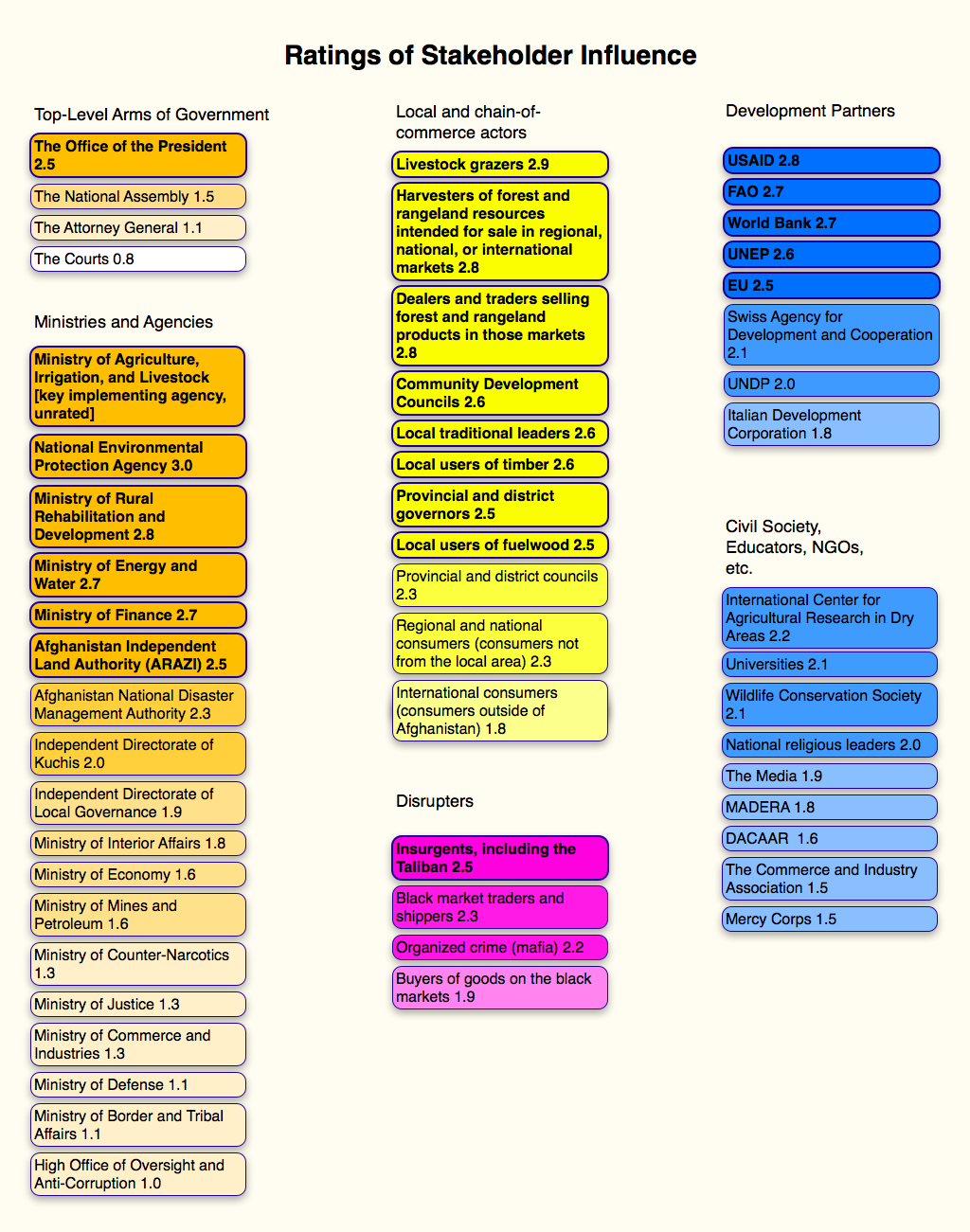


Figure 2: This diagram shows average ratings of stakeholder influence on Strategy implementation of the various groups and actors outside of MAIL. The ratings were translated into a zero-to-three scale, with zero indicating no influence and three indicating high influence

1. **Several key points emerge from this analysis.** First, there are many informal and formal actors in rural areas who will have strong influence over the success of the implementation of the strategy. The second point is the large number of Government actors that may influence implementation. Over half of Afghanistan’s ministries and several independent agencies are on the list. A third is the comparatively low levels of influence assigned to civil society organizations. A fourth is the strong (and almost certainly negative) influence of insurgents. Security and control issues, if not comprehensively addressed, will strongly affect the success of fieldwork.

Box 3: Methodology for Stakeholder Analysis

The following approaches were used to produce the stakeholder map and evaluate the relationships:

* a “Net-Map” session held with staff in the Bank’s Kabul office, to identify a rough set of stakeholders and to see their connections.
* literature researched, particularly to understand government organization and function.
* a rapid online assessment (N=12) conducted, with the assistance of MAIL, asking participants to rate stakeholder influence on the implementation of the NRM Strategy.

## Identified Capacity Development Needs

1. This section compares the assessment findings against the capacity development activities proposed in the NRM Strategy and provides the detailed findings of the assessment.

### Verifying the Findings against the Strategy’s Capacity Development Needs

1. **While the assessment reconfirms the requirement for the capacity development efforts planned in the NRM strategy, it additionally provides further granularity of the needs and prioritizes the proposed activities.** The assessment organizes the capacity needs into institutional and technical categories and details them further in the capacity groups. *Institutional capacity* includes sound policies and laws, good institutional organization, effective allocation of human and physical resources, and appropriate coordination among arms of government. *Technical capacity* includes both human capacity (resource management skills, organizational management skills, social outreach skills, law enforcement and anti-corruption skills, and research and education skills) and physical capacity (information technology, communications equipment, vehicles, and offices). The following table compares the findings of the assessment against the Strategy’s capacity development needs.

Table 2: Comparison of the capacity development needs

| **Capacity Group** | **Capacity Needs from NRM Strategy** | **Assessment Findings** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***A. Institutional*** | | |
| Laws | Enabling policies, laws regulations, such as forestry policy, rangelands law, medicinal plants law, wildlife conservation and hunting management law | Average quality rating is 2.0 of 5.0 maximum, the second lowest rating among all capacity groups. Improvements required in quality of rangelands law, making land policies consistent and harmonized with traditions, guaranteeing good access of resource users to resources, clarifying and simplifying policies for NRM businesses. |
| Policies | Adopting select bylaws, provisions and regulations, such as social forestry regulations, Green Afghanistan regulations, protected area policy and others | Average quality rating is 2.5 of 5.0 maximum. Policies are consistent with the NRM Strategy, yet other sectors are not harmonized with NRM. |
| Coordination & Structure | Introducing NRM Stakeholders Coordination Committee for promoting accountable, transparent, participatory and inclusive coordination mechanism. Improved management structure for increased capacity of forest, rangelands, protected areas staff, including women. | Average quality rating is 3.3 of 5.0 maximum. Horizontal and vertical cooperation between the relevant ministries requires improvements. Vertical authority division and cooperation within the MAIL requires reform. |
| Transparency and Accountability | Aligning NRM anti-corruption practices with national policies and approaches in procurement, staff recruitment, empowering public-private partnerships. | Average quality rating is 1.7 of 5.0 maximum, the lowest rating among all capacity groups. Measures required to increase access to NRM-related information, access of stakeholders to decision making, and to institute regular and transparent audits of government activities. |
| Rule of Law | Average quality rating is 2.3 of 5.0 maximum. Measures required to address corruption practices in NRM management, lawful dispute resolution by courts, keeping reliable land records, excluding involvement of politicians. |
| ***B. Technical*** | | |
| Administration of government | Administering short term courses, hiring master trainers, improving infrastructure and facilities of national and provincial offices, engaging educational and academic institutions, establishing MOUs for improved education | Average quality rating is 2.5 of 5.0 maximum. Measures required to increase staff and budget levels, recruitment of qualified staff, adequacy of required equipment, improving skills of mid-level management and leadership skills of high level administrators, much better coordination between government and donors. |
| Land and resource management | Establishing forest and rangelands information databases and socio-economic surveys, establishing forest and rangelands management associations, developing management plans, promotion of watershed practices | Average quality rating is 2.8 of 5.0 maximum. Measures required to address land tenure issues and to deal with disasters, enhancing various skills (resource surveying, M&E, implementation), as well as establishing rangelands and forest management plans, resource inventories. |
| Stakeholder relations, training & research | Joint research with communities, establishing new research and training centers | Average quality rating is 2.7 of 5.0 maximum. Adequate capacity for research and social skills for building relationship with local communities to hold stakeholder consultations require significant improvements. |
| Enforcement and disputes | Recognizing needs for strengthening law enforcement, recruiting staff | Average quality rating is 2.0 of 5.0 maximum, second lowest ranking capacity group. While personnel seem familiar with the law, the ability to effectively enforce the NRM laws and to deal with resource rent and revenues, and disputes, are extremely low. |

1. Detailed findings are presented in the following two sections. Table 3 shows consolidated indices based on several sub-indicators for each capacity group.

### MAIL’s Institutional Capacity

1. **Laws**: Low scores from the respondents were received on indicators showing access of people to resources (“The law gives rural people good access to resources”, scored 1 of 5) and business freedom in NRM sector (“The law imposes no needless burdens on business”, scored 1 of 5). Respondents also disagreed with the statements that ownership rights under the law are in harmony with their expectations and traditional ideas (“The laws governing land ownership and use are in harmony with traditional ideas about land ownership and use”, scored 2 of 5) and that basic laws governing land ownership are consistent with the new NRM Strategy (which scored 2 of 5). Respondents were in agreement that good basic laws governing forest resources existed (“We have good basic laws governing renewable natural resources, and the laws are consistent with the new Natural Resource Management (NRM) Strategy”, scored 4 of 5). However, rangelands laws received scores of 2 of 5.
2. **Policies**: Respondents gave low scores to indicators on the congruence and consistency of development policies in other sectors with NRM needs and the Strategy (“Policies in other sectors, such as agriculture, energy, mining, transport, infrastructure development, land-use planning and so forth, are in harmony with national policies for natural resources”, scored 1 of 5), but agreed that current national policies are consistent with the NRM strategy (which scored 4 of 5).

Table 3: Summary of Quality Scores

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Group of Capacity Indicators** |  | **Average Score** |
| ***A. Institutional*** | | |
| Laws |  | 2.0 |
| Policies |  | 2.5 |
| Coordination & Structure |  | 3.3 |
| Transparency and Accountability |  | 1.7 |
| Rule of Law |  | 2.3 |
| ***B. Technical*** | | |
| Administration of government |  | 2.5 |
| Land and resource management |  | 2.8 |
| Stakeholder relations, training, & research | | 2.7 |
| Enforcement and disputes |  | 2.0 |

1. **Coordination & Structure**: No low scores were recorded. Several indicators scored a moderate 3 of 5, including those on horizontal cooperation of main NRM-related ministries (“The national ministries, including MAIL, Ministry of Energy and Water, NEPA, Finance, Justice, and so forth, cooperate well with each other on natural resource matters”), vertical cooperation (“The national, provincial, and municipal governments cooperate well with each other on natural resource matters”), and on vertical cooperation within the MAIL (“MAIL headquarters and provincial offices work together well”). Respondents were in agreement about the division of authority within the MAIL at its various levels (“Authority within MAIL is clearly and properly divided among headquarters, provincial, and district offices”, scored 4 of 5).
2. **Transparency and Accountability:** Respondents gave a low score to the indicator on regular audits of government activities (“The government uses regular independent audits or other effective methods to spot waste and illegal activity in MAIL and other natural resource agencies”, scored 1 of 5). Two other indicators received scores 2 of 5: on access to NRM-related information (“Agencies inside of government and stakeholders outside of government can easily get information about laws, plans, and government actions that affect natural resources”) and on access of stakeholders to the decision-making process (“When making decisions about natural resources, government officials generally consult with or involve the stakeholders who will be affected by those decisions.”)
3. **Rule of Law:** Respondents gave a low score to the indicator regarding corruption (“Corruption does not affect the management of natural resources”, scored 1 of 5). Respondents also disagreed that people can rely on courts for resolution of NRM-related disputes (“People can rely on courts or other decision-making bodies for fair and well-informed resolution of disputes over natural resources”, scored 2 of 5). Respondents gave moderate scores, 3 of 5, to indicators on involvement of politicians (“Politicians do not get involved in natural resources management decisions that are purely technical”) and reliable land records (“The country has reliable land records of land ownership and use rights”).

### MAIL’s Technical Capacity

1. **Administration of government:** Respondents gave a low score to the indicator about appropriate staff and budget levels (“Staff levels and budgets for natural resources management in the headquarters, provincial, and district offices are appropriate”, scored 1 of 5); followed by other disagreements, scored 2 of 5, such as on skills of mid-level managers (“Mid-level managers in government agencies have skills necessary to run programs, such as skills in planning, budgeting, and overseeing the work of a team to assure that the team achieves its goals”). Recruitment of qualified staff (“Agencies are able to recruit and retain the qualified staff that the agencies need”), adequacy of required equipment (“Agencies have enough vehicles, telephones, radios, computers, and other equipment to do their jobs”), as well as proper coordination between governmental agencies and donors (“Agencies and donors work together well to make long-term improvements in resource management”) received low scores of 2 of 5. Moderate scores, 3 of 5, were given to indicators about skills and leadership of high-level administrators (“High-level administrators in government agencies that deal with natural resources have good management and leadership skills”), procurement system (“Agencies have competitive, fair, and open systems for procurement”), skills in general (“At all levels, people in the agencies generally have the skills needed to do the jobs that they are assigned”), and adequacy in operation and maintenance of the equipment (“Agencies have the ability to operate and maintain their equipment and structures”). Adequacy of office and storage space received 4 of 5 (“Agencies have enough offices, storage areas, and other structures to do their jobs”).

**Land and resource management:** Respondents gave 2 of 5 scores to indicators about staff technical and monitoring skills (“Agency personnel have good skills in surveying, mapping, boundary marking, and otherwise identifying the lands where the government claims ownership or use rights”), as well as indicators pertaining to M&E capacity of agencies and government’s capacity to address land tenure problems (“The government has the commitment, skills, and resources to address problems with land use, tenure, and titling”). Moderate scores, 3 of 5, were given to indicators on agencies’ capacity to inventory both forests and rangelands’ resources (“Agencies have skills and resources necessary to inventory renewable natural resources and present the results in useful forms”), environmental impact assessments (“Agencies have enough technical ability to produce environmental impact assessments”), management plans for forests (“Agencies have enough technical ability to produce long-term management plans and short-term operational plans for resource management”). Indicators on rangelands management planning scored 4 of 5; and were also moderate on agencies’ implementation skills (“Agencies have the skills and resources to implement management plans”), as well as to deal with disasters (“Agencies have the skills and resources to deal with natural threats to resources, such as fire, insects, or disease”).

1. **Stakeholder relations, training, and research:** Respondents gave a low score to the indicator about the existence of adequate capacity for research to fill knowledge gaps (“Agencies or the universities have the ability and funding to identify gaps in our knowledge of natural resources and to support scientific research to fill those gaps”, scored 1 of 5), followed by another low score, 2 of 5, on social skills of agency staff (“Agency staff have the social skills to maintain good relationships with stakeholders”).



Figure 3: Institutional and Technical Capacity Score Card

Stakeholder consultations (“Agencies make an effort to consult with a variety of stakeholders when making plans and decisions”) and the existence of ability to train enough NRM professionals (“Agencies and the universities have the ability to train enough students to meet the country’s need for natural resources management professionals”) received moderate scores, 3 of 5. A higher score, 4 of 5, was given to the indicator on the country’s capacity to educate resource users about good practices.

1. **Enforcement and disputes:** Respondents gave low scores to indicators about the government’s ability to effectively enforce the NRM laws (“The natural resource agencies, working with the police and courts, are effective in preventing or detecting and prosecuting violations of the natural resource laws”) and dealing with resource rent and revenues (“The government fairly and effectively collects and distributes the revenue due from the use or harvest of resources”) — for both, scores were 1 of 5. However, respondents agreed that agency personnel are familiar with laws that apply to their work, scoring that indicator as a 4 of 5.

Table 4: Voted Priority Areas for Reforms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Group of Capacity Indicators** | **Voted Priority Area for Reforms / Indicator** |
| ***A. Institutional*** | |
| Laws | Good laws |
| Policies | Other sectors harmonized with NRM |
| Coordination & Structure | Horizontal cooperation of ministries |
| MAIL's vertical authority division |
| Rule of Law | Corruption not affecting the management |
| Administration of government | Skills & leadership of high-level administrators |
| ***B. Technical*** | |
| Administration of government | Coordination between government & donors |
| Land and resource management | Inventory capacity for forests and rangelands |
|  | Implementation skills |
|  | Capacity to address land tenure issues |
|  | Capacity to deal with disasters |
| Stakeholder relations, training, & research | Social skills for relationship with communities |
| Stakeholder consultations |
| Enforcement and disputes | Ability to effectively enforce the NRM laws |

1. **Priority areas for reforms were further identified by the experts** (Table 4). In terms of institutional capacity, priority areas for reforms include improvement of the laws, harmonization of other sectors’ policies with the NRM Strategy, better horizontal coordination between the ministries, improvement in MAIL’s vertical structure and authority division, anti-corruption measures, and enhancing the skills of high level administrators. Even greater priority needs exist in the areas of MAIL’s technical capacity: coordination between government and donors, better capacity and skills for resource inventory, planning and management, resolution of land tenure issues, capacity to deal with disasters, ability to enforce the laws, and improvement in skills, training and relationships with communities and local stakeholders.

## Improving Management Structures and Capacities within MAIL

1. **The current Directorate’s organizational structure in Kabul, as well as in the provinces, does not adequately address its needs and support its essential functions.** It is not responsive to the emerging priorities for daily management of Afghanistan’s natural resources and does not provide effective services to the majority of the population (Figure 4). Major institutional challenges and deficiencies in the GD-NRM structure, as identified from the policy review and expert interviews, are the following:

* The current structure is mostly formed or based on political influences; staff are not stationed in the field (where there is a requirement to address communities’ needs and priorities) but are mostly concentrated in provincial offices; staff numbers are not calculated according to the vulnerabilities and priorities that are required to be addressed;
* farms and nurseries are concentrated in the center and provinces, while critical needs for sapling production, researches and demonstration of forestry, rangelands and medicinal plants practices are in districts and the field;

Box 4: An alternative model for NRM capacity needs in conflict-prone areas

The capacity assessment used in this project grew out of PROFOR’s governance assessment tool, modified to focus on capacity issues. As a partial check on any gaps or biases in that approach, consider the following alternative model of capacity needs. A guidance note from the UN Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action (2012) identifies four dimensions of capacity building for NRM.

• **Institutions and governance:** This dimension includes laws, policies, and organizations. The agencies include organizations conducting the management, but also organizations offering support, enforcing laws, resolving conflicts, and so forth. The institutions may be part of formal government, informal community governance, or civil society. The PROFOR-based tool covers institutions and governance fairly well.

• **Leadership:** Successful NRM programs usually have capable leaders. Leadership, organizational management, and persuasion are teachable skills. The PROFOR-based tool covers management skills, which stakeholders chose as a high priority for improvement, but may underplay leadership and persuasion skills.

• **Knowledge:** This dimension includes both technical skills and social skills. Social knowledge includes an understanding of past conflicts, good communication skills, and good conflict resolution skills. The PROFOR-based tool covers both technical and social skills fairly well, and the stakeholders chose improvement of social skills as a high priority.

• **Accountability:** This dimension embraces transparency and inclusion as well as accountability. Since accountability, transparency, and participation are three of the six principles of good governance that underlie the original PROFOR assessment tool, they are reflected in the PROFOR-based tool used in the present assessment. The scores on some of the indicators on auditing, transparency, and consultation tended to be low. Still, the participants did not flag these areas as priorities. This may indicate a bias of the participating stakeholders rather than a bias of the assessment tool.

* critical research and extension services are underfunded - these include research in NRM, genetic resources and their conservation, inventories and NRM sector planning, watershed management (soil and water conservation), extension, trans-boundary interventions and others;
* leadership, policymaking, and organization in the sector is weak; the experts and specialists in the MAIL Center and GD-NRM are mostly concerned with operations and execution of practices.

### Enhancing Strategic Staffing and Technical Skills

1. **The assessment highlights the needs for enhancement of management skills, improvement of procurement systems, recruitment of qualified staff, provision of the necessary equipment and skills trainings, and enhancement of the vertical division of authority within MAIL.** The analysis of the staff numbers employed by the NRM Directorate and their job functions reveals several gaps. First, in terms of numbers, from 536 staff employed by the NRM Directorate, 225 staff (42 percent) are at the central apparatus in Kabul (Table 5). Another 172 staff (32 percent) are located in 33 province centers. From 367 districts in the country, only 134 districts have NRM staff, with a total number of 139 staff in those districts (26 percent). A large number of districts and towns – 236 from the total of 402 in the country or 59 percent– do not have permanent NRM staff at all (Table 6Table 6: Number of districts and towns with and without NRM staff. Data: MAIL, 2018).
2. **In the context of staff expertise and relevance to the natural resources they supervise as part of their job description, the provincial directors noted that MAIL currently assigns the same staff levels for forest and rangelands management, regardless of the area to be managed.** The directors called for increased flexibility in staffing and budgeting. Revenues collected from local MAIL projects, such as nurseries, go to the national government and do not, necessarily, result in benefits for local people.

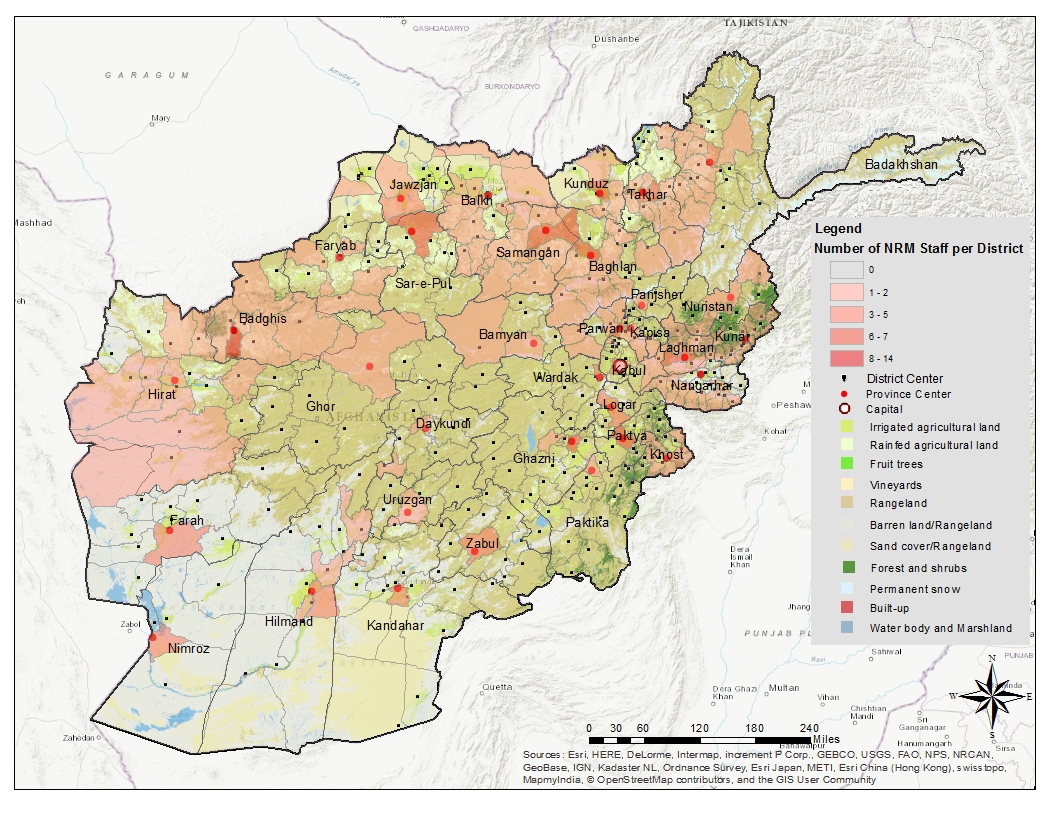


Figure 4: MAIL’s NRM Directorate human resources capacity at district level as related to forest and rangelands resources. Data: MAIL, 2018.

Table 5: Number of NRM staff by administrative divisions. Data: MAIL, 2018.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Region | MAIL central | Province Center | District | Total |
| Central Afghanistan | 225 | 24 | 14 | 263 |
| North East Afghanistan |  | 35 | 50 | 85 |
| East Afghanistan |  | 17 | 21 | 38 |
| South East Afghanistan |  | 29 | 10 | 39 |
| North West Afghanistan |  | 28 | 24 | 52 |
| West Afghanistan |  | 28 | 14 | 42 |
| South West Afghanistan |  | 11 | 6 | 17 |
| Grand Total | **225** | **172** | **139** | **536** |

Table 6: Number of districts and towns with and without NRM staff. Data: MAIL, 2018

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Region | With NRM staff | Without NRM staff | Total |
| Central Afghanistan | 20 | 40 | 60 |
| North East Afghanistan | 21 | 9 | 30 |
| East Afghanistan | 53 | 44 | 97 |
| South East Afghanistan | 29 | 26 | 55 |
| North West Afghanistan | 16 | 73 | 89 |
| West Afghanistan | 9 | 18 | 27 |
| South West Afghanistan | 18 | 26 | 44 |
| Grand Total | **166** | **236** | **402** |

1. **Improving communication and social skills of the field staff will contribute to better engagement and more meaningful relationships with communities.** The analysis revealed the need for the government to tap into existing community institutions, especially the CDCs, for educating local people about sustainable resource use, thus, closing the gap between government programs and communities. Communities will require both human and financial resources, greater involvement of stakeholders in planning and decision making, including through the MAIL’s NRM Stakeholders Coordination Committee. It was also suggested that MAIL officials should study the successes and failures of other community-centered programs. Village-level institutions, particularly CDCs, would play an important role in Afghanistan.
2. **MAIL has prepared a comprehensive NRM Reform Strategy to address the current gaps and challenges.** The NRM Structure Reform Strategy envisages a fundamental change in the structure of MAIL. The reorganization and restructuring will give more autonomy at the province and district levels to make utilization of the resources more efficient at the farm level, in order to provide better technical support through research hubs at the provincial level. This Reform Strategy identifies four major sectors for management (watershed management; forestry; rangelands and medicinal plants; and protected areas and wildlife) and introduces ecological zoning for more effective management approaches. The proposed reform plans to increase the number of staff from current level to approximately 2,250 staff (a fourfold increase), with the majority to be stationed at district and field levels, thereby supporting farmers and communities.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOLLOWING THE ASSESSMENT

1. Successful timely capacity development of the identified development needs will be key in increasing the potential of rangelands and forest resources for development and improving the lives of rural Afghans. Overall, the suboptimal results of the MAIL’s capacity assessment indicate the urgency for and the large scope of the capacity development efforts that are required. Taking into consideration the policy reviews conducted, stakeholder analysis carried out, identified baseline benchmarks of institutional and technical capacity, and priorities for reforms identified by the experts, the following recommendations are suggested, mainly for the MAIL.
   1. **Strengthening Rule of Law, Anti-Corruption Measures, and Dispute Resolution Mechanisms:** These areas of institutional capacity received the lowest scores; in addition, they are potentially further weakened by the high negative influence of disrupting stakeholders – insurgents, black market traders, and organized crime. Simplifying formal requirements and increasing transparency usually discourages corruption. MAIL can institute and make public, regular independent audits of its activities. The Government can increase the wages of civil servants so that they do not need alternative sources of income, and publicize corruption prosecutions as a public discouragement. Running education programs for rural communities about the laws and their legal rights and providing linked mechanisms to report corrupt, illegal, and wasteful activities will increase legal awareness and discourage corruption. Improved coordination between MAIL and law enforcement agencies can be achieved through signing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and instituting secondment programs for training personnel in law enforcement skills (evidence collection for MAIL officers and resource damage evaluation for law enforcement personnel – Interior Affairs, Counter-Narcotics, Justice, Defense, Border and Tribal Affairs). Prevention of illegal transboundary trade can be strengthened through joining the Interpol’s Environmental Crime Network and training staff in preparing and reporting such illegal cases.
   2. **Improving the Legal Framework:** Modernizing the outdated policies and legitimizing new communal custodianship is possible through completing the development, enactment and operationalization of priority policies and rules, most importantly, the Rangeland Law. While the Forest Law is considered adequate for its purpose, the rangelands policies and land tenure remain a key issue. The land tenure rights are essential for better management and securing private investments in natural resources management. Improvements are required in making land policies consistent and harmonized with national traditions, guaranteeing access of resource users to resources, and clarifying and simplifying policies for NRM-based private businesses. Policies require additional bylaws, capacity, and resources for their implementation and enforcement.
   3. **Reorganizing and Strengthening the MAIL’s GD-NRM Department:** Increasing the number of staff and applying merit-based functionality at provincial and district levels will provide better technical support to farmers and communities at local levels. Establishing internal staff oversight and rewards mechanisms and processes can ensure that actions in the provincial and district offices are efficient, lawful, and consistent with national priorities. Establishing a regular, comprehensive national inventory using a combination of remote sensing and permanent sample plots will create necessary management data on status and use of rangelands and forest resources. Another step would be to determine allowable use levels for the sustainable management and regeneration of rangelands and forest resources. Staff leadership and organizational skills of MAIL’s high-level management can be significantly enhanced via training and professional courses, regular performance monitoring, and professional evaluations. A training-of-trainers (ToT) program for dissemination of the technical skills or more focused direct approaches can give field staff the necessary social and organizational skills to deal with stakeholders. A working group of natural resources professionals across agencies formed with a purpose of drawing up a watershed level management plan covering forest, rangelands, water, agriculture, land tenure, and rural development issues can help demonstrate an integrated resources management approach. MAIL, in collaboration with partners, can establish several watershed demonstration projects focusing on a single watershed and addressing coordination issues across the ministries with the goal of replicating them in connected watersheds (basins).
   4. **Working with Communities:** Creation of user associations – forest and rangelands – will provide both better access to the resources and help manage resources more sustainably. This process will have to be accompanied by capacity building efforts, preparing resource managers, connecting small private businesses to the markets, and defining and incentivizing women’s participation in business development. An “apprentice ranger” approach can be considered for preparing trained resource managers in the field, first by training local youth in basic technical management skills, and then (after two or three years of service), giving them opportunities to start farming and running small businesses in their own community. This approach would help make joint gains in resource management, youth employment, and rural economic development. MAIL, in collaboration with Afghanistan Independent Land Authority (ARAZI), can create a national Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism (FGRM) for reporting irregular rangelands and forest activities and conflict resolution.
   5. **Coordinating Collective Action.** MAIL should play *the* leadership role in addressing broader institutional issues and advocating for a greater role of the courts, Justice, Commerce, Border and Tribal Affairs Oversight and Anti-Corruption offices. It has a leading role also in integrating rural development at watershed level by bringing together key agencies (forest, rangelands, water, agriculture, land tenure, and rural development issues),identifying priority landscapes and watersheds, communities, their boundaries, organizing stakeholders, and collaboration mechanisms. To better inform the planning and decision making, MAIL has to open the sector to applied research, academia and civil society. MAIL has an advantage in leading periodic round tables, bringing together leadership from key ministries, along with donors and other organized stakeholders. It can organize a professional society of Rural Development Professionals in Afghanistan for building capacity and networks that cross departmental lines. MAIL can also improve engagement of donors by establishing a Donor Dialog Group to better understand and coordinate joint investment activities in rangelands and forest management, as well as to help donors to share knowledge and build capacities for projects’ integrity, procurement, financial management, implementation arrangements, environmental and social risk management, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

1. Forest Management; Rangelands and Medicinal Plant Management; and Protected Areas and Wildlife Management. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Kishor, N. and Kenneth R. 2012. Assessing and Monitoring Forest Governance: A user’s guide to a diagnostic tool. Washington DC: Program on Forests (PROFOR). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)