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# Strengthening Indo-Afghan Ties: Mobilization and People's Participation

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# Acknowledgement



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## Background



- **Longest turbulent historical past**
- **Geo-centric proximity**
- **World community seeking political and economic leverage - post Bonn**
- **“ Afghans have done more damage to their own country than had the soviets”**
- **Violence and conflict prevails**

# Afghanistan – The Regional Neighbors



## Afghanistan – A Bird's Eye View

Given the remote location and difficult terrain, Afghanistan has been a choicest place for hiding people or caches of weapons and/or other contraband

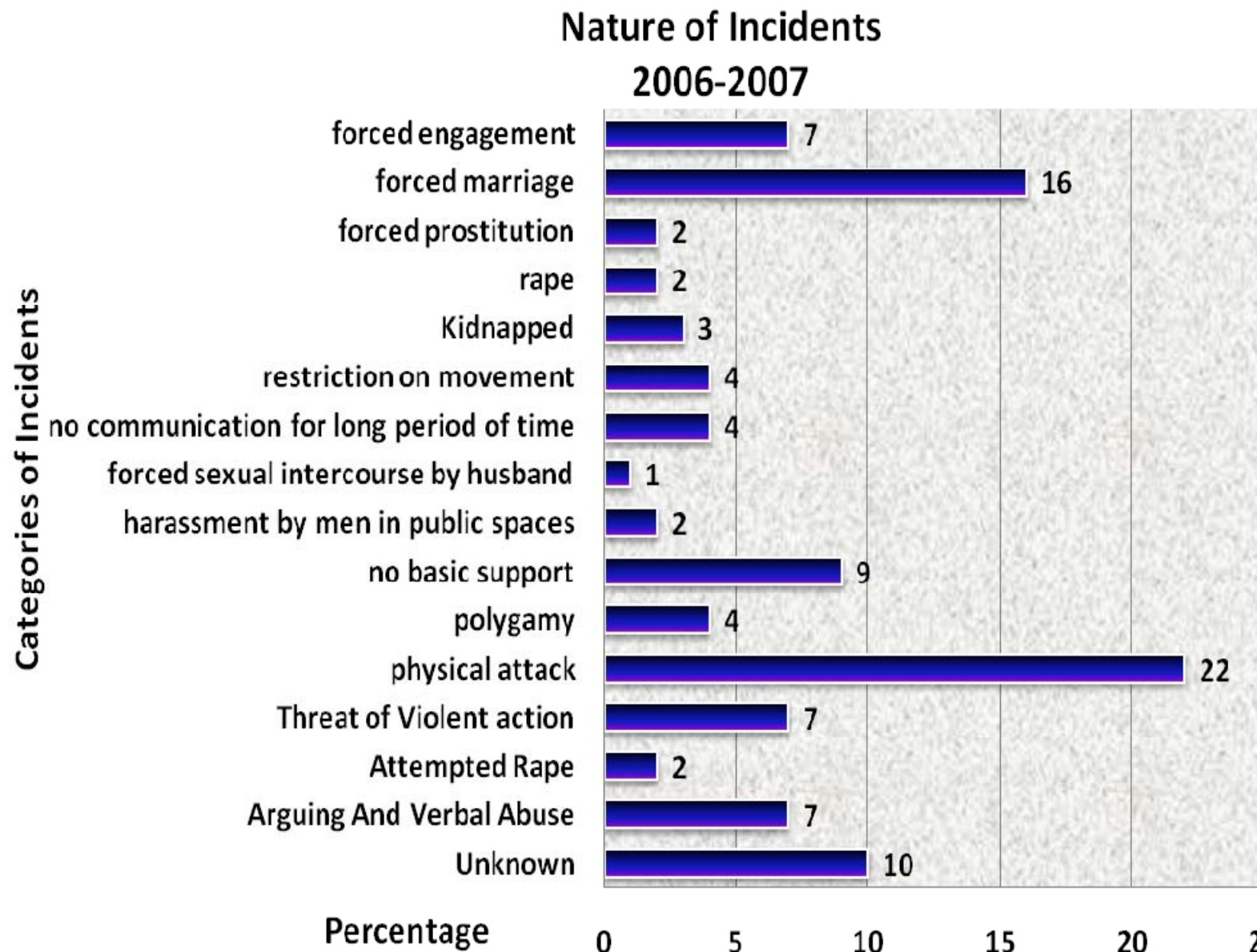
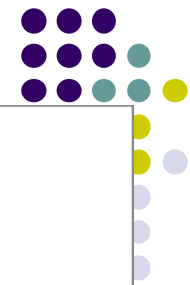




# Village Life in Afghanistan



# The Afghan Women (2006-2007)



Source : UNIFEM and MOWA

# Violence against Women



**‘Aisha’ – the 18 year old Afghan women whose nose and ears were chopped off for fleeing her abusive in-laws**



## Mobilization and People's Participation



**This is a time when the reconstruction efforts have been synergized towards combating insurgency and terrorism;**

**This is a time when dialogues, discussions, coercion and enticement seem to be wearing out,**

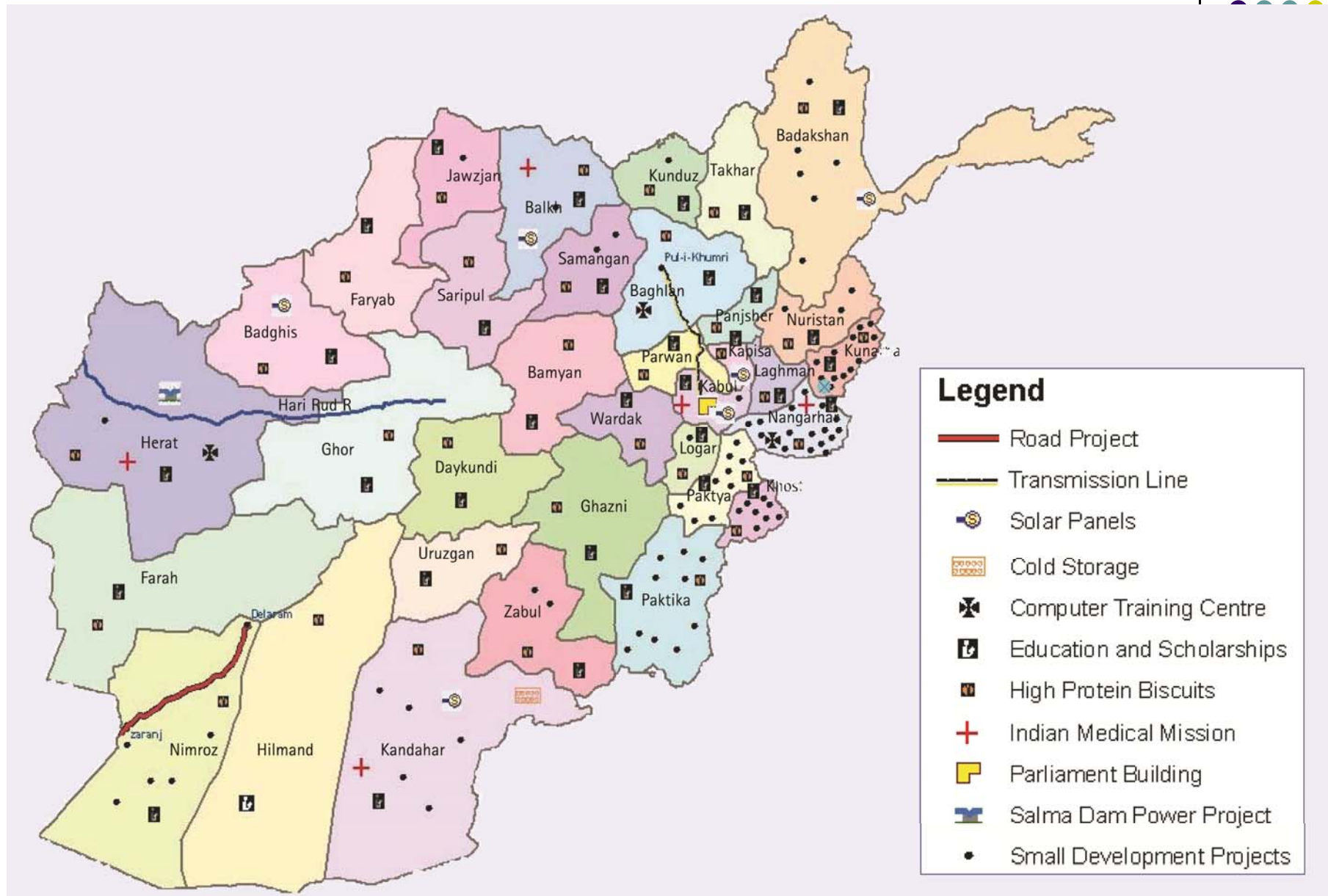
**So the only hope that exists is 'mobilization of community and people's participation' through capacity building measures and training of skill development which directly impacts the lives and hearts of people**

# Indian Contribution to Afghanistan



- **India's contribution towards reconstruction - 2 billion USD**
- **Some of the social projects involving the Afghan community are being implemented by**
  - **Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)**
  - **'Hand in Hand' (HH) (*Das te Badast*)**
  - **Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR)**
  - **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC), Ministry of External Affairs**
  - **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) project**
  - **Training courses were imparted in India with funding from other donors and facilitated by the Indian embassy**
  - **India-Afghanistan Foundation**

# Indian Assistance to Afghanistan



Source: <http://www.mea.gov.in/staticfile/Report.pdf>

## India - Afghan MOUs



- Several Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) aimed at carrying forward small development projects
- Establishing other small projects of less than \$1 million
- Training of Civil Servants
- Projects related to health, agriculture and rural development are in compatibility with those identified by the Afghan Government
- Most of these projects are being implemented in the sensitive areas of the south and south eastern provinces of Afghanistan besides other areas



## Micro Level Study



**Hand-in-Hand (Das Te Badast) – An NGO who have been a partner of the govt of India in implementing the development activity for the community in Balkh province.**

# Hand-in-Hand Afghanistan Organization



- **HIHAO's work is concentrated in north Afghanistan**
- **This is a region with a strong cultural binding and prevalence of Islamic law**
- **Thus all developmental activities imbibed the local culture and tradition in order to gain community support**
- **Under the Islamic law – interest free loans**
- **World Bank, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation Development – failed in providing interest free loans**
- **Finally the Government of India was approached and sanction was obtained to provide these loans**
- **Thus the Mass Mobilization into Entrepreneurship (MME) project was supported by the Govt of India along with private donors in Balkh and Badakshan provinces of north Afghanistan. Govt of India funded the project in Balkh province**
- **The period of the project was from 2008 to March 2010**

# Impressions



- Remnants of the conflict and war of several decades
- Innumerable craters on the ground
- Broken houses all along were a disturbing reality - clustered hutments
- Total Groups surveyed during the field visit was 12 HH Savings Credit Groups (SCG). Group consisted of 10 to 20 members.
- A focused group discussion with both male as well as female groups were held.

# Stakeholders / Beneficiaries (Based on Field Visit)





# Mass Mobilization into Entrepreneurship

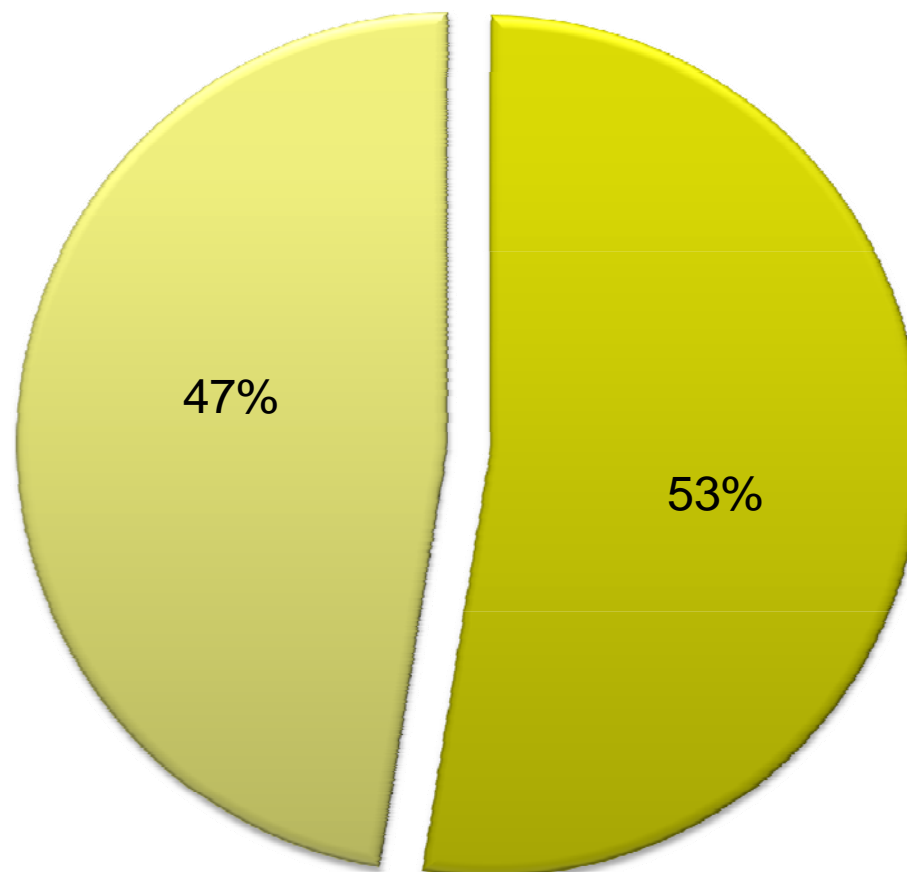


- **HiH organized 'Savings Credit Group' (SCG) based on the lines of 'Self Help Group' of India**
- **Groups were formed among the local people for men and women separately**
- **Each group consisted of 10 to 20 members in the age group of 18 to 60 years**
- **Thus HH formed a total of 274 groups in the Balkh province out of which 131 were women's groups, 103 were men's group and the rest (40) were common interest group. It consisted of 4899 beneficiaries.**
- **The Badakhshan province covered another 174 groups with a total number of 3484 beneficiaries**



# Total HH-SCG & CIG (274) in Balkh

■ Male ■ Female

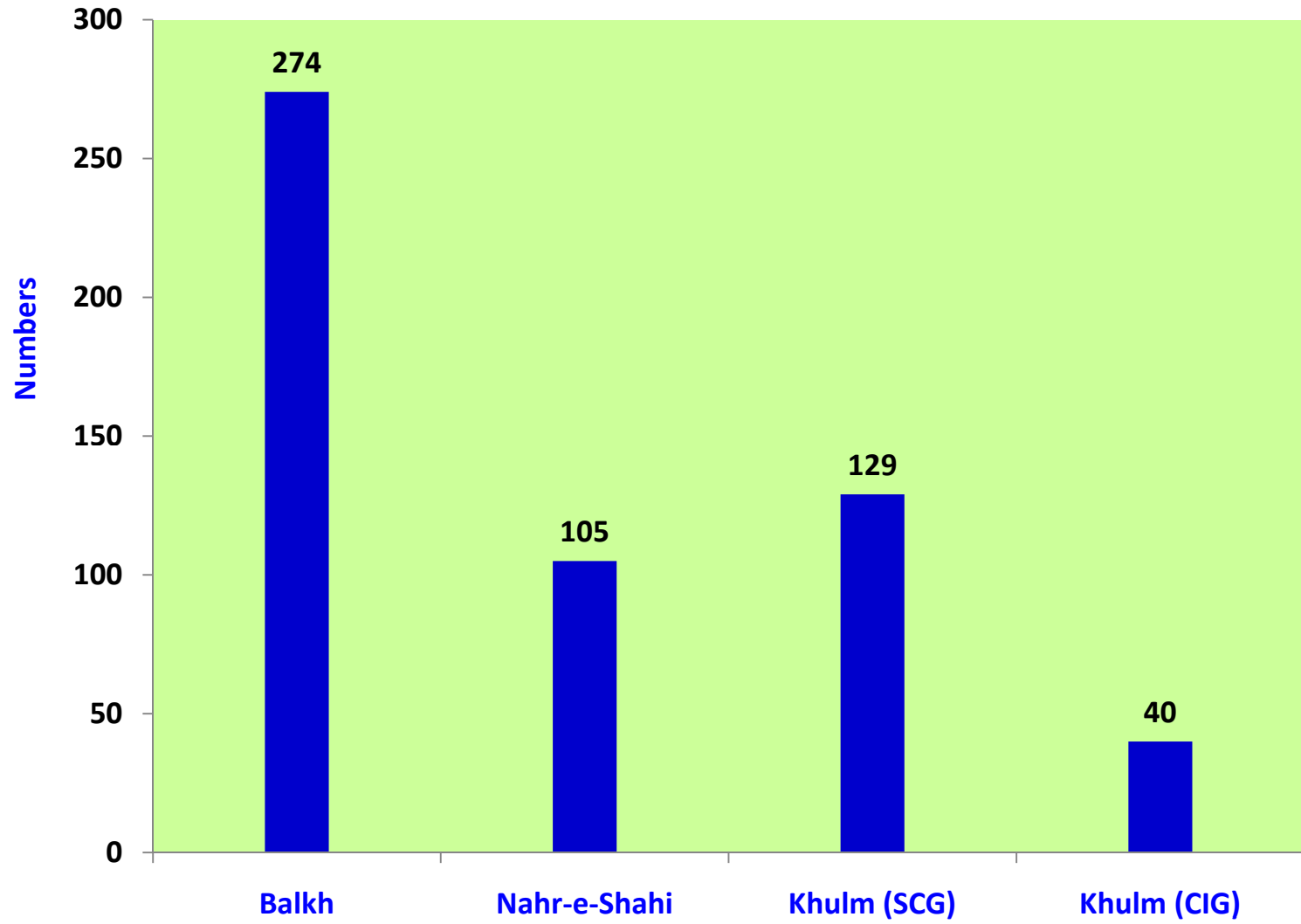


As on Feb, 2010

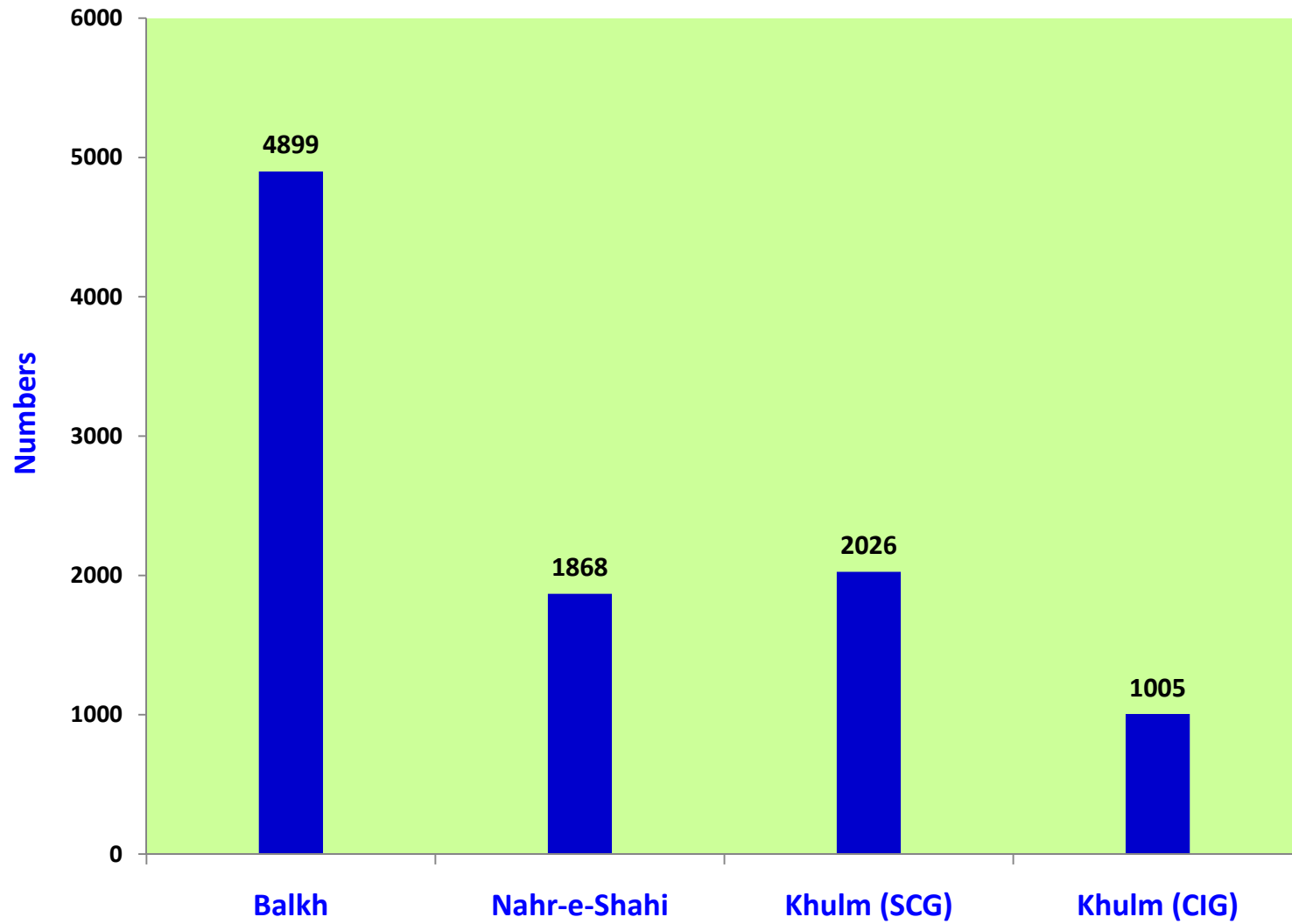
# Savings Groups

# Credit/Common

# Interest



# Savings Credit/Common Interest Groups (Total Members)





# Area of Project Implementation



- **Balkh is one of the 34 provinces in Afghanistan consisting of 14 districts.**
- **No banks and little transportation**
- **Capacity Building of the community is perhaps the most appropriate strategy in this area for providing alternative livelihoods**
- **Winning the hearts and minds of people takes a long time. The initial beginning was indeed a path breaking process given the existence of traditional laws and cultural setting**
- **During the field visit, men's group clearly displayed that they were not only hesitant but against letting their women participate in SCG activities**
- **This was indeed a new beginning! HIHAO was successful in creating such groups**

# A Hazara Home



# Ethnic Representation

- Representation of all ethnic communities - Tadjiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Pashtuns, others. Every ethnic community had been intrinsically woven within the Hand in Hand groups
- Such combinations have significant positive ramifications for an inclusive community development
- HH groups also incorporated members from the Community Development Committees (CDC) enhancing visibility and authenticity
- HH groups were created in the remote accessible areas of Khulm and Nahr-e-Shahi of Balkh province where the basic facilities of life were non-existent
- This fact has been attested by the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) under the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation Development (MRRD)



## Greater Visibility and Participation

- **Group members displayed a high level of participation, transparency and ownership**
- **Regular documentation - eight registers - attendance, cash book, voucher, group ledger, book keeping, recording of minutes and so on**
- **HH field mobilizer recorded the minutes of the meeting**
- **Meeting place for the women were usually inside the home of one member who had more space or outside a mosque in the case of men's group**
- **Meetings were orderly. Beneficiaries displayed their products such as embroidered work, stitched materials, cushion covers and other handicrafts. Men displayed shoes, belts and iron products.**





# Transparency



- **No amount was kept in person by any of the staff members from HH.**
- **Treasurer of the group and other office bearers are carefully chosen from the group.**
- **The groups were happy to meet and contribute their weekly savings of 25 afghani. Twenty five percent of the savings are always kept away for emergency and only 75 percent were operative for loan purpose.**
- **The group displayed a capacity towards decision-making, accountability and transparency - strong ownership of the project.**
- **The capacity building measures did prove advantageous in supporting the local skills including financial management**

## Concerns for Effectiveness



- **Past experiences suggest that there are concerns which need to be factored in for greater effectiveness**
- **Female groups through men's groups. Mobilization by coordinating with the female CDC sub committees. This involves a consistent effort and perseverance**
- **Poor economic situation of communities often pose as a major constraint in the group formation.**
- **Overbearing leaders - army commander background. Building a consensus and reselecting a group leader can be extremely challenging.**
- **Severe draughts - mass exodus of people. Among 500 SCGs that were functional, records suggest 90 groups collapsed due to drought and 80 percent of these groups were then revived by August 2009**
- **World Bank and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation Development (MRRD), Govt of Afghanistan could not provide interest free loans permissible under Islamic law.**

## Creation of Vertical and Horizontal Linkages



- **HIHAO has created the necessary vertical and horizontal linkages through networking and coalition development mechanism**
- **The ease with which such meetings were organized revealed the close liaison and coordination that the team members maintained with the local governance. People who mattered in the local government were readily available for the HH staff.**
- **The sub governors were willing to extend all possible help to HH staff for bringing about community development.**

# Utilization of Indian Funds

- **Leather Products**
- **Embroidery and Stitching**
- **Livestock**
- **Horticulture**
- **Iron Goods**



# Beneficiaries Producing Shoes



# A Hazara Woman Beneficiary





# Embroidery



# Embroidery





# Livestock



# Horticulture





# Horticulture



# Lasting Impact



- Highly appreciative of the timely help rendered by the government of India for the activation of a deep well
- This had stopped working after being installed in one of the villages and after it was handed over to the village head for operation.
- Each deep well supplied water to six or seven villages.
- After much hesitation the people finally decided to approach the Indian Consulate at Mazar-e-Sharief. The Indian Consulate promptly took action by fetching an engineer from India and sent him to the field within a few days of receiving the complaint and got the tube well working.
- People were full of gratitude for this gesture of the Indian government