Annex G Methodology

G.1 Overall

The methodology for this evaluation was very constrained by the security situation in Afghanistan. The security situation constrained the work of the evaluation in the following ways:

- Limiting the areas the consultants could visit
- Relying on programme partners to select appropriate field sites to visit
- The cancellation of previously arranged meetings due to security alerts
- Limiting the time that the consultants could spend in particular areas
- Limiting the possibility for observation
- Limiting the possibilities for interacting with beneficiaries

In spite of these constraints, the evaluation team was able to consult with beneficiaries and to gain some insight from their experiences. We have presented some of these experiences as individual cases throughout the report.

G.2 Key informant interviews

These were one of the principal sources for the evaluation. In total 134 individuals were interviewed, with some the main informants being interviewed several times. 29% of the individual interviewees were female, reflecting the general under-representation of women in the aid community in Afghanistan. Annex B presents a full list of persons met, as well as summaries by gender, interview type, and interviewee occupation. Interviews were conducted under a modification of the Chatham House Rule (Chatham House, 2007) whereby nothing that interviewees said is directly or indirectly attributed to them in this report without their express permission.

The evaluation team also interviewed 144 people in a number of group interviews (these are also detailed in Annex B). Females made up one quarter of the interviewees in group interviews. There was a marked difference between Nangarhar and Herat. In conservative Pashtun Nangarhar, only 8% of group interviewees were female, whereas 39% of the group interviewees in Herat were female. This was a function of the different cultures rather than of the evaluation team composition.

All 144 persons in group interviews were from the affected population as were 45 key informants giving a total of 189 persons from the affected community who were consulted by the evaluation.

The evaluation team found, as expected, that the national staff of partners, with their context knowledge and institutional memory, were a rich source of information on the ROI and operations in Afghanistan.

G.3 Documentary research

The evaluation team had already assembled a large number of documents before the fieldwork and continued to gather them during the fieldwork. Additional documents were added to the data set during the report-writing phase as different issues were followed-up on. The evaluation team used the following means to identify additional documents:

- Citations to new documents in the documents consulted.

- Google searches on particular topics
- Google Scholar searches on particular topics

All of the key documents consulted have been annotated and entered in a bibliographic database so as to produce the annotated bibliography. The documents in the wider document set were also indexed (using the dtSearch indexing software) so that any issues arising in the evaluation could be quickly researched in the document set. For example, when the issue of whether Danish development assistance was targeted at the poorest of the poor, or was targeted more generally (so that the poorest would be assisted by broader wealth creation) the reference set was searched for the term “poorest” within 10 words of “poor”. Fifteen documents were found in the reference set, and these were then examined to see what the context of the reference was and whether it was relevant to the issue.

G.4 Numerical data analysis

Numerical data analysis was limited largely to analysis of the size of different contributions to Afghanistan, to emphasise the scale of the ROI against the scale of the overall Danish ODA to Afghanistan, and to highlight the enormous scale of other donor funding for Afghanistan. The evaluation team has done this to emphasise that the ROI is but one small part of the overall funding flows to Afghanistan, and that the impact of the ROI must accordingly be limited. Furthermore, analysis was undertaken of the budgets of the individual projects supported. The varying degree of transparency in the financial reporting challenged the extent to which this could be undertaken for all four projects.

G.5 Observation

Opportunities for observation were limited, but the evaluation team made maximum use of their visits to the field to observe the ROI in action and the relationship between partner staff and the community.

G.6 Community consultation

As expected, security limited the opportunities for interviews and group meetings with the affected community. However, the evaluation team did manage to meet with several Shuras and Community Development Councils during field visits and consulted with 189 persons from the affected community in total. Taking the current context into consideration this is judged to be sufficient to enable the evaluation team to understand the nature and context of the ROI funded interventions in the field.

G.7 Sampling strategy

The field visit provinces have been selected on the following basis:

- Provinces with high numbers of returned
- Provinces where all or almost all of the partners are working with ROI funds
- Provinces which were accessible during the time frame for the field visits

Within the individual provinces the selection of the sites to be visited was left to the partners due to the constantly changing security situation in Afghanistan. The evaluation recognises that this is a form of purposive sampling strongly controlled by the security situation. The field visits served more to inform the evaluation team on the nature of the interventions rather than to be a statistically valid random sample.

G.8 Remote evaluation methods

The evaluation team had planned to use remote evaluation methods if they were unable to conduct fieldwork due to security. Fortunately, the evaluation team was able to visit the affected population in the field and talk to partner staff, so it was not necessary to resort to remote evaluate methods.

G.9 Validation

The evaluation team validated its work in the following ways:

- By holding follow-up meetings with those partners whose programmes the evaluation team was concerned about.
- By holding a workshop with partners in Afghanistan before departing. The evaluation team presented initial key findings at that stage for validation or otherwise by the workshop attendees.
- Through the circulation of the draft report by the Danida Evaluation Department (EVAL) to key stakeholders and the reference group.

G.10 Triangulation

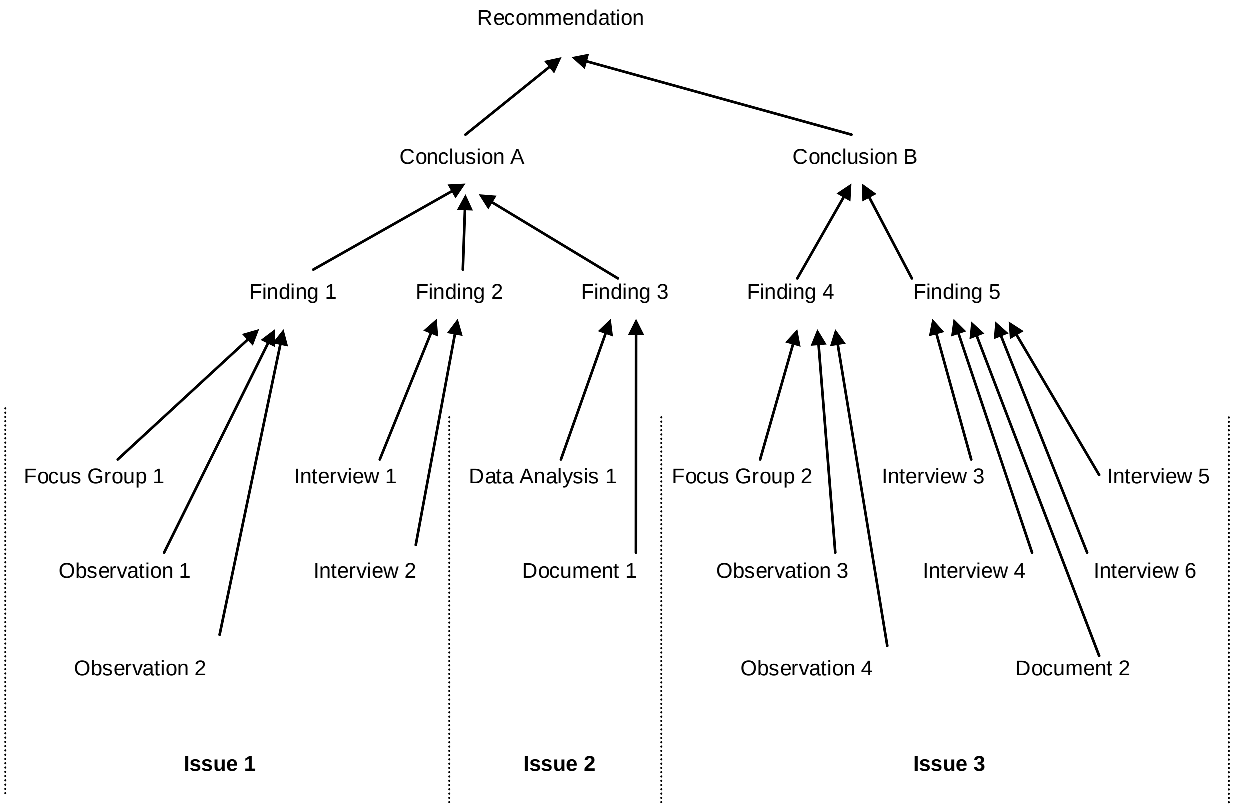

Figure 1: A strong chain of evidence.

The evaluation team used triangulation to ensure that the findings of the evaluation are accurate and reliable. We used the following types of triangulation:

Source triangulation We compared information from different sources, e.g. from Danida, from partners, from Government officials, the community and other humanitarian actors, including from different levels within organisations.

Method triangulation We compared information collected by different methods, e.g. interviews, on-site project observations and document review.

Researcher triangulation The evaluation team split into two for part of the field-work. This provided two independent sets of data and allowed the evaluation team to distinguish between general issues and issues that were related to a specific local context.

In addition, we compared the information from the different types of intervention. The aim of triangulation was to produce a strong chain of evidence (Figure 8) to ensure the reliability of the research (Yin, 2003).

G.11 Criteria used by the evaluation for assessing projects

The evaluation team used a range of criteria for assessing different aspects of the projects visited.

Sustainability of livelihood interventions: The evaluation used the following criteria for assessing the sustainability of livelihood interventions:

- The intervention should have been maintained, i.e. the trainee should still be in business or the assets should still be in use.
- The beneficiary intends to continue with the supported livelihood.

- The beneficiary has replaced the consumables involved several times (e.g. fabric for tailors, spare parts for mechanics, products for beauty parlours, fodder for animals).
- The beneficiary had invested part of their income in additional assets for the livelihood activity (e.g. wedding dresses for beauty parlours, a compressor for a mechanic).

For assessing the overall quality of an intervention, the evaluation considered:

- Evidence of staff enthusiasm for the programme.
- The observed relationship between the apparent beneficiaries and the staff of the agency.
- The adherence of the project to generally accepted good practice for that type of project.

For evaluating training, the evaluation used Kirkpatrick's four-level model (2006) as a guide. These four levels are:

- Reaction of student – what they thought and felt about the training
- Learning – the resulting increase in knowledge or capability
- Behaviour – extent of behaviour and capability improvement and implementation/application
- Results – the effects on the business or environment resulting from the trainee's performance

While it was possible for the evaluation to assess training at the level of Results in some cases, in other cases the evaluation team was limited to assessing the Reaction and Learning or Behaviour in other cases due to the time it takes for results to be evident.

For assessing Capacity Building the evaluation considered a number of definitions of capacity including that present in the OECD guide: *"the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully"* (OECD/DAC, 2006, p. 12) and the more comprehensive World Bank one: *"the availability of resources and the efficiency and effectiveness with which societies deploy those resources to identify and pursue their development goals on a sustainable basis"* (Otoo et al., 2009, p. 3). The evaluation adopted the Danida Results-Oriented Approach to Capacity Change (ROACH) definition of capacity: *"the ability of an organisation to produce appropriate outputs"* (Boesen and Therkildsen, 2004, p. 10).

The evaluation did not use the ROACH framework as capacity building was only one small part of total interventions. However, we did adopt the ROACH definition, but broadened it to include individuals and communities and not just organisations:

> *Improvements in the ability of organisations, individuals, and communities to produce appropriate outputs.*

G.12 The analysis process: from evidence to recommendations

The evaluation team used a simple evidence tool during the field work to record evidence[1] (Table 19) from the different sources of information on a spread-sheet. The use of this tool helps the evaluation team to ensure that the findings are well grounded in evidence, and that conclusions are based on findings, recommendations on conclusions. This tool has been revised based on its practical use in evaluations over the last three years. The present version of the tool has been developed specially for this evaluation to take account of the fact that the ROI is more a framework for projects than a coherent programme.

Table 19: Evidence tool

Prepared in advance	Filled in during fieldwork					Automatic
Evaluation Topic	***Details of piece of evidence***	***Part***	***Source***	***Date***	***Initials***	***Criteria***
What is the evaluation question to be answered or the issue that has arisen?	Evidence about this issue (this could be a note of a specific point from a document, an interview, a focus group, or an observation).	Part of the ROI to which this evidence applies	Source of evidence	Date of entry	Initials of person recording this piece of evidence	The relevant evaluation criteria

The tool records the sources of information but even without this the sources may sometimes be evident from the specifics of the evidence. Therefore, the tool remains internal to the evaluation team, in order not to breach the Chatham House rule under which the interviews are conducted. However, this section will explain how the evaluation team used the tool for the analysis of the ROI.

Over 600 pieces of evidence totalling some 26,700 words were entered into the tool. The amount of evidence related to particular criteria varies between the criteria and between the agencies (Table 20).

Table 20: Summary of evidence tool by evaluation criteria and element of the ROI

Criteria	DACAAR	NRC	NSP	UNHCR	Other	ROI	Total
Relevance	35	46	16	29	3	66	**195**
Effectiveness	10	17	6	33	3	31	**100**
Efficiency	40	27	9	24	12	42	**154**
Impact	22	4	3	3		3	**35**
Sustainability	17	7	11	5	4	10	**54**
Various	13	15	4	10	3	20	**65**
Total	**137**	**116**	**49**	**104**	**25**	**172**	**603**

[1] This tool was developed by the team leader in 2007. An earlier version of the tool was recently described in New Directions in Evaluation (Brusset et al., 2010).

Of the partners, NSP had the least amount of evidence. This reflected that the evaluation team did not do field work on the NSP in Herat, as there was no ROI funding there. However, the NSP has been well covered by quality evaluations (Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, 2010; Barakat et al., 2006; Beath et al., 2011; Reed et al., 2009), as well as numerous references in other reviews and evaluations and these provide a rich source of evidence on the NSP. The evidence on the NSP was more reliant on documents than the other elements of the ROI (Table 21).

Table 21: Balance between documentary and other evidence by ROI element

Source of Evidence	DACAAR	NRC	NSP	UNHCR	Other	ROI	Total
Documents	47	23	24	11	0	47	152
Interviews and observations	90	93	25	93	25	125	451
Total	137	116	49	104	25	172	603
Documents as% of total	34%	20%	49%	11%	0%	27%	25%

In order to facilitate analysis, all of the evidence was copied into a single worksheet. The columns of this worksheet were filtered so that only evidence relating to a particular criteria, evaluation question, element or source could be highlighted. This greatly facilitated the writing up as only the evidence relevant to whatever was being written about was viewable after filtering. As will be explained below, the evidence tool is only the starting point for the writing up and analysis.

G.13 First stage: Preparing the debriefing presentation

The first stage of the analysis was the preparation of the debriefing presentation. The evaluation team had already had a number of detailed discussions on different issues throughout the field-work and had already reached a consensus on a number of issues based on the evidence they had encountered.

The process of preparing the debriefing presentation began with a team discussion on the content of the presentation. The evaluation team decided to follow a layout based on the evaluation questions. After this discussion the evaluation team leader, using the evidence tool as a base, prepared a draft presentation. This presentation was then circulated to the other team member who suggested additions, deletions, and amendments. After a number of iterations the presentation was ready for the debriefing workshop. The presentation was also shared with EVAL who clarified and commented on some overall policy issues.

Immediately after the debriefing workshop, a number of small changes were made to the presentation based on the comments made by the workshop participants and by EVAL. The revised presentation was then circulated to the participants.

G.14 Second stage: Writing the Draft Report

The initial report outline (essentially a table of contents) was prepared by the evaluation team leader and circulated to the evaluation team members. The outline was then amended in light of their comments. The evaluation team decided to structure the report by the evaluation criteria as the main chapter headings, with the ROI overall and the four ROI partners as the five sub headings.

The draft outline was then populated with the conclusions and the recommendations from the debriefing presentation. This was done not to prejudge the conclusions and recommendations that would flow from the analysis, but to ensure that nothing from the first analysis of the evidence tool would be overlooked in the report.

Each sub-section of the draft was then written using the evidence tool as a base. The evidence tool was supplemented with:

- Searches of the document set (including all electronic documents collected during the fieldwork) using the dtSearch[2] tool. This software allows complex searches of document sets including work proximity searches, thesaurus-based searches, and other complex searches.
- Searches using Google Scholar[3] for academic articles on issues emerging from the report draft.
- Searches using Google[4] for grey documentation.

Any key documents found were added to the bibliography for the evaluation using EndNote[5]. The bibliography and documents were shared on DropBox[6] so that all the members had access to it.

The evaluation team leader then wrote a draft for each chapter and shared this with the other team members so that they could add in comments and make corrections. This allowed the evaluation team members to add in any additional evidence or learning that they had gained. Working by chapters was done to speed up the evaluation team review process to meet the shortened timetable for the draft (the evaluation team had proposed shortening the timetable so that the draft could feed into the new ROI programme document). Some specific appendices and text boxes were assigned to different team members.

After considering the changes proposed by the evaluation team members the evaluation team leader then prepared a complete draft that was circulated to the evaluation team members. After review this draft was passed to the quality control team.

[2] http://www.dtsearch.com (Note: reference to this and other software tools is intended to provide readers with an full description of the methods employed rather than as an endorsement of the particular tool).

[3] http://scholar.google.com

[4] http://www.google.com

[5] http://www.endnote.com

[6] http://www.dropbox.com