

FutureGenerations
Graduate School

Applied Community
Change and Conservation

**TOWARD A BETTER FUTURE IN
AFGHANISTAN: AN INVESTIGATION
INTO THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF
SHAHIDAN IN BAMYAN PROVINCE**

Written by: Kazim Yazdani, May 2008

Translated by: Hasan Rezaee, Coordinated by: Bamyán Site Director, Abdullah Barat

Occasional Papers of the Future Generations Graduate School explore community-based approaches to social development, health, nature conservation, peace building, and governance. Faculty, alumni, and partner organizations present their field studies and applied research.

www.future.org

Acknowledgement

My thanks go to all those very dear people who provided me with their information honestly. I especially thank Mr. Naiem Azizi, an employee of Future Generations Afghanistan, Mr. Abas Aghah, a correspondent for Ashna Radio, Mr. Abdu –Al- Rahman Shahidani, the chairman of Bamiyan Security, Mr. Wakil Akbar Shahidani, Mr. Mohammad Asaf Baig and all members of the village shuras of Shahidan.

--Kazim Yazadani



Band-i-Amir Lakes near the Shahidan Valley, Bamiyan Province

This case study provides an overview of the history of the village councils, known as *shuras*, of Shahidan valley in Afghanistan's Bamyan province. The shura's founding, activities, obstacles, and achievements are presented as a means sharing with a larger audience what rural life is like in Shahidan and what improvements local people, including former combatants, are accomplishing.

The Geography of Shahidan

The district of Shahidan is located in the central highlands of Afghanistan's Bamyan province. Shahidan is west of the province's main Bamyan City and contains 72 villages ranging in size from 18,000-23,000 people. To the east, Shahidan connects to the Khuja Ali valley, Du Abi Barikey and Aqrubat. To the west, Shahidan meets Yakawlang district, and to the south is the famous mountain range of Baba.

Shahidan's central bazaar is located 25 kilometers from the central bazaar of Bamyan City. With an altitude between 3,000-3,200 meters high, Shahidan has a cold climate with long, snowy winters. This climate can threaten the area's agricultural products and can leave the local rivers frozen for the duration of winter. During this time, villagers collect their water from nearby springs. Along the Baba mountain range, snow can be seen throughout the summer, and it is believed that snowfall from several years ago can be found within the cracks of frozen cliffs along the mountains.

Much of Shahidan district is covered with desert. Historically, the hills of this district provided ample firewood and fodder for villages, but today the hills are mostly bare due to demolition and erosion.

Shahidan's Economy

A large part of people's income is provided through agriculture and animal husbandry. For economic and security reasons, a majority of people who had immigrated to Iran and Pakistan at the time of Taliban domination have not returned back yet. Some families returning to Shahidan since the fall of Taliban have found that their homes were burned and looted. One returnee said, "When we got back, we could find neither an even surface where we could sleep nor an old carpet to lay under our feet. Our houses were destroyed, and it was a frightening perspective."

Prior to the Taliban coming into power, animal husbandry was excellent, and people were able to live off of the profits from this work. Under the Taliban, the market was destroyed. Today, with the help of international aid, local people in Shahidan have reconstructed their homes and have revived the animal husbandry economy.

Local families continue to worry about fuel shortages. Although people have started to plant trees, it will take several years before they can be used as firewood. Also, unemployment remains high. Some people have to immigrate to Kabul or even to a foreign country to look for jobs. If refugees decide to return to the area, they will face many problems, particularly related to fuel shortages and unemployment.

Major export items in Shahidan include:

- Livestock, especially sheep
- Animal products, including butter, animal fat, wool, and skins
- Agricultural products, including potatoes, lentils, and alfalfa
- Medicinal plants, such as caraway and other seeds
- Handicrafts, including carpets and rugs

Life in Shahidan

The people of Shahidan are brave, patient, peaceful, and sympathetic. They support the government's plans and are happy with the honest efforts of the governor, Dr. Habiba Sarabi. This is evidenced by Shahidan's acceptance and warm welcome when the governor visits the village.

At the present time, Bamyam is the among the most secure provinces in the country, a place where visitors and tourists can travel freely. However, this peace and security should not encourage authorities not to provide public services for the people. There are still groups that are encouraged by enemies of peace and freedom who are committed to propagating discrimination, administrative corruption, poverty and unemployment as points of weaknesses and inefficiencies of government. These groups encourage local people to join their extremism. In most districts of Bamyam province, including seven areas of Shahidan, there is a clear shortage of schools, books for students and clinics for patients. In some villages, children spend four hours a day in traveling to and from schools.

Regarding health, many deaths result from simple diseases such as pneumonia and appendicitis. Women frequently lose their lives in childbirth due to a lack of access to a midwife or a doctor. In winters, when grounds are covered by snows, it is hard to transmit such people who are ill to medical centers, especially for those villagers living in places without access to roads and vehicles.

Initial Efforts of the Shahidan Shura

It seems that first steps of the Central Council of Shahidan were taken when a collective journey was organized by Future Generations Afghanistan. There was a group of 36 young people participating. During that trip in the region of Hajigag, participants started to talk about the future of their community, discussing in particular what lessons from the past could be learned to help shape their futures. The group concluded that the "people of Shahidan were at the front line of wars and were damaged humanly and financially, and now they had not even a significant person who could work in an official capacity in either the local or central government." The group asked, "Do we have a person who is able to undertake an important official job in the government? Of course not. We do have many experienced 'holy fighters' but we do not have a skillful person qualifying for ministry or embassy positions."

These discussions posed as questions made the group think deeply. Everybody was trying to suggest a solution. Finally, one member of the group said: “the era of war and guns is finished. It is time that pens should work, until we have literacy, we cannot participate in governmental decision-making. Every nation or individual who wishes to achieve its right must be competent to handle it.”

Establishing an Educational Center

Pursuant to those discussions, an educational center was established in the area of Paei Kutal. The youth who had taken part in the journey, along with a group of interested people in cultural and scientific affairs, started the work voluntarily. The cost of brick was covered by local people, and the rest of the cost was provided by Future Generations Afghanistan. When the building was completed, several experienced teachers were employed by Future Generations. They taught English, Mathematics, Dari and other needed subjects at different levels.

Close to 80 of the participants were people who had fought against Soviet Union forces or against internal factions in civil wars. Now, however, they were gathered in one educational center and were sitting beside each other to learn. When they finished their courses, they played sports such as football, volleyball, and two local sports called tubdanda and lingizani. Villagers who graduated from educational courses went to their villages and small towns to start a total of thirty-five additional courses for their communities.¹

There was neither gender nor ethnic discrimination in determining who could participate in these courses. It was very interesting for such a diverse group to enter classes and learn together. Initial equipment, including books, notebooks, pens and black boards, were provided by Future Generation Afghanistan. Each course had between 25-35 participants. In some of the more densely populated villages such as Pierdad, classes could contain up to 80 persons. Teachers not only were teaching but also holding sessions for people to debate and share their experiences. They were discussing subjects such as the necessity for schools to be expanded, sanitation improvement, local council development, and basic reforms of agricultural and animal husbandry issues.

Everything seemed easy at the outset, but as people started discussing together, they realized just how complex the various issues were. Some people’s views were pessimistic and unsure about the future. At this time, Future Generations began monitoring the work being completed at the Educational Center. Abdullah Barat, the Bamyán Site Director for Future Generations Afghanistan, told the people of Shahidan “our friends have started the work seriously and eagerly. They undertook the burden of the hard work. Even when I was providing them some equipment, I nearly lost my life because of very cold winter of ‘Heights of Khamneel,’ but atlast resisting against

¹ Villages participating in these additional courses were Shibartu, Qarghanatu, Ladow, Darvaza, Shurkshishlang, Anbarzamuji, Tul-e-Baqer, Tul-e-Ghlahmahmad, Barikey, Mamorak, Paie Kutal, Pierdad, Khurdakzaee, and Jimqala.

problems, but we have overcome them. Now the majority of the youth who have taught the educational courses have entered universities”.²

Establishing a Local Council in the village of Ladu

One Future Generations employee, Naem Azizi, explains, “when we were discussing the necessity for a local council, the first people who responded positively were the people of village of ‘Ladu’.” The first local council, thus, was Ladu’s council, and its members began holding their sessions at least twice a month. Both men and women participated in this council, which facilitated debate about the community’s status and future priorities. At last two educated and experienced women were designated by Future Generations to lead women’s health and sanitation training courses. Finally the local council of Ladu decided that in order to speed up the decision-making process, they should consider examples of other successful collective work to be able to follow accordingly. When the local shura heard of successful work being done in Jaghori district (located in Ghazni province), they decided to visit the Jaghori shura.

A Journey to Jaghori

Following this decision, 14 people (6 males and 8 females) visited Jaghori. They stayed there for one week and visited several health and training centers as well as some electricity stations, which had been constructed by the people of Jaghori. Future Generations Afghanistan covered costs of transportation of this journey. The delegation that visited Jaghori was very satisfied with the journey. They found that women could take part in social activities alongside of men. Those women who were a part of the delegation were very excited and when they returned to Bamyan, they established the women’s council of Shahidan in Bamyan. They started their works very eagerly and expanded their own health and social courses.

A Journey to India

As the villagers’ eagerness in social activities were mounting, some very interested people decided to go to India in order to visit Indian rural councils.³ With the support of Future Generations, these people announced that they are ready to visit India. A few of those participating in the journey described it:

² Abdullah Barat

³ Those attending included Mohammad Asaf Baig (representative of the Darvaza village), Eavaz Sharwal (representative from Naal-e-Shira), Sarmoalem Hadi (representative from Ladu), Haji Amin (representative from Achaqul), Kalifa Zahir (representative from Surkhshighlang), Abdurhman Shahidani (from Surkhshighlang), Niazmohammad Ebrahimi (from Yakawlang), Naem Aziai (Future Generations associate), Ahmad Farid (Future Generations associate).

In India we visited several different villages and local councils and learned precious things in each visit. At first we visited a remote mountainous area. The local officials of councils in that area said that about 35 years ago the people's life situation and their livelihoods were very bad, perhaps worse than rural areas in Afghanistan. However at the present time, under people's efforts and rational management of local councils, the whole area has changed into a beautiful spectacular example.

We talked in detail to the chairman and members of the central council there. The founder of the council was Dr. Eroudi, who was the manager of an equipped hospital with nice beds and a large of facilities. Twenty experienced doctors were working under direction of Dr. Eroudi. He attracted a lot of people's respect. On the day of our arrival, Dr. Eroudi and other members of the council welcomed us warmly. After eating food and drinking tea, he checked us up and cured those who needed medical cares. Then they showed us the most important works they have done, including dry lands that they had changed into green farms gardens, crowded markets, factories and productive and economic centers.

They told us that before establishment of these councils, they had a bad situation. Poverty, unemployment, breakouts of various diseases in addition to wars and disputes between tribes prevailed. Lands were lacking trees and firewood, so that they were changed into plant-less and flooded deserts. There was no sanitation and no health care. Religious disputes between different cults promoted hatred and hostilities between people and every cult ascribed others unclean, were reluctant to associate each other.

However, after 35 years of continuous efforts, all hatreds and hostilities were demolished and turned into friendship and brotherhood. Now, all people have friendly relationships and respect each other's cultures and beliefs. There was no dispute. We, with our efforts and collective works, changed deserts into extended woods. We also create water channels and expanded our farms. There is water-powered electricity in some of our villages, and in some other villages there is solar-power system. We minimized using wood fires from jungles. Also we have got from animal fertilizers and Mitan Gas for fuel. At the present time, the economic situation is absolutely satisfactory. We made some export corporations and big raising cattle's, productive factories that are increasing.

Before the councils have been established, women had poor diets and were giving birth to weak children with a very high rate of death. However, now the economic situation has improved, and the newborns have their natural weights. The mean weight for infants was about 2 Kilos but now it has increased to 3 Kilos. There is no problem in health care and we now have hospitals and medical clinics”.

Dr. Eourdi continued: “Our village is a model in sanitation among 40,000 villages of India's Jamkhed district. We even announced that if one found a fly in our region, he would win a prize of 50,000 Indian Rupee, but no body has won this prize yet.” He also said, “we made it a tradition that every one who comes here, he should plant some trees as a remembrance.”

One villager from Shahidan named Abdurrahman Shahidani told me: “We, the Afghan delegation were praising this tradition and thus planted trees that they had provided for this purpose in order to perpetuate the memory of this journey in their minds.”

Mohammad Asafbaig Shahidani said: “Our journey to Indian villages coincided with month of Moharram, and we held the ceremony of Ashura for Imam Hussain there, killing several sheep, invited them to the ceremony. There was an experienced cleric among us whom we asked our religious questions from. The head of the council invited us one day to visit a kind of chemical fertilizer’s factory in which the fertilizers were produced by earth worm (in Hazargi Shulog). In this factory they had poured a lot of earthworms in half full forage and sheep dropping brooklets. The worms, eating, the material, produced a black kind of fertilizer that one Kilo of it evaluates 14 Kilos of chemical fertilizers.”

One day the chairman took us to a village where its residents were following eight different religions and there was a serious dispute between them at the past, but now under wise direction of the council, friendship and brotherhood were prevailed and people were living in peaceful and intimate conditions. There was not any hostility between different groups.

Upon their return, the delegation held several consulting sessions and workshops in the office of Future Generations in the center of Shahidan, explaining their experiences and what they had seen after they had returned to Bamyan. People of different professions participated. They were surprised when they heard of the success of Indian local councils. They found it interesting that the local councils were able to resolve people’s problems and meet the needs of the communities.

Some youth who did not have the opportunity to go to India asked questions about agricultural, sanitary and educational affairs as well as about planting trees and establishing councils. These youth wanted to understand the effectiveness of the councils in finding answers to the community’s problems. In adhering to local traditions, some people disagreed with the delegation. For instance, one day when a member of delegation was talking to people, a cleric said angrily “why have you gathered around this man? Has he just come from Karbala? What does he say? He does speak from advancement of Christianity! Hearing of him is promoting Christianity and blasphemy.”

The delegation, however, was able to agree that following work should be done in Shahidan as soon as possible: 1) Establish a decision-making institute; 2) Register schools in order to develop educational centers and combat illiteracy; 3) Eradicate narcotics and warn people of the harmful consequences of drugs; and 4) Protect the environment and promote tree planting.

Emergence of the Central Council of Shahidan Villages

After much effort and several workshops, the majority of participants concluded that a decision making body able to cover all villages of Shahidan and resolve people's problems was necessary. Thus, a central council of villages of Shahidan was established. The council was to be directed by a chairman, an assistant who acts in absence of the chairman, a secretary, a person responsible for the finances, as well as seven people as representatives of villagers. They also recognized the necessity of a charter for the council in order to be able to do their works according to plan. They then voted for choosing out of three people nominated via a secret election as chairman. In this election, Mr. Gholam Sakhi Fasihi, a well-known person as well as a former combatant and holy war figure, was elected as president and Mr. Mohammad Alam Shibartu, Mohammad Ali Rajaei, Habiballah Mobariz were elected as assistant, secretary and finance person respectively. Seven other people were elected as representatives of the villages.

Before the elections had been held, all sessions of the council were held in the office of Future Generation Afghanistan. After a generous donation from charitable man named "Haji Musa", however, the council had its own meeting place. Equipment such as furniture, books, and carpets was supplied by Future Generations Afghanistan. The central shura of Shahidan has 11 principal members total and several alternate members covering about 72 villages (both small and large). This council holds its sessions every 15 days to discuss social and cultural problems and public works. The council divided villages of Shahidan into seven major areas in order to facilitate its work, as follows:

1. Barikey Shahidan,
2. Aqraubat,
3. Chahardeh or center of Shahidan,
4. Balaquls,
5. Aghaqls,
6. Shibartu,
7. Qarghanatu.

Each area has its own registry and every record of service completed is registered into a special document.

Goals of the Council

According to the shura's charter, the major goals are as follows:

- Promote public participation in decision-making and growth, social, economic, and cultural development;
- Promote equality, including the presence of women and the improvement of women's situations in all aspects of life;

- Improve the situation of children regarding their rights, and encourage their growth and their education;
- Combat against cultivating, producing, consuming and smuggling of narcotics;
- Combat against violence and try to eliminate negative consequences of the war, as well as promote cooperation between local people to be able to resolve their problems without resorting to the violence;
- Protect the environment and prevent damages;
- Combat against illiteracy, promote education, and expand technical and professional training;
- Improve health care situation via training and establishing centers for services and health care;
- Develop agricultural sector;
- Attract support from non-governmental and governmental aid organizations, and implement development projects.

Relationship Between the Council and Local People

The people of the seven areas of Shahidan bring their problems to their representatives, who then share them with members of the council. This is a very efficient process. If it is necessary for the council to talk to people or to contact them, the council first contacts the representatives, who then deliver the message to the people.

Despite obstacles and disagreements, the council has been successful in facilitating education associations, environmental protection, sanitation, livelihoods and enhancing people's well being. The following section highlights some examples of the Shahidan shura's achievements.

The Tree Planting Project

According to Naem Azizi, the council has planted thus far 500,000 different kinds of trees, including willows, sycamores, white poplar and jungle trees, throughout Shahidan. Seedlings and tree-cuttings were supplied by the agriculture department and by local people, but all transportation costs were paid by Future Generations Afghanistan.

Taking Care of Seedlings

In warmer areas of Shahidan, tree planting had traditionally prevailed, but many young trees were destroyed by animals. However, the shura of Shahidan passed a rule that every one who unleashes his animals on the field of trees will be fined 50 Afghanis. People were encouraged to care for their animals to prevent the destruction of trees. In addition, the council of Shahidan requested that the police center in Bamyan send two policemen to Shahidan to implement the rules. These solutions helped save the seedlings from destruction.

Boosting Self-Confidence

The central council of Shahidan has really shown the members what all can be achieved by group decision-making and community social change. One shura member said, "The first time we had proposed the formation of such an institution, no one believed we

would be able to achieve these goals, but now people understand that there is no problem that cannot be resolved by determination and tactfulness.”

Expanding Local Knowledge

Currently there is much enthusiasm and eagerness among people throughout Shahidan to learn and obtain knowledge. Parents are ready to take on additional responsibilities in the home so that their children can attend schools. In the past, parents had been too frightened to send their children to official schools due to both security and stigma about what was being taught. Several years ago, Dr. Sima Samar, the chairwoman of Shuhada Organization and the head of Independent Human Rights Commission, wanted to build an intermediate school. No one was ready to give her the required land. When she observed people’s reluctance, she built the school in Aqrubat instead of in Shahidan. Today, the people of Shahidan are filled with regret, with one community member explaining, “We lost a good and golden opportunity.”

Currently, the chairman of the council, Mr. Gholam Hassan Fasihi, voluntarily gave some of his private land to the Ministry of Education. This land was designated for a girls’ school. Some other community members followed in the chairman’s footsteps and have endowed some of their lands for a new high school. So far the central council of Shahidan by virtue of its constant efforts and activities has registered 3 new schools. The council also got permission to promote the intermediate school of Shahidan to a high school. Now the shura is building a school in the village of Nalshira that contains about 700 students. Some children from the villages of Ladu, Nalshira, and Darvaza are learning in camps establishing by charity organizations. Education is now viewed as a necessary tool for helping to resolve the problems in Shahidan.

Settling Local Disputes

The legal part of the central council of Shahidan has been able to settle local and interethnic problems fast and without high costs. So far, the council has settled more than 200 cases. When I went to the office of the council they showed me a big notebook, in which the cases and settlement dates were recorded. Settlement issues ranged from water distribution between farms to residential disputes.

Preventing Narcotics Cultivation

When the Taliban dominated Bamyan province, poppy cultivation began and expanded little by little throughout the region. Now, however, the government directs communities to prevent and put an end to poppy cultivation. The shura of Shahidan works to enforce the government’s position on this issue locally by trying to eradicate poppy in the entire province of Bamyan. The council posted papers with verdicts from Shiite and Sunni clergymen calling on people not to cultivate poppies on walls of their office. Mr. Abbas Aghah, a correspondent for Ashna Radio, told me, “The central council of Shahidan posed a rule that prevented cultivating poppies before the government decided to eradicate poppies. In one local case, the son of a shura council member had cultivated some amount of poppies, but when his father found out, he eradicated poppies – with his own hands.”

Sanitation and Health Care

The council has achieved a lot regarding health care and sanitation by holding training courses. The courses were designed to teach local women about taking care of children, having clean houses and environment, cooking healthy and sanitary foods, and

practicing good hygiene. In addition, the council contributed to building two clinics (one in the center of Shahidan and another in Qarghanatu), digging twelve clean water wells in various villages, laying drinking water pipeline from springs, covering springs and installing taps on the water pipelines.

Preventing Eradication of Firewood

Shortage in firewood is one of big problems for most Afghan villagers, and Shahidan's increasing population creates an even greater need for fuel. Without an energy plan that depends on planting trees and using solar power, local firewood will be completely depleted. This would result in harmful consequences for everyone. The council of Shahidan passed a rule to minimize the gathering of firewood and to encourage people to plant trees for the provision of firewood. Planting trees does not produce an immediate benefit, but it will be useful in the future. The council is also working to provide solar-electricity for the region.

Meeting Government Authorities

The council of Shahidan has been able to hold meetings with civil officials and has requested that they help the community resolve its problems. To this end, representatives from Bamyan had several meetings, including a meeting with President Hamid Karzai, former king Mohammad Zahir, the Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Mohammad Hanif Atmar, the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Mr. Yousef Pashtun, and Mr. Mustafa Zahir, the chairman of the government's environmental agency. Mr. Mustafa Zahir undertook the cost of constructing a girls' intermediate school in the center of Shahidan as well as the cost of constructing a clinic and a high school. Local people believe his total investment in the area amounted to \$300,000.

The government supported and helped the local council by digging drinking wells, establishing schools, and providing many trees. On one occasion, the representative of government entered the council's sessions, and this strengthened the attitudes of personnel. The governor made the council responsible for distributing aid among families, and the council did this job properly and honestly.

The shura made a number of suggestions to the government, including:

1. The rebuilding of an airport in Shubartu, to which the government agreed;
2. The establishment of a dam in Darvaza including the constructing one kilometer of a water channel;
3. The construction of a dam in Qarghanatu;
4. The creation of a new road in Akhshi and Gonbad (a length of 14 kilometer);
5. The creation of a road of Gholstan (a length of 7 kilometers);
6. The construction of a dam in Achaqul;
7. The construction of a water channel in Sarladu

The Local Council of Dehkhodadad in Kabul

To extend the success of their work, the shura of Shahidan traveled to Kabul, to an area of displaced people called Dehkhodadad. The Shahidan council began consulting with local leaders in Dehkhodadad who were interested in establishing their own Central

Council. One Dehkhodadad resident explained, “we view the central council of villages of Shahidan as a model and we have established a consulting association in Dehkhodadad that has so far been useful.” He went on to say, “we have been able to train a large number of young males and females in computer programs, the English language, and the literature of Dari and Pashto. We have also set up trainings in knitting carpets, tailoring and embroidery. We created a center and hold our sessions every week discussing ways to guarantee a respected, prosperous life.”

One representative named Akbar said that:

The establishment of a council made people think about their problems seriously. They prevented trucks from dumping trash in the region by sending about twenty people to object to the sanitary conditions. This situation made people realize that work is effective when done together and collectively. Once we made owners of brick kilns, which were polluting the air, take their brick kilns away from settled regions and go further away. This achievement enhanced our confidence, so we decided to establish a public council in which representatives from all areas of Dehkhodad participated in order to provide more services. After several sessions, we established this council titled “The Public Council for the towns of Khurasan and Nowabad of Dehkhodad in Kabul.” This council has 11 leaders in addition to 61 representatives who represent a population of 63,000.

The Council does not discriminate based on ethnic, racial, sexual and lingual biases. The Council is divided into nine sections to facilitate work as follows:

- The Procedures section, under the direction of the representative Mohammad Esa from Parvan province;
- The Commission on Social Affairs, led by engineer Abdul Vahab from Badakhshan province;
- The Commercial Commission, led by Saed Asaf from Oruzghan province;
- The Commission of Services, directed by Mr. Nowrouz from Ghazni province;
- The Legal Commission, led by Alhaj Abdul Qadir from Baghlan province;
- The Commission of Women's Affairs, led by Ms. Shakila Nazari from Kabul;
- The Commission of Advertisement and Guidance, headed by Mr. Shaker Mohammad from Badakhshan province;
- The Cultural Commission, headed by Mr. Esmael from Dikaundi province;
- The Security Commission, headed by Zamin Hosien Ammar from Parvan province.

The council of Dehkhodadad has a constitution and has its activities approved by the Ministry of Justice.

The Council has established a good relationship with the governmental ministries and agencies, and on this basis has an allowance of water for the region covering all of Dehkhodadad. The Cultural Commission held training courses in computers, mathematics, English, writing, painting, filmmaking, and other subjects. In addition, the council purchased three pieces of lands with the financial aid of a businesswoman. The

council also has distributed 30 water-productive electricity sets with the help of Norwegian Church Aid for cultural, educational, and services centers. Every set can produce 80v electricity.

The Cultural Commission has established the Javan-e-Farda school, and Educational Afghan Course school, and an Educational Knowledge Course school. Also, a theatre group with fifteen members has formed. The legal commission under the direction of Haj Abdul Qader Khan has been very successful in settling local disputes. Haj Abdul Qader Khan says, "we are of every ethnic group, but treat each other as brothers. I am very glad that I serve these people, and so far a lot of work has been done on behalf of the people. More than 300 cases of local disputes and quarrels have been settled by the legal commission of the council." The Commission on Women's Affairs also performed a lot of activities, including holding public training courses for women and helping 300 vulnerable women.

The Public Council of Dahankage of Yakawlang

This Council of Dahankage in neighboring Yakawlang District has also viewed the Shahidan shura as a model for learning. Mr. Hosien, son of Zafar Ali, is president of the council and is an active and experienced man. Mr. Qurban Ali, Haji Sharval and Ali Azizi serve as assistant, finance person, and secretary respectively. A number of people serve as alternates, in the absence of official members. They hold their sessions every 15 days.

Major Achievements of the Council of Dahankage

- Establishment of water-electricity station;
- Establishment of a central office for holding its sessions;
- Promotion of tree planting.
- Establishment of a water streamlet into the village made of stone and cement;
- Construction of a green house covered by plastic where a variety of seedlings such as tomato, cabbage cauliflower, and red pepper are grown;
- Creation of a store-house for chemical fertilizers and seeds to be distributed among local people;
- Establishment of a clinic;
- Laying of pipelines for safe and sanitary water from a spring;
- Decreasing of local expenditures for traditional ceremonies including funerals and weddings;
- Establishment of an intermediate school for girls built in the village of Rostam and currently with 250 students;
- Settlement of inter-ethnic disputes and quarrels.

This council made it a tradition to plant trees for three days from 15-17th month of Hamal. According to this tradition, all villagers, young or old, including Dahankage, Kamari, Aovbaha, start planting trees. So far they have planted thousands of seedlings of willows and sycamores. They have designated a man, who in local language called "Qarighan" as a forester to protect the trees. Establishment of a water streamlet with stone and cement into the village;

Water power Electricity of Village of Dahanhage

This water-powered electricity dam is located in the village of Dahankage. The height of the platform of Nava from the place, in which the turbine was installed, is about 18 meters vertically but with an incline of 35°, it reaches to a height of about 35 meters. The amount of water that moves the turbine, according to the controller, is between 160 to 200 liters each second, but in winters it is reduced to about 120 liters. The station of water electricity of Dahankage has a strong current, producing 15 kilowatt of electricity but the production is reduced to 12 kilowatts in colder seasons.

The electricity meets the needs of the entire village of about 150 families. The furthest home that uses of this electricity is at a distance of 1.5 kilometers from the station. Hosien Zafar, the president of the council of Dahankage, said, “It was an ambition for us to build a water electricity station. One day I suggested it to Abdullah Barat, the head of the sub-office of Future Generations in Bamyan and he posed our request to the institution. We were told by that organization that we could not be helped directly, but they wanted to mobilize local people and encourage them to try themselves. They said they could only introduce us to some organizations that might help. An organization purchased 80% of the equipment, including a turbine, big metal pipes, a boiler, a control box, and a number of cement keeper pillars The other 20% of expenses were provided and paid by local people themselves, including construction of the streamlet and the building. The station of water electricity has had good results so far. It inspired other villagers to build similar stations in their villages. The following villages have succeeded to build stations.⁴:

Future Generations Afghanistan

Future Generations has been mentioned several times in this case study, thus I chose to further describe the work of this organization in this section. The organization promotes an equitable and sustainable process of community change in Afghanistan, but also in China, India and Peru. Future Generations was founded by Daniel Taylor in 1992. The organization teaches communities to join together and improve their local conditions by mobilizing local resources. Future Generations believes everyone has the right to improve his/her life and family, and that these improvements can be achieved by working together with local, government and external partners. Future Generations has been active in Afghanistan since 2002. Initial programs in Bamyan, Dai Kundi and Ghazni provinces led to work in Nangarhar and Baghlan provinces as well.

⁴ Other villages following this example include Sargige, Dahncirdagh, Moughkhaneh, Saih Dara, Miran, Kilihan and Neifaq.