

# ANNUAL REPORT

NORTHERN  
REGION

2023



# CONTRIBUTING DONORS



Government of Germany



United Nations Development Programme



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Government of Luxembourg



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# PARTICIPATING UN ORGANIZATIONS



**Delivering as One UN**



Organizations that have received direct funding from the MPTF Office under this programme: 10 PUNOs





Programme Title & Project Number	Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s)/ Strategic Results								
<p><b>Programme Title:</b> Programme Title: STFA Joint Programme for the Northern Region of Afghanistan: Addressing Basic Human Needs through UNSFA ('JP-Northern')</p> <p><b>MPTF Office Project Reference Number:</b>00129785-8</p>	<p><b>Country:</b> Afghanistan</p> <p><b>Region:</b> Northern</p> <p><b>Priority areas/Strategic Results:</b> UNSFA Outcomes 1, 2, 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Outcome 1:</b> Sustained Essential Services</li> <li><b>Outcome 2:</b> Economic opportunities and resilient livelihoods</li> <li><b>Outcome 3:</b> Social Cohesion, Inclusion, Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Rule of Law</li> </ul>								
Implementing Partners	Programme Duration								
Please refer to PUNO-specific reports	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Overall Duration</td> <td>48 months</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Start Date</td> <td>01.01.2022</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Original End Date</td> <td>31.12.2023</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Current End Date</td> <td>31.12.2025</td> </tr> </table>	Overall Duration	48 months	Start Date	01.01.2022	Original End Date	31.12.2023	Current End Date	31.12.2025
Overall Duration	48 months								
Start Date	01.01.2022								
Original End Date	31.12.2023								
Current End Date	31.12.2025								
Programme/Project Cost (US\$)	Report Submitted By								
<p>Total approved budget as per project document: 151,822,852</p> <p>Government Contribution: N/A</p> <p>MPTF /JP Contribution: 49,776,501</p> <p>Agency Contribution: N/A</p> <p>Government Contribution (if applicable): N/A</p> <p>Other Contributions (donors): N/A</p> <p><b>Total Contributions: 49,776,501</b></p>	<p>o Name: Hiroko Massey</p> <p>o Title: Trust Fund Manager</p> <p>o Participating Organization (Lead): UNDP</p> <p>o Email address: hiroko.massey@undp.org</p>								
Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.									
<p>Assessment/Review - if applicable please attach</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Mid-Term Evaluation Report – if applicable please attach</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p>									

[1] The MPTF or JP Contribution, refers to the amount transferred to the Participating UN Organizations, which is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#)



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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>CDC</b>	Community Development Council
<b>CfW</b>	Cash for Work
<b>DaO</b>	'Delivering as One' (approach, modality, initiative)
<b>DfA</b>	De Facto Authorities
<b>DIC</b>	Drop-in Centres
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>FHH</b>	Family Health House
<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence
<b>IDP(s)</b>	Internally Displaced Person(s)
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>JP</b>	Joint Programme
<b>MPTF</b>	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
<b>MPTFO</b>	Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office
<b>MSME</b>	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>PUNO</b>	Participating United Nations Organization
<b>STFA</b>	Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>TEF</b>	(UN) Transitional Engagement Framework (for Afghanistan)
<b>TFMU</b>	Trust Fund Management Unit
<b>UCT</b>	Unconditional Cash Transfer
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNIDO</b>	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime
<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services
<b>UNSFA</b>	United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan
<b>VLC</b>	Village Literacy Committee
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA) was established on 20 October 2021 to help address basic human needs in Afghanistan at a time when communities across the country were confronting an accelerating socio-economic crisis. It constitutes an important instrument to enable well-coordinated international assistance for populations in need – including women and children – through joint United Nations (UN) interventions, while facilitating robust connections with humanitarian actions on the ground. The numerous interventions, tailored to the local context, were delivered through four main outputs: 1) provision of essential services; 2) community livelihoods and local economic activities; 3) protection of farm-based livelihoods from natural disasters; and 4) community resilience and social cohesion.

In 2023, a total of 660,946 people, including 325,765 (49.3%) female, benefited from STFA JP activities in the Northern region, as follows:

- 624,902 people, including 313,112 (50%) female, benefited from access to essential services. Of these, 20,671 people (78% female) received basic health services, such as child and maternal health services and health education, drug treatment and prevention, and psychosocial counselling. In addition, 597,723 people (48.8% female) benefited from enhanced basic community infrastructure, including access to potable water, irrigation, public sanitation, and renewable energy, among other services. Furthermore, 6,508 learners (74.4% female) aged 15 years and over completed a nine-month literacy programme.
- 33,932 people (36% female) benefited from livelihood support activities such as Cash for Work (CfW) and rural livelihood support, Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCT), and support to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), including training.
- 1,418 people (31.8% female) benefited from community resilience and disaster risk management interventions such as rehabilitated and newly constructed disaster-resilient community infrastructure (results merged with infrastructure section of output 1), asset and training support on climate resilience. Moreover, some infrastructure support activities also contributed to disaster risk management.
- 694 people (62.7% female) benefited from activities to improve social cohesion such as awareness-raising, mainly on gender and human rights issues, and to support community planning and training.

Throughout 2023, STFA encountered challenges in all regions. One of the most common challenges was related to the operating environment where programme activities had to be readjusted to accommodate restrictions announced by the de facto authorities (DfA) (on women's mobility or access to public spaces). This announcement resulted in delays and lower-than-expected participation of women in activities.

The STFA Secretariat continued to closely engage with PUNOs, donor partners, and other key stakeholders, continually assessing their implications on programming and possible options to manage the negative consequences in a principled manner. At the same time, PUNOs were, in many cases, also effective in introducing alternative, pro-active measures to continue to ensure – and, to the extent possible, expand – the meaningful engagement of women throughout the programming cycle. Such efforts are expected to continue in 2024.







# PURPOSE



## PURPOSE

The Trust Fund complements the efforts of humanitarian programmes, it aims to provide essential services to vulnerable Afghan communities so that they can meet their basic needs. At inception, the STFA implemented the Area-Based Approach to Development and Emergency Initiative (ABADEI) strategy, adopting the UN Transitional Engagement Framework (TEF) as the overarching strategic planning document in 2022, and contributing to two of TEF's main outcomes: the maintenance of essential services (Outcome 2) and the preservation of social investments and community-level systems essential for meeting basic human needs (Outcome 3). In July 2023, the STFA aligned with the priorities of the UN Strategic Framework for Afghanistan (UNSFA[2]) to support strategic and systemic programming and programme implementation while capitalizing on the complementarities and technical expertise of PUNOs. The Fund constitutes an important instrument to enable coordinated international assistance to vulnerable communities in Afghanistan.

The STFA Regional Joint Programme for Northern Afghanistan covers five provinces including Balkh, Samangan, Sar-e-Pul, Faryab, and Jawzjan, as well as Kunduz Province, and is bordered by Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The Northern region's total population is 4,356,890 (11.19% of the total national population). Relative stability in recent years, especially in Balkh province, has resulted in some development through construction – including for the rehabilitation of irrigation channels and transport infrastructure – but economic collapse has affected the provision of basic services and infrastructure projects with a direct impact on livelihoods, including livelihoods that rely primarily on agriculture and small trade. The region is affected by natural hazards – in particular drought and floods – and extreme winter and summer temperatures pose challenges to households that depend on crops and livestock particularly.

Implementation of activities commenced with a six-month joint initiation plan, developed and approved in December 2021, only two months after the Fund was established. The original JP was designed with a total budget of US\$150 million but with limits on funding that could be mobilised, an allocation of US\$49.97 million was approved as of December 2022. This was calculated using the STFA Allocation Strategy, which is guided by the population-adjusted Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI). No further funding allocation was made in 2023, and the PUNOs are implementing the JP with \$19.8 million carried forward from the allocations approved in 2021 and 2022.

[2] The UNSFA has three priorities: (1) Priority 1: Sustained Essential Services; (2) Priority 2: Economic Opportunities and Resilient Livelihoods; (3) Priority 3: Social Cohesion, Inclusion, Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Rule of Law. The JP also directly contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including Goal 1: Poverty Reduction; Goal 2: Zero Hunger; Goal 3: Good health and well-being; Goal 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls; Goal 8: Decent work and Economic Growth; Goal 10: Reduce inequalities; and Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities.



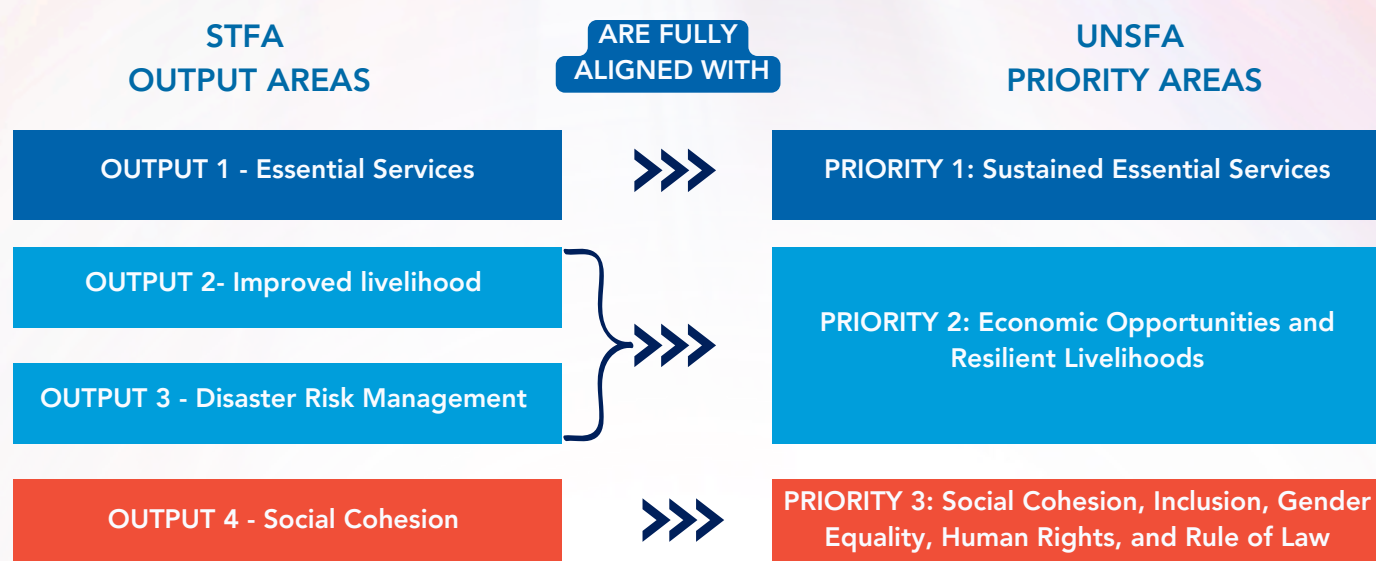


Figure 1: Summary of the alignment of the STFA Output Areas with the UNSFA priorities

There are 12 contributing partners notably Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, UNDP, Luxembourg, Qatar, Turkey, Czechia and Iceland. A total of 12 PUNOs have received funding allocations to implement JP activities in the region, as presented in Table 1 below.

PUNO	Provision of Services (Output 1)	Livelihood Support (Output 2)	Community Resilience & Disaster Risk Management (Output 3)	Social Cohesion (Output 4)
ILO	Yes	Yes	No	No
FAO	Yes	No	No	No
IOM	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UN Habitat	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UN Women	No	Yes	No	Yes
UNCTAD	No	Yes	No	No
UNDP	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UNESCO	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
UNFPA	Yes	No	No	No
UNODC	Yes	No	No	No
UNOPS	No	Yes	Yes	No
UNHCR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
# PUNOs	10	9	5	7

The end of 2023 marked the second year of implementation of JP activities in the Northern region under STFA. This annual report presents the consolidated progress and results collectively achieved and reported by the 12 PUNOs for the period January to December 2023[3]. Detailed annual reports from individual PUNOs can be accessed online on the STFA Data Management System.

[3]As UNHCR completed activities in the Northern region in 2022, no UNHCR progress was expected or reported for 2023.





# RESULTS



## OUTCOMES

From January to end June 2023, the programme portfolio aligned with two strategic priorities of the Transitional Engagement Framework (TEF). Then, from July to end December 2023, the programme aligned with the three priority areas of the UN Strategic Framework for Afghanistan (UNSFA). Approximately 2.7 million people, (1.5 million; 53.4%) women and girls have benefited from the regional programme activities since inception in 2022.

In 2023, at least 660,946 people (49.3% female) benefited from the STFA-funded JP in the Northern region. While an outcome level independent evaluation is yet to be conducted, the analysis of available data indicates that the programme has contributed to generating significant and tangible impacts on the lives and livelihoods of targeted beneficiaries in multiple dimensions. Programme activities targeted priority needs, focusing on construction or rehabilitation of essential community infrastructure, improving access to health services, including drug prevention and treatment services, livelihood support, and community engagement to promote social cohesion and gender equality. Overarching outcomes include improving and sustaining access to essential services, facilitating routes to employment and economic opportunities for resilient livelihoods, and enhancing social cohesion and human rights, with a focus on women and girls. The JP also generated immediate employment and income opportunities for host communities, including the most vulnerable and disadvantaged households, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and returnees through rehabilitation of public assets and community infrastructure.

## OUTPUTS

In 2023, approximately 660,946[4] people in the Northern region (49.3% female) benefited from STFA activities across all four output areas[5]. The majority benefited from the provision of essential services, most significantly access to improved infrastructure and healthcare and drug treatment services under Output 1 and livelihood support under Output 2, but it is important to note that the four output areas have cross-cutting impacts: 'cross-fertilisation' is common and indeed an objective across programmatic interventions. For instance, irrigation works implemented under Output 1 also contribute to the protection of people from flood hazards under Output 3. Similarly, community-level planning initiatives under Output 4 contribute to programming for the remaining three output areas. The following section provides a more detailed breakdown of all four STFA JP output areas for the Northern region.

[3] As UNHCR completed activities in the Northern region in 2022, no UNHCR progress was expected or reported for 2023.



## Northern Region STFA Report Card - 2023



**12**

Participating UN Organizations



**660,946**

people benefited



50.7%



49.3%

**325K**

female  
beneficiaries



## Beneficiaries reached through STFA in Northern Region

Health

**20,671**



Basic community infrastructure

**597,723**



Awareness-raising

**694**



Unconditional cash transfers

**16,893**



Cash for work

**13,939**



Employment generation  
/work days/

**129,978**



Agri-based livelihood

**3,932**



Trainings

**586**



MSME support

**793**





# UNSAFE PRIORITY AREA 1: SUSTAINED ESSENTIAL SERVICES



**OUTPUT 1:** Essential services and community infrastructure – including for health, agriculture, education, and energy supply - are functional, sustained and expanded to meet different needs of women and men.

In 2023, approximately 624,902 people, including 313,112 (50%) female in the Northern region, benefited from the provision of essential services under Output 1. They benefited from infrastructure; essential health services; and education as summarised below



Figure 3: IOM /Family Health House/ Samangan province

## INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2023, over 597,723 people (48.8% female) have benefited from improved community-based infrastructure to provide access to essential services and reduce risks of natural hazards, particularly flooding, and improved access to water supply. Highlights include the following:

- A total of 18.56 km of roads were rehabilitated benefiting 72,968 people (37,630 female). These interventions addressed significant mobility issues that the targeted communities confronted.
- Protection wall infrastructure with a total length of 4.5 km was constructed benefiting 140,672 individuals (70,336 female). In addition, road-side ditches were cleaned/rehabilitated with a total length of 19 km benefiting 8,715 individuals (4,357 female). These interventions resulted in safeguarding targeted communities and communal infrastructure from the negative effects of climate induced shocks.
- Five new irrigation canals totalling over 3 km were constructed and handed over to communities in Arabha, Sherabad and Childokhtar benefiting 1,250 farmers directly and 9,375 other people indirectly. The support has resulted in channelling irrigation water to crops thereby improving agricultural yield and income.
- A total of 11 water supply systems were constructed/rehabilitated in the region benefiting a total of 33,259 individuals (19,376 female). The support resulted in provision of safe and sufficient water for domestic use in the targeted communities and is expected to improved overall hygiene and reduce communicable diseases.

- During the reporting period, a total of eight watershed treatment systems were established in Samangan and Balkh provinces of the Northern region benefiting a total of 21,350 individuals (10,675 female). The support is expected to address water management issues in the targeted communities both by curbing the destruction/erosion of land/soil by slowing runoff and recharging ground water.
- A total of 228 handwashing stations have been established in 164 healthcare facilities and 64 schools benefiting 63,790 individuals (31,895 female). The support has enabled beneficiaries to safely access safe water and maintain proper hygiene.
- Two women's empowerment centres have been constructed in Mazar-e-Sharif city of Balkh province providing women-only spaces for social gatherings, community dialogues and training has been conducted to benefit over 3,413 women and girls. The centres are run by an all-women 15-strong committees trained by the JP.
- A total of 17 latrines were constructed/rehabilitated in schools in Balkh province benefiting 12,540 students (nearly 50% female).
- Six karezes (traditional water management system) were rehabilitated in Keshende district of Balkh province benefiting 4,200 people (2,100 female). The project also created 13,820 working days of short-term employment for 191 local people through CfW. These beneficiaries also benefited from an awareness programme on Intangible Culture Heritage (ICH) in 136 separate sessions for males and females.
- Two waiting hall areas for males and females were constructed and equipped at Abu Ali Sina Balkhi Regional Hospital in Mazar-e-Sharif city of Balkh province. The support was complemented with construction of two toilets sets for males and females and furnishing the hall with furniture which has enabled the clients/patients and guardians to access the healthcare facility comfortably. Since completion and handover, a total of 8,500 people (5,202 female) have benefited.

Such infrastructure initiatives provide durable solutions with long-lasting effects on target communities. Members of the local community were involved in implementing these initiatives, which also contributed to the creation of livelihood opportunities for skilled and unskilled workers.

## ESSENTIAL HEALTH SERVICES

During the reporting period, over 20,711 individuals (16,162 female) benefited from improved access to essential health services, including psychosocial and essential reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health (RMNCAH) services support, drug prevention and treatment services. Highlights include the following:

- Out of 29 planned FHHs, progress on completion of construction of 22 varies between 35 and 80 percent. On average, progress stands at 60 percent, while overall progress against the target of 29 stands at 50 percent. Once established, the FHH would provide reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health (RMNCAH) services in the targeted areas.
- Psychosocial support provided by dedicated counsellors has been integrated into six FHHs in Faryab province. In 2023, beneficiaries reached through individual and group counselling totalled 15,688 – including 10,848 female (8,348 women and 2,500 girls). This provided them with services required to maintain their well-being, helping restore their dignity and providing them with a sense of hope.
- In 2023, one 50-bed female drug treatment centre was supported in Balkh province in terms of running costs, salaries and other expenses, which resulted in rehabilitation and treatment of 40 women who were eventually re-united with their families.



- Throughout the reporting period, the JP facilitated the establishment of a Drop-in Centre (DiC) in Balkh province, catering to 4,983[6] individuals (including 434 female). The DiC offered diverse interventions such as psychosocial counselling, social support, awareness programs on HIV, hepatitis, and syphilis, primary health care services, wound management, and overdose assistance. Additionally, it organised sports events to raise awareness about drug use and engaged with youth to prevent substance abuse, among other activities.

## EDUCATION

In the reporting period, over 6,508 individuals (4,829 female) benefited from improved access to equitable and quality education. Highlights include the following:

- The JP constructed five classroom blocks and a boundary wall and provided school equipment and supplies benefiting over 400 students (200 girls) in Balkh province resulting in facilitation of an effective learning environment.
- 433 literacy classes were established where 6,508 learners (4,829 female) aged 15 years and over completed the nine-month programme in Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan, Samangan and Sarepul provinces. All facilitators received pre-service and in-service training on teaching methodologies and the curriculum. The programme implementation was overseen by the Village Literacy Committees (VLCs) [7].
- One computer training session was conducted to build computer skills of 120 youths (90 girls). The support has empowered and equipped the targeted youth with the required skills to succeed in the job market and provide them with better opportunities for the future including education.
- In an effort to investigate the current context and to seek valuable insights for future support interventions, two studies were conducted: (1) a survey of public and private universities, including those in the Northern region, that provided an overview of the current state of higher education in Afghanistan, and (2) a gender analysis of higher education that reviewed the situation of women's role in higher education from a gender equity perspective. The higher education study highlights the detrimental impacts of the suspension of higher education for women on the functionality of the higher education sub-sector and Afghanistan's economic growth prospects. Building on the results of these two STFA-supported studies, eight further studies were commissioned through other funding sources to acquire up-to-date data and information on other relevant aspects of education in Afghanistan.

[6] Psychosocial counselling, social support, and psychoeducation were provided to 3,055 marginalized individuals (63 female). 1,576 leaflets disseminated to high-risk groups (253 female) covered drug use prevention, mental health, family support, and other relevant topics. IEC materials on psychosocial support were distributed to 3,055 people (63 female). Group counselling aided 578 individuals, while 161 received individual counselling, benefiting 69 families.

HIV, hepatitis, and syphilis testing and counselling were provided to 97 individuals (38 female). Primary healthcare and related services were extended to 125 individuals. 844 individuals (64 female) accessed refreshments, food, recreation, and social services. A sports event raised drug awareness among 1,265 male youths. A youth meeting on drug prevention engaged 90 participants (40 female) in Balkh province.

[7] VLCs are influential community-based groups that support and promote literacy and basic education in rural areas. They have been established and trained by UNESCO and its partners as part of literacy programmes.





## UNSFA PRIORITY AREA 2: ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS



**OUTPUT 2:** Livelihoods, businesses and the local economy can recover, more sustainable and more resilient to instability.



**Sattar, beneficiary with disability of EIIP project of ILO, Balkh province**

In 2023, 33,932 people (12,218 female) benefited from livelihood support. Key outputs included agricultural support packages and technical training, MSME support, including business training and financial support, and cash-for-work (CfW), income generation and unconditional cash transfer (UCT) schemes. Highlights include the following:

- The JP supported over 3,100[8] households (2,920 are females) through provision of assets and horticulture training support packages including, backyard poultry, solar dryer, micro-poly greenhouse, beekeeping packages, along with related technical training. These interventions are expected to increase community resilience to shocks, protect household and community assets, and generate employment opportunities.
- During 2023, 793 MSMEs (445 women-led) received technical and financial support that is expected to provide durable income to targeted people. Out of these:
  - 16 MSME training sessions (6 for female) in Balkh, Jawzjan and Faryab provinces benefited 239 MSMEs (142 male-led and 97 female-led) and 249 employees (151 male and 98 female). The end of training evaluation indicated that participants' abilities improved with the average total marks obtained in the pre-test being 7.15 out of 20 while the post-test average was 16.14. One MSME also received support for asset replacement in Balkh province.
  - 330 MSMEs (322 women led) benefited from technical and financial support, which included business training, business plan development and implementation, mentorship, asset replacement, and other support as needed. In addition, 25 women-led MSMEs were connected with an e-commerce platform developed under STFA-supported activity.
  - JP-supported ISO and HACCP certification under the Cross-Border Trade initiative has enhanced the competitiveness of 58 MSMEs, including 52 male-led and six female-led enterprises in Balkh (57 MSMEs) and Jawzjan (1 MSME) provinces, promoting cross-border trade and supporting economic resilience.

[8] Out of the total, 1,250 received backyard poultry packages, 250 received beekeeping packages, 150 received micro green/poly house packages, 200 received micro solar dryer packages and 1,250 received agriculture-based income generating opportunities.

- The JP provided capacity building for 118 contracting companies through classroom and on-the-job training programmes. Subsequently, 78 women were supported through in-kind grants to support their businesses, and two MSMEs were facilitated to attend the Khadijat-ul-Kubra National & International Expo in Kabul.
- Over 13,939 people (including 427 (3.7%) female) benefited from short-term employment opportunities through Cash for Work (CfW) schemes that generated over 129,978 equivalent workdays of employment. The CfW scheme not only provided income for local communities and families to meet basic needs but also resulted in rehabilitation/construction of communal infrastructure such as road cleaning and rehabilitation, construction of flood protection walls, etc.
- Unconditional cash transfer (UCT) programmes reached 16,893 individuals (52.5% women) in the region that targeted the most vulnerable groups including female headed households, elderly headed households, people with disabilities etc. The assistance enabled beneficiaries to access essential resources for themselves and their families, even in challenging circumstances.



**OUTPUT 3:** Communities have improved infrastructure, access to water and preparedness mechanisms to protect farm-based livelihoods and cope with climate and environment shocks and natural disasters.



**Figure 5: Community based protection and solutions programme, Balkh province**

In the reporting period, climate change adaptation, disaster preparedness and early warning support activities progressed that benefited over 1,418 people (451 female), elevating their capacity and resilience. Highlights include the following:

- The JP established 16 community-based drought early warning system (CB-DEWS) across five provinces in the region and trained 4,650 smallholder farmers and herders to use them. CB-DEWS aims to provide forecasts and early warning information to farmers and livestock holders to enable them take anticipatory actions in the face of potential shocks or hazards and make meteorological, remote sensing and agro-related information accessible and actionable to provide farmers with practical guidance and agronomical recommendations.
- Plans were developed to improve water supply in 12 communities in Faryab, Samangan and Balkh by adapting karezes by channelling nearby springs through pipes to a water reservoir. This will provide water to the STFA-supported FHH, with excess capacity made available to the community, improving access to water to cope with climate and environment shocks.
- Disaster risk reduction (DRR) training was provided to 836 individuals (230 women) that enhanced their resilience and sustainability in mitigating the impacts of climate change and disasters.
- A total of 582 farmers (221 female) received agricultural support kits consisting of small greenhouses equipped with irrigation systems, vegetable seeds, wheat seeds, and DAP fertilizer. These provisions are anticipated to enhance the resilience of agricultural livelihoods against the impacts of climate change.





## UNSFA PRIORITY AREA 3: SOCIAL COHESION, INCLUSION, GENDER EQUALITY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND RULE OF LAW



**OUTPUT 4:** Social cohesion, respect for human rights – including, in particular, the rights of women and girls and access to justice are progressively strengthened at the local level – contributing to greater community resilience.



**Figure 6 Female MSME Soyabean in Northern Region**

In the reporting period, community outreach and engagement programmes benefited around 694 people (62.7% female) with JP activities focusing on participatory engagement, women's empowerment, capacity building on community resilience and social cohesion, and media training and engagement. Highlights include the following:

- Awareness of 360 individuals (approximately 45% female) on social cohesion, natural resources management, women's right, and local governance was raised. In addition, in partnership with the Afghan Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 334 women (who lead MSMEs) were provided with information on psychosocial first aid, self-care, legal awareness, women's and business rights, family conflicts, and female inheritance resulting in improved emotional and mental well-being.
- Using the peoples' process approach, the JP engaged fourteen communities in Mazar-e-Sharif city of Balkh Province to identify challenges and develop 22 community projects. This approach not only effectively identified community needs inclusively but also fostered greater cohesion among community members.
- Two communities were supported to develop inclusive community action plans (CAPs) in Balkh and Samangan provinces, benefiting 156 people<sup>9</sup> (41 female). In addition, through three women's peace and security consultations, further information was obtained regarding women's perspectives and recommendations. The data collected will inform future efforts to empower and support Afghan women.
- The JP delivered 18 community-based discussion sessions for 720 people<sup>8</sup> (targeting 50% female). In addition, capacity building training on community dispute resolution enhanced the knowledge of 120 community members (targeting 50% female) and supported formation of 11 traditional dispute resolution Jirgas (TDRJ) and mentoring of TDRJ activities.
- 3,137 individuals<sup>8</sup> (1,489 female and 1,648 male) benefited from information provision and awareness sessions conducted at the community resource centre (CRC) in Nawanad village, Nahre Shahi district, Balkh province.

To foster gender diversity and job creation in the media, and bolster media resilience and its critical role in providing access to information, the JP trained 12 journalists<sup>[9]</sup> (9 women) highlighting the JP's dedication to fostering gender diversity and job creation in journalism. In addition, 100 news reports, special interviews and feature reports were created on social topics (e.g., education, health, environment and social issues) and 20 roundtable discussions were hosted which contributed to improved information accessibility and increased community engagement.

<sup>[9]</sup> This intervention did not have a designated target outlined in the PUNO workplan, but its advancement was noted in the progress report for the reporting period. However, this information requires verification, and therefore, the progress made has not been included in the overall progress calculation for Output 4.



# CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED & BEST PRACTICES



# CHALLENGES

In 2023, implementation of activities under the JP in the Northern region faced a number of challenges, including security concerns, lack of access, exchange rate fluctuations, and harsh weather conditions. The following are the most significant challenges reported by STFA PUNOs in 2023.

**Security concerns:** Security concerns and the complex political situation caused disruptions, particularly in remote areas. Staff retention amid security risks presented additional challenges. The PUNOs have maintained rigorous security protocols to uphold situational awareness and safeguard the well-being, security, and safety of their personnel.

**Increasingly challenging operating environment:** The DfA decree of 24 December 2022 and its extension in April 2023, announcing restrictions on women work for NGOs and UN agencies, became a challenge for PUNOs in 2023. Particularly during the period that immediately followed the announcements, with limited female staff available, office-related work and project administration ran at reduced capacity resulting in process delays. The restrictions also limited access among female staff supporting field activities, meaning that it was harder to engage women and girls in targeted communities. While the exemptions that have been secured through a limited level of coordination enabled most female staff to return to employment, the risk of intervention continues and requires close monitoring to enable timely and appropriate mitigation measures. Nevertheless, the JP remains committed to gender representation within the workforce, and a principled approach, including within implementing partner workforces. The impact of these announcements in the North have been relatively less extensive than in Southern Afghanistan. Localized measures continue to be adopted by PUNOs to ensure a principled delivery modality across the portfolio.

**Inflation and exchange rates:** Inflation and shifting exchange rates contributed to market price increases for construction materials and works resulting in challenges related to implementation costs. As per the UN Operational Rates of Exchange<sup>[10]</sup>, on 15 January 2023, 1 US\$ = 88.73 Afghani (AFN) while on 31 December 2023, 1 US\$ = 69.34 AFN meaning that the US\$ value against the Afghani dropped around 22 percent and, at the same time, global inflation contributed to an increase in the costs of materials and fuel. With the intention of ensuring stability of JP contracts, the cost of fulfilling agreements made in US\$ have had a huge impact on contractors considering that the costs of wages, materials, equipment and taxes are paid in the local currency. This has caused significant losses among contractors and bankruptcy threatens some.

**Harsh weather conditions:** During the winter it is not recommended to implement some infrastructure projects and construction work as the low temperatures can compromise quality. Therefore, construction work has to be expedited in advance of winter, or work paused requiring additional time and related contract extensions. The PUNOs made considerations of the seasonal cycle and the project duration and time contract signing to the extent possible.

**Remote project locations:** Some construction materials must be sourced from outside project areas and due to the remoteness of some locations, the costs to mobilize and demobilize required resources and transport materials was higher than anticipated for contractors, especially considering inflation.

**Challenges in meeting FHH construction targets:** New requirements imposed by the DfA Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) on FHH design, including changes to the structural design, specification of key items, and the addition of a boundary wall and men's waiting room, have significantly increased the cost of each FHH. As a result, the original goal of constructing 29 FHHs in the Northern region cannot be met; instead, only 22 FHHs will be built. Additional funding from alternative sources will be pursued to complete the remaining seven FHHs.

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[10] <https://treasury.un.org/operationalrates/OperationalRates.php>



# LESSONS LEARNED

The following are key lessons learned during 2023:

**Engagements with local stakeholders:** Although the process is lengthy and causes delays, affecting implementation, timely expenditure and agreed timelines, consultation with local stakeholders to ensure safe and unhindered access to beneficiaries proved essential. Coordination with relevant de-facto counterparts and obtaining assurances for programme implementation, especially regarding women's involvement or when dealing with sensitive issues, has proven helpful. Close coordination and building strong relationships with community elders, youth associations, religious leaders, and influential bodies such as provincial chambers of commerce and investment can also increase support and understanding of the benefits of programming, especially if addressing stigma and discrimination against targeted individuals, for example. Segregating office space for male and female staff, hiring female staff to engage with female beneficiaries, and recommending the use of hijab for female staff can help address gender-specific challenges and ensure inclusivity within projects.

**Training work with women:** Likewise, following Islamic rules and regulations, female trainers should train female trainees, separate spaces and entrances should be provided for female participants, and training may need to be conducted in female-dedicated spaces such as women's markets. Female trainers and women activists may also agree to use their own houses for training. To a large degree, the decision to switch to apprenticeships for female beneficiaries has resolved the issues of the DfA ban on centre-based trainings. Engaging and involving the relatives of female beneficiaries through training sessions has also proved effective in enhancing women's skills and knowledge, fostering knowledge transfer within their support networks, and ensuring project sustainability.

**Involvement of Community Development Councils:** Involvement of CDCs was often crucial in ensuring project activities were delivered on time. It also helped ensure that any changes in the delivery mode of women's activity were socially accepted. Such engagements have not only helped to ensure community ownership and inclusion of both women and men but have also often contributed to reducing restrictions put in place by local DfA. In contrast, the implementation of activities without engaging local community leadership can reduce impact and sustainability, and place greater risks on programme personnel during implementation.

**Delivering as One 'collaboration and innovation':** PUNO working groups have successfully collaborated to identify and address common problems, share experiences and knowledge, and organize joint visits and activities, for example. Duplications and overlaps in activities have been avoided and beneficiaries reached more effectively and equitably. Shared knowledge has enabled mapping of different interventions, resources available and good practices. Similarly, the overlapping of community engagement and social cohesion activities, for example, to raise awareness and community capabilities and ensure continuity of activities with women, has been more effectively implemented.

**Continuous innovation:** The need to be flexible and innovative in developing pragmatic solutions is apparent, especially within the current fragility context. The restrictions imposed by the DfA, many which impede the application of decent work principles, has led to the continued need to consult, seek and identify local techniques and solutions and adapt them to address the socio-economic challenges. Sometimes this resulted in additional costs and delays related to the need for additional incentives, partnerships building, and stakeholder engagement.





**Conflict-sensitive and culturally appropriate communication and negotiation skills:** The implementing partners should remain committed to accepted vulnerability-based beneficiary selection criteria regardless of potential attempted interference by self-interested local stakeholders. Vigilance, professional skills and organizational direction, including conflict-sensitive and culturally appropriate communication and negotiation skills, may be required to enforce and explain binding beneficiary selection criteria.

**Long-term employment opportunities:** The provision of employment retention support has proven effective in safeguarding jobs and creating new employment opportunities, providing essential support to the private sector. However, as work opportunities are usually short term, it is beneficial to link project activities to employment opportunities that extend beyond the specific lifetime of the project. Integrated enterprises development can demonstrate how beneficiaries can contribute towards their own advancement through investing seed money to support initiatives, such as confectionary and tailoring businesses, agreed by the community. This instils a sense of ownership, pride, cooperation and confidence among beneficiaries that sustainable livelihoods are possible.

**Cross-border trade:** The ISO and HACCP certification support provided in the Northern Region focusing on MSMEs represents a successful initiative. Businesses that received this support have reported growing consumer trust in their products, leading to increased sales.

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[1] <https://treasury.un.org/operationalrates/OperationalRates.php>



## RISK ANALYSIS

During the planning and development of the JP for the Northern Region, a risk management framework was developed to categorize risks into contextual (political, security), programmatic, operations/financial, and organisational types. In 2023, although there were no new reported risks, several previously identified risks from 2022 persist, and appropriate responses are being enacted, as outlined in the Table below.

Risk Description (as per JP document)	Type	Rating	Owner	Response
Risk#7. Abuses of human rights or unlawful behaviour is committed by de facto authorities and/or local authorities.	Programmatic	Likelihood: Likely Consequence: Major Risk Rating: High	Programme Management, PUNOs	<p>[Risk status: Materialized and Open]</p> <p>In 2023, PUNOs have continued to engage with CDCs, shuras, village literacy committees, religious leaders, and community elders, to assess and monitor the human rights situation, at local level, and continue advocacy for a principled approach to delivery – including by ensuring the meaningful participation of women and girls in planned activities.</p>
Risk#18: Further restrictions on women and girls' participation in social and economic life. DfA announced restrictions on Afghan women workers in I/NGOs and the UN.	Contextual	Likelihood: Very Likely Consequence: Major Risk Rating: Very High	PUNOs/TFMU	<p>[Risk status: Materialized and Open]</p> <p>PUNOs to remain apprised of higher-level dialogues and engagements on the human rights situation in Afghanistan (UN SG; UN Human Rights Council; UN Security Council, UNAMA; international community/ACG), and of measures or recommendations issued through such platforms.</p> <p>Regular coordination meetings between UN/ international community leadership and DFA aiming to advocate to reverse restrictions placed on Afghan women workers in I/NGOs and the UN.</p> <p>PUNOs assessing the situation on the ground and seeking alternative work modalities/approaches for female staff to work and also reach out to female beneficiaries that are in need.</p> <p>Continued advocacy has been a key measure PUNOs have taken to lessen the impact of this materialized risk. Space for localized arrangements (ensuring non-discrimination alongside the safety and security of personnel) are continuously explored.</p> <p>In some cases, alternative modalities of implementation have been effectively implemented– e.g. changes in venues for training targeting women entrepreneurs. Commitment requested by IPs not to replace female personnel with male personnel.</p>

<p>Risk#17: Programme unable to mobilize required financial resources. (the Joint Programmes for Northern, region remain significantly underfunded vis- à-vis initially plans, i.e., \$150 million)</p>	<p>Programmatic</p>	<p>Likelihood: Possible Consequence: Moderate Rating: High</p>	<p>Programme Management &amp; PUNOs</p>	<p>[Risk status: Materialized and Open]</p> <p>TFMU together with PUNOs have allocated available resources based on critical needs and identified priorities in the region; some PUNOs have been able to leverage additional, non-STFA resources; TFMU is engaging with STFA leadership to seek to mobilize more resources to be able to reduce the funding gap in the existing STFA portfolio.</p>
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Table 2: Risks that materialized and responses implemented.



# QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

In 2023, the STFA-supported JP in the Northern region of Afghanistan continued to make progress to improve lives and livelihoods, especially those of the most vulnerable. In a challenging socio-economic environment resulting from the August 2021 powershift in Afghanistan, the conflict in Ukraine and a global economic slowdown, the JP has enhanced access to essential services, including healthcare services, and created sustainable jobs, including for women. Agricultural support packages, along with income generation, CfW and UCT initiatives, and cash (small grants), in-kind and training support to MSMEs – many female-led – have sustained and enhanced lives during a severe and continuing socio-economic crisis. With activities prioritized according to needs determined by local communities, the JP also helped improve social cohesion by promoting women's rights and human rights and building local community governance structures to guide grassroots planning processes. Despite some limitations resulting from the working environment in 2023, the JP has achieved its intended objectives.

With a 2023 funding of \$19.8 million carried forward from 2021-2022 allocations, at least 660,946 people, including 325,765 (49.3%) female, benefited from JP activities in the region during the year. This includes 597,723 people (48.8% female) in vulnerable locations with improved access to basic services such as safe drinking water and education, and 20,671 people (78% female) who received healthcare services, including child and maternal health services, drug treatment and drug prevention services, mental health and psychosocial counselling support, and health education, all essential to help restore at-risk individuals to normal and more resilient lives.

Works to improve infrastructure, culverts and flood protection walls have not only improved drainage systems and protected agricultural land from flood damage but have also acted to safeguard local livelihoods and economies. The JP has improved the quality of life for many community members while enhancing resilience against natural disasters and contributing to overall community socio-economic well-being with initiatives providing employment opportunities and incomes that help drive economic growth and local development. Specifically, a total of 3,932 people (79.9% female) benefited from agriculture-based livelihood support, while 30,832 people (30.2% female) benefited from CfW and UCT initiatives.

Support provided to MSMEs, including cash (small grants), in-kind and training opportunities, has also resulted in the creation of thousands of sustainable jobs, including for women, in targeted regions. Preliminary monitoring data indicates high success rates of activity outputs, including considerable increases in average incomes of MSME beneficiaries, contributing to improved access to basic services, self-reliance and resilience. Empowering MSMEs through financial support and training not only helps build economic growth but also strengthens local economies and improves access to essential services. Furthermore, promoting gender equality within the entrepreneurial landscape fosters a more inclusive and diverse workforce. As the current protection landscape of Afghanistan places strict limitations on the inclusion of women and girls in social, economic and political aspects of life, facilitating their access to livelihoods is important and provides pathways to inclusion.

Efforts in disaster preparedness and climate-resilient livelihoods highlight the JP's commitment to environmental health and climate resilience. These initiatives aim to enhance community members' knowledge and skills in mitigating risks related to disasters and adapting to changing climatic conditions, ultimately promoting sustainable practices and mitigating environmental impacts. In 2023, the JP continued to demonstrate a strong commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, along with youth empowerment and social inclusion, by prioritizing the needs of women and other vulnerable groups and enabling their participation.

Gender diversity, job creation and resilience in the media has also been supported. Beneficiary groups have demonstrated strong engagement in decision-making processes, notably through engagement with CDC leaders and the community in promoting human rights and gender equity. Community consultations and needs assessments in intervention design phases have further ensured accountable programming, with interventions targeting priority gaps and needs. In 2023, over 694 people (62.7% female) benefited from social cohesion support under the JP. This number is the lowest among the four JP Outputs but while the activities under Output 4 may be fewer, they play a crucial role as facilitators for Outputs 1, 2, and 3. For instance, mobilising communities under Output 4 to identify needs and develop response plans provides essential input for activities like constructing protection walls, irrigation canals, healthcare facilities and education under the other three outputs.

Activities have been significantly enabled by key partnerships with local NGOs, and local expertise and knowledge have been instrumental in delivery for sustainable outcomes, including in infrastructure components, livelihoods activities, drug treatment, and social cohesion interventions. In tandem, DaO partnerships have enabled interlinked activities, leveraging PUNOs' individual technical expertise to deliver responses that effectively target gaps and needs including among IDPs, IDP returnees, refugees and refugee returnees, with specific consideration for vulnerable population groups, including women and girls.

Throughout 2023, JP implementation faced programming and operational challenges. In some instances, PUNOs faced restrictions in gaining safe and unhindered access to target areas or beneficiaries which resulted in some delays in implementation and underachievement of targets, especially related to female beneficiaries. Nevertheless, PUNOs remained proactive in their pursuit of alternative means to engage female beneficiaries and such efforts will continue. Moving forward, alternative and innovative modalities for principled delivery will remain critical to sustain the pace and scale of progress and protect the gains made under the JP in 2023 and beyond.

The Trust Fund Management Unit (TFMU), through a third-party firm, conducted a beneficiary survey to assess the progress of STFA activities against specific JP performance indicators in the Northern and Southern regions and for the health sector project – Support to Ataturk Hospital in Kabul. In addition, this assessment examined the impact of restrictions imposed by the DfA on women’s access to education and employment on STFA activities in the field. The survey results indicate high satisfaction levels among respondents in the Northern region (100%) regarding the essential services support provided, particularly in basic community infrastructure and health services. Beneficiaries who received support expressed significant satisfaction with the health and education services in remote areas, where access was previously limited before the implementation of STFA-funded JPs. Furthermore, 90 percent of respondents who received livelihood support affirmed its effectiveness, noting improvements in their situations through enhanced access to employment opportunities, initiation or expansion of businesses, income generation, and better provision for their families.

While the DfA announcements may have restricted women's participation in communal or societal life, STFA-funded joint programmes were able not only to deliver services to the affected women and girls in the communities, but also to involve them to the largest possible extent in development activities.

In conclusion, the JP's comprehensive approach to addressing cross-cutting issues such as socio-economic development, environmental health, gender equality and community well-being underscores its commitment to fostering holistic growth and resilience. A comprehensive approach to implementation ensures that both immediate needs are addressed, and long-term sustainability and inclusivity is fostered. Strong inclusive practices in planning and implementation have contributed to local ownership of intervention activities, underpinning sustainable outcomes. JP initiatives are not only paving the way for sustainable development and inclusive socio-economic progress in the Northern region but are also driving positive change within the community.



# PARTNERSHIPS

**STFA Leadership:** At the end of 2022, the Chair of the Steering Committee changed from UNDP Resident Representative to UN Resident Coordinator, contributing to moving STFA closer to a 'One UN' funding framework vision. In 2023, Under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator, the STFA tapped into UN-wide coordination mechanisms (e.g. UN Country Team (UNCT)/ Programme Management Team (PMT)/ Operations Management Team (OMT)) as a key pooled financing instrument alongside the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF). As chair of the STFA Steering Committee, the Resident Coordinator is well-positioned to further advance 'Delivering as One UN' in alignment with the broader UN reform agenda.

**Co-leadership of the Steering Committee:** In 2023, Sweden continued to serve as the co-chair of the STFA Steering Committee and other official platforms e.g., TCWG and Donor Technical Sessions until June. During this period, Sweden played an essential role in the management and coordination of the fund's activities aimed at supporting vulnerable communities in Afghanistan. At the STFA SC meeting held on 26 June 2023, Sweden transitioned its co-chair responsibilities to Norway. Norway continued collaborating with existing partners to further the fund's mission of addressing the basic human needs of people in Afghanistan.

**Pro-active outreach:** The Trust Fund also engaged in targeted outreach efforts to promote relationships with diverse stakeholders, including potential new donors such as Arab states, European countries, and North America, as well as non-governmental organizations like Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) and other implementing partners, local communities. In June 2023, the Chair of STFA led a strategic discussion on STFA transition into 'One UN Funding Framework'. Key topics addressed encompassed the necessity for predictable funding, alignment with other funding streams, and the prioritization of activities. Participants largely supported the transition into One UN framework, underscoring the importance of ongoing evolution and flexibility within the Fund. This dialogue laid the groundwork for the formulation of the STFA Strategic Note[11].

**Strategic coordination with other funding streams:** The Trust Fund further strengthened its engagements with other funding streams – particularly Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (OCHA), ARTF (World Bank), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and Afghanistan Humanitarian Trust Fund/Islamic Development Bank (AHTF/IsDB); cultivating a network of support and advocacy for delivering as one and HDP nexus approach to promote a sustainable solution for the current humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Consequently, the STFA became an observer of AHF's Advisory Board Meeting, as well as ARTF's Management Committee, while representatives of OCHA and ARTF/World Bank are regular attendees, as observers, in STFA's Steering Committee meetings. Joint events hosted by STFA-ARTF/WB were also held on the side of the Afghanistan Coordination Group in-person meetings. Such levels of engagement allowed for strategic information-sharing which, in turn, helps to minimize the risk of unnecessary duplications or overlaps in downstream programmatic activities.

The engagements between STFA and ADB also stepped up in 2023, at fund-management and senior leadership level, helping to ensure adequate strategic coordination. The engagements between TFMU and IsDB/AHTF paved the way for the signing of a bilateral agreement between IOM and IsDB, complementing the work being supported by STFA. Such agreement was indeed instrumental to ensure the continuation of an ongoing 'Delivering as One' initiative in support of the expansion of 'Family Health Houses' network in Northern Afghanistan. This experience showcases that STFA, and other sources of funding can work in synergistic ways, to expand the outreach and scale of joint investments and enhance the quality of products and services being delivered to local communities while, at the same time, increasing efficiencies and cost savings.

[8] The Strategic Note received approval during the STFA SC meeting of March 2024.



# ANNEXES

# ANNEX I: INDICATOR BASED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT \*

JP Output Indicators	Achieved Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target	Source of Verification
<b>Output 1: Essential services and community infrastructure – including for health, agriculture, education, and energy supply - are functional, sustained and expanded to meet different needs of women and men.</b>			
1a. Number of people that have benefited from UN-supported essential services and/or new/rehabilitated infrastructure, disaggregated by type of service and sex. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 0(0) People</li> <li>Planned Target: 557,571(282,272) People</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: 591,648 Female: 288,689		PUNO REPORTS
1b. Number of people that have benefited from UN-supported maternal/reproductive health care services (health) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 0(0) People</li> <li>Planned Target: 40,000(20,000) People</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: 23,671 people Female: 16,122		PUNO REPORTS
1c. Number of people that have benefited from drug-treatment, drug rehabilitation services (health) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 0(0) People</li> <li>Planned Target: 4,000(1,200) People</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: 4,983 Female: 0		PUNO REPORTS
1d. Number of functional, UN-supported, facilities providing basic health assistance (including basic health assistance services for women and girls) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 32(0) Facilities/Infrastructure</li> <li>Planned Target: 78(0) Facilities/Infrastructure</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: 78 Female: 0 78(0) Facilities/Infrastructure		PUNO REPORTS
1f. Number of children, adolescents and adults (including adolescent girls and women) who benefit from primary and secondary education, basic general literacy and vocational education programmes (at least 50% female) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 0(0) People</li> <li>Planned Target: 120(90) People</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: 6,508 Female: 4,829	Efficient use of time and resources through effective community mobilization	PUNO REPORTS



1g. Hectares of rehabilitated and/or newly irrigated land for agricultural activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline: 0(0) Facilities/Infrastructure</li> <li>• Planned Target: 100(0) Facilities/Infrastructure</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: 0 Female: 0 0(0) Facilities/Infrastructure		PUNO REPORTS
1h. Percentage of target beneficiaries satisfied with the quality of UN-supported services, disaggregated by type of service and sex <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline: 0(0) %</li> <li>• Planned Target: 90(90) %</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: Female:		PUNO REPORT
<b>Output 2: Livelihoods, businesses and the local economy can recover, more sustainable and more resilient to instability.</b>			
2a. Number of people who benefited from UCT(at least 80% women) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline: 0(0) People</li> <li>• Planned Target: 13,754(7,377) People</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: 16,893 Female: 8,871		PUNO REPORTS
2b. Number of people who have benefited from newly-created income-generation opportunities, disaggregated by sex, age and province <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline: 0(0) People</li> <li>• Planned Target: 4,330(4,330) People</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: 3,100 Female: 2,920		PUNO REPORTS
2b.1. Number of people who have benefited from productive employment through CfW schemes (at least 30% women; 50% youth) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline: 0(0) People</li> <li>• Planned Target: 12,267(325) People</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: 13,939 Female: 427	Female targets could not be achieved mainly due to the lack of a safe, conducive, operating environment – which posed challenges to safely access and mobilize women beneficiaries. Alternative measures to continue to improve access, despite the emergence of new challenges, are being explored by PUNOs.	PUNO REPORTS



2c. No. of worker-days generated with UN-support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 0(0) Work days</li> <li>Planned Target: 33,540(8,077) Work days</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: 129,978 Female: 8,133		PUNO REPORTS
2d. % of people with disabilities (PWD) that have benefited from newly-created income-generation opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 0(0) %</li> <li>Planned Target: 0(0) %</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: Female:  0(0) %		PUNO REPORT
2f. Number of MSMEs that benefit through financial capital support, training and/or other forms of asset support, disaggregated by women-led and men-led MSMEs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 0(0) MSMEs</li> <li>Planned Target: 234(57) MSMEs</li> <li>Baseline: 0(0) Other</li> <li>Planned Target: 4(160) Other</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: 793 Female: 445 Progress 2023: 90% Female:		PUNO REPORTS
2g. Proportion of beneficiaries who confirm sustained or improved livelihoods as a result of programme-supported activities (random sampling) Baseline: 0 Indicative target: 70% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 0(0) %</li> <li>Planned Target: 70(70) %</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: 90% Female:		PUNO REPORTS
<b>Output 3: Communities have improved infrastructure, access to water and preparedness mechanisms to protect farm-based livelihoods and cope with climate and environment shocks and natural disasters.</b>			
3a. Number of districts with functional early warning systems and other preparedness mechanisms for climate shocks and natural disasters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 0(0) Districts</li> <li>Planned Target: 11(0) Districts</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: 13 Female: 0		PUNO REPORTS
3b. Number of people who acquired knowledge and skills on disaster preparedness and climate-resilient livelihoods (at least 30% women) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 0(0) People</li> <li>Planned Target: 25,000(0) People</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: 586 Female: 230		PUNO REPORTS
3c. Number of farmers who benefited from training and assets for improved, climate-smart, agriculture (at least 30% women) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 0(0) People</li> <li>Planned Target: 13,000(5,000) People</li> </ul>	Progress 2023: 832 Female: 221		PUNO REPORTS

<p>3d. Number of people that benefit from rehabilitated and/or newly constructed disaster-resilient community infrastructure and nature-based solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 0(0) Hectares</li> <li>Planned Target: 100(0) Hectares</li> </ul>	<p>Progress 2023: 0 Female: 0</p>		<p>PUNO REPORTS</p>
<p><b>Output 4: Social cohesion, respect for human rights – including, in particular, the rights of women and girls and access to justice are progressively strengthened at local level – contributing to greater community resilience.</b></p>			
<p>4a. Number of CBOs/CSOs with improved capacity for participatory and inclusive community planning (at least 20% women-led)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 0(0) CSOs</li> <li>Planned Target: 4(0) CSOs</li> </ul>	<p>Progress 2023: 0 Female: 0</p>		<p>PUNO REPORTS</p>
<p>4b. Number of people with better awareness about human rights , social cohesion and conflict prevention (at least 50% women)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 0(0) People</li> <li>Planned Target: 0(0) People</li> </ul>	<p>Progress 2023: 694 Female: 435</p>		<p>PUNO REPORTS</p>
<p>4g. Proportion of women in target areas that perceive benefits from measures addressing gender-based discrimination and GBV (including preventive measures)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline: 0(0) People</li> <li>Planned Target: 39,700(39,700) People</li> </ul>	<p>Progress 2023: 0 Female: 0</p>		<p>PUNO REPORTS</p>

## ANNEX II: VOICES FROM THE FIELD: REAL-LIFE STORIES

### FROM RETURNEE TO CEO IN AFGHANISTAN: MOZHGAN'S STORY



*Mozhgan female MSME in Northern Region Balkh*

In Mazar Sharif, Afghanistan, Mozhgan's story unfolds—a tale of resilience, empowerment, and entrepreneurial triumph. Born in northern Afghanistan but raised in Iran amid conflict, Mozhgan returned to Afghanistan with her family in 2005, drawn by the hope of a peaceful future. As she grows up, the dream of owning her own business took root.

With just \$100 and a team of 10 in 2019, Mozhgan founded her carpet weaving company to make her lifelong dream a reality. However, she faced number of challenges including lack of financing, knowledge and skills for managing her business successfully, and expertise of carpet-weaving.

Her big break came in 2020 when she was selected to participate in a business training programme by ILO which was later complemented by the UNDP-hosted international exhibition in Dubai. The training honed her skills in both carpet weaving and business management and provided crucial financial support to elevate her business that had a great potential. Upon completion of the training in 2022, Mozhgan had already transformed her small business into a thriving enterprise named Almas Kabir, employing nearly 200 employees.

In 2023, Mozhgan's carpets gained international attention at a UNDP-organized exhibition in Dubai, highlighting her ability to expand her market reach globally. This exposure was pivotal, boosting sales and introducing her products to a wider and international audience. Today, Almas Kabir has expanded to three factories, employing 400 individuals. Ninety percent of the workforce is comprised of internally displaced women. Her commitment to providing equal opportunities, regardless of educational background or origin, stems from her own experiences as an internally displaced person.

Mozhgan's approach to business is deeply intertwined with her personal experiences. As someone who has faced displacement, she is keenly aware of the challenges that internally displaced women encounter in securing employment. By focusing on training and equipping her employees with marketable skills, Mozhgan ensures they are prepared not just to work, but to thrive with capacity to support the basic human needs of their families including food, shelter, and clothing.

The collaborative efforts of UN agencies including ILO and UNDP through 'Delivering as One' approach, facilitated by the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA), have been instrumental in Mozhgan's success. In a country where women often face substantial barriers to professional advancement or even employment for that matter, Mozhgan is breaking barriers, proving that with persistence and support, women can not only succeed but also lead in rebuilding their communities.



## LITERACY LIGHTS THE WAY: STORY OF EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

In the remote Faizabad district of Jawzjan province, Afghanistan, a young woman named Arzo is changing lives. As a 12th-grade graduate in a village where women often have limited role and opportunity, Arzo fought against the tide to claim her right to education. Today, she stands as a symbol of hope, not just as educated women but also inspiration to other Afghan women.

Arzo's involvement in local literacy initiatives began when she secured a position with the local NGO, a partner of UNESCO supported by the STFA. Her mission is both simple and revolutionary: to bring literacy to the women of her village. Through her classes, Arzo offers more than alphabet and numbers; she provides keys to unlock vast potentials of many. In Faizabad, the demand for education is great as many are unable to read or write. Therefore, the literacy classes in there are more than just education; they are a transformative force.

In one of Arzo's literacy classes in Jo-e Wazir village, 15 women gather regularly, eager to learn. Among them is Shukria, whose life has been transformed by the nine-month course she attended. Previously, Shukria struggled with basic tasks such as recording names on her phone or reading street signs. Now, she writes letters and understands pharmacy labels with confidence, illustrating the significant impact of literacy on her daily life. The stories of Arzo and Shukria highlight a crucial issue in Afghanistan: the vast demand for and limited access to education, especially for women.

According to UNESCO, only 29.8 percent of the women are literate compared to 55 percent of the men in Afghanistan as of 2020. This disparity is not just a local issue but a national crisis, reflecting deep-rooted societal norms and the ongoing challenges that women face in accessing education underscoring the need for coordinated and concerted support from international organizations.



*Women in the Literacy class in Northern Region Jawzjan*

## ANNEX III. OTHER ASSESSMENTS OR EVALUATIONS

The beneficiary survey assessed the progress of STFA activities against specific JP performance indicators in the Northern and Southern regions and for the health sector project – Support to Ataturk Hospital in Kabul. In addition, this assessment examined the impact of announcements by the DfA on women’s access to education and employment on STFA activities in the field.

- 100 percent of respondents expressed high satisfaction levels with the essential services support provided, particularly in basic community infrastructure and health services.
- 90 percent of respondents who received livelihood support affirmed its effectiveness, noting improvements in their situations through enhanced access to employment opportunities, initiation or expansion of businesses, income generation, and better provision for their families.

## ANNEX IV. PROGRAMMATIC REVISIONS

The joint programme document was revised to align with the UN Strategic Framework for Afghanistan (UNSFA), which will serve as the strategic planning framework for Afghanistan until the end of December 2025. This included adjustments in geographic coverage area with no change in budgets/allocations.



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