



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**EASTERN REGION
JOINT PROGRAMME**



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Tents at Omary Camp in Torkham, Nangarhar Province that offer returnees their first safe shelter.

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Participating UN Organizations



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Gender Equality and the
Empowerment of Women



International Organization
for Migration



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Food and Agriculture
Organization of the United
Nations

Programme Title & Project Number		Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s)/ Strategic Results	
Programme Title: STFA Joint Programme for the Eastern Region of Afghanistan: Addressing Basic Human Needs through UNSFA ('JP-Eastern') MPTF Office Project Reference Number: 133760-3		Country: Afghanistan Region: Eastern Priority areas/Strategic Results: UNSFA Outcomes 1, 2, 3 Outcome 1: Sustained Essential Services Outcome 2: Economic opportunities and resilient livelihoods Outcome 3: Social Cohesion, Inclusion, Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Rule of Law	
Participating Organization(s)		Implementing Partners	
Organizations that have received direct funding from the MPTF Office under this programme: 11 PUNOs 1. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 2. International Organization for Migration (IOM) 3. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) 4. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 5. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 6. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 7. United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) 8. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 9. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 10. International Labor Organization (ILO) 11. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)		Please refer to PUNO-specific reports	
Programme/Project Cost (US\$)		Programme Duration	
Total approved budget as per project document:	150,685,491	Overall Duration	48 months
MPTF /JP Contribution1:	54,623,798		
Agency Contribution	N/A	Start Date	4 Nov 2022
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Assessment/Review - if applicable please attach Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Mid-Term Evaluation Report – if applicable please attach Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No		o Name: Hiroko Massey o Title: Trust Fund Manager o Participating Organization (Lead): N/A Email address: hiroko.massey@undp.org	



Contents

P.7	Executive Summary
P.9	Purpose
P.11	Results
P.27	Delays in Implementation, Challenges, Lessons Learned & Best Practices
P.32	Qualitative Assessment
P.34	Partnerships
P.36	Annexes

Maryam, an internally displaced woman working at a STFA supported paper recycling factory in Nangarhar Province.
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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CB-DEWS	Community-Based Drought Early Warning Systems
CDC	Community Development Council
CfW	Cash for Work
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DaO	Delivering As One
DfA	De Facto Authorities
DIC	Drop-in Centres
DTC	Drug Treatment Centre
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FHH	Family Health House
GBV	Gender Based Violence
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JP	Joint Programme
MCHC	Mother and Child Health Centre
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPI	Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprise
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PAC	Provincial Advisory Committee
PSS	Psychosocial Support
PUNO	Participating United Nations Organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIYB	Start and Improve Your Business
STFA	Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan
UCT	Unconditional Cash Transfer
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime
UNSFA	United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene



Executive Summary

A water supply system with reservoirs built through STFA interventions in Woch Tangi, Nangarhar Province, providing clean drinking water to returnees and host communities. © UN-Habitat



The Eastern Region joint programme commenced in November 2022 and activities are gradually peaking. In 2024, a total of 731,408 people (361,774; 49.5% women and girls) benefited from STFA-supported Joint Programme (JP) activities as follows:

- 375,449 people (193,780; 51.6% female) gained access to essential services, including enhanced basic infrastructure, irrigation systems, healthcare services, evidence-based drug prevention, treatment and harm reduction, and community-based literacy programmes.
- 17,810 people (9,885; 55.5% women and girls) received livelihood support, including Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCT), Cash-for-Work (CfW), and assistance to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through business training, asset replacement, and employment retention.
- 324,528 people (147,038; 45.3% female) benefited from disaster risk reduction and community-based climate resilience activities, including early warning systems (CB-DEWS), climate-resilient agricultural training and infrastructure support for preparedness in the wake of disasters.
- 13,621 people (11,071; 81.3%) engaged in social cohesion efforts, including community capacity-building, awareness campaigns, and multimedia initiatives.

Just like other JP's, implementation of interventions faced several challenges. These included restrictions imposed by de facto authorities (DfA) particularly on women's mobility and public participation as well as delays in signing of MoUs, and DfA demands to be included in recruitment and procurement processes. Additional barriers included inflation, unpredictable exchange rates, adverse weather, and difficult-to-reach locations, which all hampered operations.

Despite these challenges, the STFA Secretariat (TFMU) maintained close engagement with PUNOs, donors, and partners to monitor and address gender-related restrictions and identify principled workarounds. Many PUNOs adopted proactive strategies to sustain—and, where possible, expand women's meaningful engagement, a priority that will remain central going forward.

Third-party monitoring (TPM) in the Eastern region highlighted strong community validation. Relevance was rated at 80 percent, with essential services scoring 100 percent, livelihoods 91 percent, and social cohesion 55 percent, pointing to the need for more tailored approaches in the latter. Effectiveness was rated at 65 percent, and sustainability at 81 percent, indicating growing community ownership.

The end of 2024 marked the second full year of JP implementation under STFA. This report presents the consolidated results and progress achieved by the 11 active PUNOs from January to December 2024.



Purpose

A citrus orchard farm supported by STFA in Nangarhar Province offers returnees and local farmers a sustainable livelihood. © STFA



The STFA Regional Joint Programme (JP) for Eastern Afghanistan covers the provinces of Kunar, Laghman, Nuristan, and Nangarhar, which share a border with Pakistan. The JP was approved by the STFA Steering Committee in March 2022, with funding allocations approved in October 2022. As of December 2024, the programme received a total funding allocation of US\$41.50 million, based on the STFA Regional Allocation Strategy, which is guided by the population-adjusted Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

Home to a population of 2,912,579 (representing 7.48% of Afghanistan's national population), the Eastern region remains highly vulnerable to natural hazards, including seasonal floods, earthquakes, landslides, and droughts. The region has also been severely affected by decades of conflict, resulting in displacement, destruction of infrastructure and livelihoods, and a disruption of development efforts. Insecurity and the remoteness of rural areas continue to pose serious access challenges, contributing to a fragile humanitarian situation. A total of 11 Participating UN Organizations (PUNOs) received funding to implement JP activities in the region.

Below is the report card for 2024.

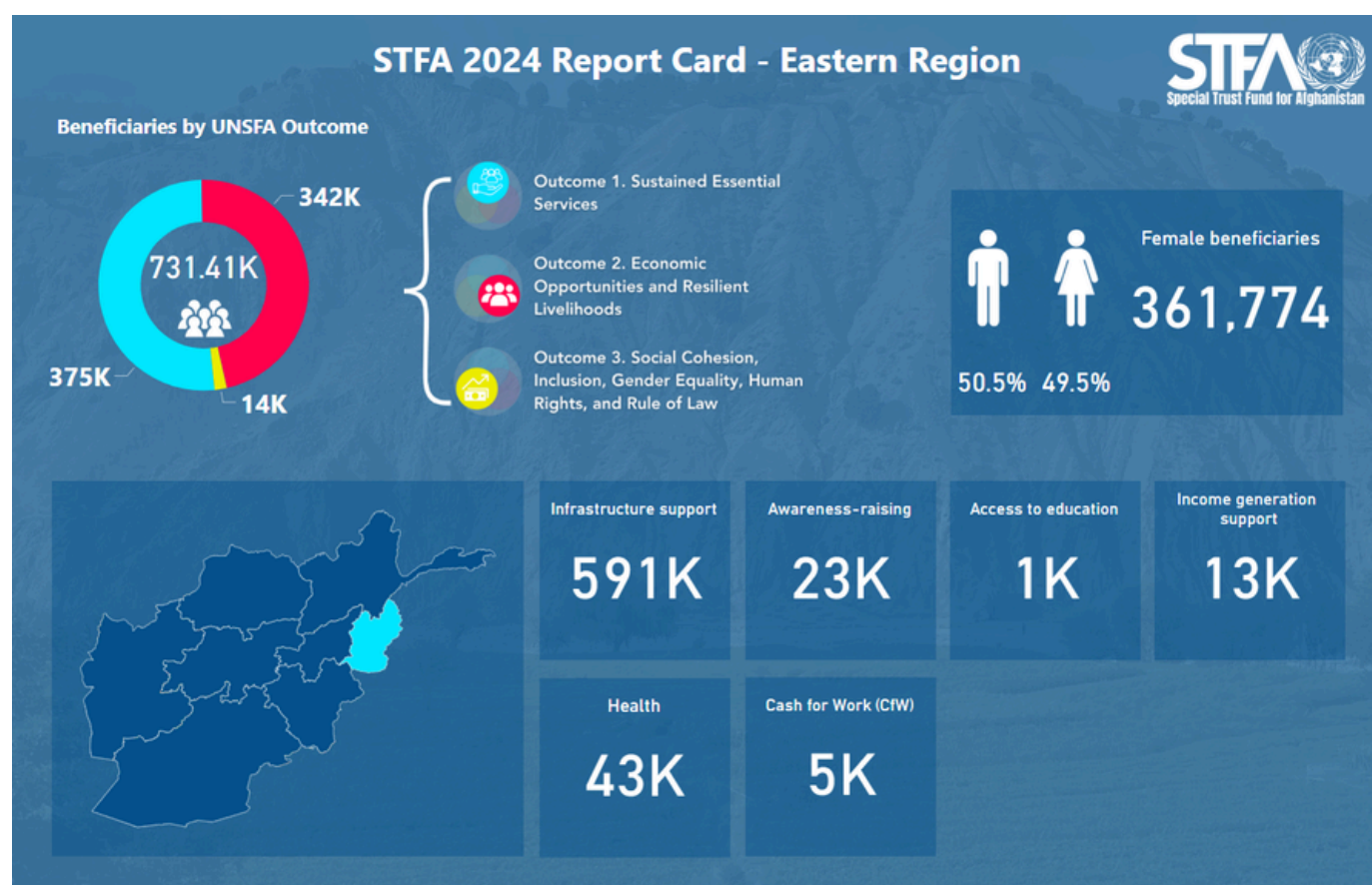


Figure 2: Eastern Region STFA Report Card – 2024.



Results

Women at a Poultry Package Coop Material Distribution session in Nuristan Province. © FAO



III. Outcomes

In 2024, approximately 731,408 people (361,774; 49.5% women and girls) benefited from the JP in the Eastern region. 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. Since inception in 2022, approximately 809,811 people (402,916; 49.8% women and girls) have benefited from STFA-funded regional programme activities aligned with the three priority areas of the UNSFA.

Collectively, the JP demonstrated a principled, inclusive and adaptive approach to building resilience in Eastern Afghanistan. By prioritizing needs-based service delivery, supporting the self-reliance of vulnerable populations, and promoting gender-responsive and locally owned solutions, the programme strengthened access to essential services, enabled livelihood recovery, improved climate resilience, and fostered social cohesion while maintaining a conflict-sensitive, rights-based, and community-driven approach.

Infrastructure investments increased access to services and reduced disaster risk while enhancing agricultural productivity and food security, contributing to stronger community resilience. Upgraded water and sanitation systems reduced disease exposure and protection risks, particularly for women, children and displaced persons, while supporting better public health and learning environments and expanded health service delivery, including drug harm reduction and awareness-raising, enhanced care-seeking behaviours and reduced stigma. Additionally, community involvement in infrastructure planning and maintenance strengthened local ownership and accountability, and construction and rehabilitation activities generated temporary income and promoted social cohesion among displaced and host populations, improving service equity, strengthening adaptive capacity, and supporting more inclusive and sustainable development.

Livelihoods support specifically enhanced economic stability and resilience among vulnerable populations, including women, returnees, and displaced persons. While supporting infrastructure rehabilitation, cash-based assistance provided immediate relief to income-insecure households and strengthened household coping capacities. Separate support to MSMEs preserved jobs, created new opportunities, and stimulated local economic activity while targeted business development, entrepreneurship training, asset transfers and improved market linkages promoted the recovery and long-term viability of enterprises, and supported labour market integration and local capacity development, contributing to more inclusive private sector growth.

Regarding agriculture, the promotion of alternative livelihoods and sustainable farming practices reduced reliance on illicit crops, increased productivity, and improved market access. Strengthened veterinary services and value chain support contributed to diversified rural economies, and community engagement and institutional coordination mechanisms ensured interventions were sustainable, conflict-sensitive and locally relevant. Collectively, these efforts supported livelihood recovery, economic self-reliance, and greater resilience to instability.

Climate change adaptation and disaster preparedness measures enhanced resilience at both community and household levels. Strengthened early warning systems improved awareness of climate risks enabled anticipatory action, while climate-smart agricultural training promoted efficient resource use and strengthened food security. Adoption of drought-tolerant crops, improved irrigation, and sustainable livestock practices also increased the resilience of farming systems, diversified livelihoods and enhanced household nutrition, with women's participation expanding in local food systems.



Likewise, community-led preparedness planning improved emergency response capacity, and targeted support to vulnerable farmers strengthened climate resilience, improved food and water security, and reduced the long-term impact of environmental shocks. Disaster risk reduction infrastructure, including flood protection and improved water systems, further reduced vulnerability to climate-related hazards and safeguarded lives and assets and improving access to water for domestic and agricultural use.

STFA Third Party Monitoring insights: While final evaluations of the Joint Programmes are scheduled for a later phase, findings from the 2024 Third-Party Monitoring Agent (TPMA) offer a comprehensive snapshot of programme performance and community-level results across the STFA portfolio and serve as a credible proxy for gauging progress toward intended results. The TPMA conducted field monitoring at 2,919 activity sites under 513 projects, engaging nearly 5,500 beneficiaries from 2,572 communities across 210 districts in four regions.

In the Eastern region, where relevance ratings stood at 80 percent, communities generally affirmed the value of STFA interventions in addressing pressing development and humanitarian needs. Interventions related to essential services such as clean water, energy, and healthcare received the highest relevance rating at 100 percent, underscoring their critical importance. Livelihood-related initiatives were also well-aligned with community priorities, reflected in a 91 percent relevance rating.

Social cohesion efforts, while acknowledged, received a lower relevance score of 55 percent, pointing to a need for more tailored, context-specific strategies to strengthen trust and inclusion. Effectiveness ratings in the Eastern region were 65 percent, indicating that most interventions met their intended objectives, particularly in service delivery and livelihoods, though further refinement in targeting and implementation quality is needed.

Sustainability was a noted strength, with 81 percent of respondents expressing confidence in the long-term continuity of intervention outcomes especially in livelihoods and essential services citing increased local ownership and the development of community-led systems to sustain progress.

Initiatives to promote social cohesion, human rights and access to services strengthened community resilience. Community-based engagement and outreach improved access to protection, psychosocial support, and reintegration services for displaced populations, returnees, and host communities. Multimedia outreach extended messaging on sensitive issues, including mental health and displacement, to a wider audience. At all times, women and girls were central to programming, both as beneficiaries and as agents of change. Overall, these efforts supported more cohesive communities and advanced the realization of human rights.

In a highly fragile context, these outcomes collectively reflect meaningful progress towards more equitable, sustainable and resilient development outcomes rooted in local capacities and aligned with UN values.



III. Outputs

In 2024, approximately 731,408 people¹ (361,774; 49.5% women and girls) benefited from the STFA-funded JP. The majority benefited from the provision of essential services, most significantly access to improved infrastructure under Output 1, livelihood support under Output 2, and climate change adaptation, disaster preparedness and early warning support activities under Output 3. However, the four output areas have important 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. Likewise, CfW initiatives implemented under Output 2 support infrastructure enhancements under Output 1 and community outreach and engagement programmes implemented under Output 4 may benefit all output areas. The following section provides a more detailed breakdown of all four STFA JP output areas for the Eastern region.



DSRSG Indrika Ratwatte and STFA Co-Chair Michael Tawanda engage with children during their joint mission in Nangarhar Province © STFA

[1] Progress figures reflect the number of unique beneficiaries reached. In instances where individuals received multiple types of support from different Participating UN Organizations (PUNOs), each beneficiary was counted only once to avoid duplication. Further verification of beneficiaries count will be conducted through monitoring visits, including Third-Party Monitoring (TPM) and regular field monitoring by UN agencies.

UNSFA 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 2024, approximately 375,449² people (193,780; 51.6% female) benefited from the provision of essential services. As summarized below, initiatives addressed infrastructure and essential health services, including drug prevention, treatment and harm reduction services and awareness-raising efforts.

Infrastructure

Over 276,611 people (135,732; 49.1% women and girls) benefited from improved community-based infrastructure that provided access to essential services and reduced risks of natural hazards, particularly flooding. Access to water for agricultural irrigation, domestic supply and WASH facilities was improved along with micro-power generation and solar street lighting. Highlights include the following:

40

community-level irrigation infrastructures rehabilitated in Nangarhar and Laghman provinces to irrigate approximately 6,298.4 ha of agricultural land. Works included the construction of 129 metres of plain cement concrete (P.C.C) canal protection wall, 1,157 metres of dual-side protection walls, and 628 metres of single-side protection wall. Additionally, 105.5 km of canals were cleaned, contributing to irrigation of over 11,500 hectares of land. A total of 20 culverts, 19 community water access points, and 39 steel gates for off-takes were installed. Further construction activities included one intake structure, five stone masonry protection walls for canal banks, and the cleaning of six additional canals. The rehabilitated and newly constructed infrastructures directly benefit 3,000 households and indirectly support 27,928 farmers.

10,080

individuals (5,141 female) within the school community accessed clean water from a newly constructed solar-powered tube well and water reservoir at Kandi Bagh School in Kandi Bagh Village in Chaparhar district in Nangarhar province.

40,432

individuals (20,620 female) in Pashad Village in Sar Kani district of Kunar province, benefited from a boulder protection wall constructed along an irrigation canal to mitigate disaster risks and protect agricultural activities.

[2] Progress figures reflect the number of unique beneficiaries reached. In instances where individuals received multiple types of support from different Participating UN Organizations (PUNOs), each beneficiary was counted only once to avoid duplication. Further verification of beneficiaries count will be conducted through monitoring visits, including Third-Party Monitoring (TPM) and regular field monitoring by UN agencies.



1,210

households including 8,470 individuals (4,235 female) benefited from 11 rehabilitated Karezes (local traditional water management structures) in Achin (1), Pachir Wa-Agam (2), Speen Ghar (2), Khogyani (1), and Ghani Khil (5) districts in Nangarhar province. Skilled and unskilled labourers were recruited through the CfW modality from the communities where the Karezes are located, the intervention helped build the skills of local workers. The abundance of Karezes in Nangarhar highlights the province's reliance on this traditional irrigation system, making their rehabilitation crucial for sustaining local agriculture and water management³.

17,500

individuals (9,045 female) had improved access to clean and safe drinking water following water well drilling, construction of an elevated reinforced concrete reservoir, installation of a submersible solar water pump, water distribution network design, and installation of pipes, valves and household water taps in 2,230 households. The installation of in-house water taps reduced protection risks for women and children, who previously travelled long distances to fetch water. Five community members in each location were trained on the operation and maintenance of the water system. One planned water supply project was cancelled after geophysical testing showed the bore well would not yield sufficient water.

6,000

male students and 15,001 community members (7,497 female) benefited from improved sanitation facilities constructed with 10 stances each at Sirajul Imarat Community Garden (District 1) and Istiqlal High School (District 5) in Jalalabad. The latrines have been handed over to the school management committee and local community structures and will go a long way in reducing the risk of water-borne diseases.

252,475

individuals (110,237 female) from 36,064 households are now protected from flash floods that previously damaged homes and local infrastructure following the construction of six stone masonry boulder walls totalling 675 metres in Arbaban district 3 (78.5m), Babaryan district 3 (145m), Itifaq Mina district 3 (181.5m and 119m), Omaid Abad district 1(70m), and Shahre Naw district 1(81m) communities in Jalalabad city, Nangarhar province.

15

community organizations, each comprising approximately 20 members (14 male, 6 female), received orientation on participatory approaches, infrastructure monitoring, and maintenance. These organizations, originally Community Development Councils not officially recognized by DfA, operated without formal designation to avoid disruption of activities. While all organizations were male-led due to cultural and DfA-imposed restrictions, female community members were indirectly engaged. The community organizations played a key role in project prioritization, monitoring, accountability, and inclusion of women and girls. All completed infrastructure projects were handed over to these organizations to ensure sustainability.

[3] Karez rehabilitation raises water levels, boosting agricultural production and enhancing livelihoods. The rehabilitation of these Karezes was also helped preserve local knowledge, skills and practices related to the water management system and provided access to water for drinking that helps reducing waterborne diseases. By addressing a basic human need, it laid the foundation for economic growth.



59,591

people (29,792 female) have improved lighting following installation of 120 solar street lights in Woch Dand district 1, and Talashi Chowi district 2 in Jalalabad in Nangarhar province. The project benefited enhancing community security, supporting increased business activities, and improving road safety. The also benefited 11,060 MSMEs (60 female-owned), enabling them to extend operating hours into the evening.

Construction and rehabilitation of five micro-hydropower stations, collectively generating 0.5 MW of sustainable energy addressed acute energy shortages and improved access to electricity for health centres, educational institutions, and local businesses. The initiative reduced reliance on traditional fuel sources, helping to curb deforestation and mitigate flood risks.

28,000

individuals also benefited from a third solar street lighting intervention which improved safety and supported increased economic activity in the urban environment.

869

individuals (2 female) participated in cash for work interventions that facilitated the construction of 41 public infrastructure facilities, including 10 Family Health Houses (FHHs), 12 roads, 1 Basic Health Centre, 7 bridges, 1 flood protection wall, 1 canal, 1 culvert, 5 productive facilities, and 3 community gathering places. These facilities benefited 173,711 individuals (84,776 female). The initiative also generated 32,020 working days, providing short-term employment, new construction-related skills and improved future opportunities for employability. Additionally, the intervention fostered collaboration between IDPs, returnees, and host communities, promoting joint participation in infrastructure development and strengthening social cohesion.

20

small-scale irrigation structures constructed to improve water management across 1,328 hectares of agricultural land in Laghman and Nangarhar provinces will contribute to increased agricultural productivity, promotion the adoption of sustainable farming practices, and improved crop irrigation efficiency in targeted communities.

Essential Health Services

Over 42,558 people 28,672 (67.4% female) benefited from improved access to essential health services including new and rehabilitated clinics, drug prevention, treatment and harm reduction services, and awareness-raising efforts. Highlights include the following:

1,763

1,763 individuals (39 female) received evidence-based drug prevention, treatment, and harm reduction services at two Drug Treatment Centres (DTCs), a 30-bed male DTC in Laghman and a 20-bed male DTC in Nuristan, and one Drop-In Centre (DIC) in Laghman. These facilities were equipped to deliver comprehensive services to people who use drugs and staff received technical training for improved service provision.

- 407 individuals (all male) received 45 days residential drug treatment services, supporting recovery and social reintegration.
- 1,493 individuals (4 female) who use drugs accessed primary health care services, while 528 individuals (1 female) received harm reduction services through outreach efforts.



- As part of awareness-raising activities, 7,224 Information, Education and Communication materials were distributed.
- In addition, improved knowledge and reduced risky behaviours of 3,227 individuals at risk (38 female) through psychosocial support (PSS) and counselling services.

23

national facilitators (13 female) received training-of-trainers on the 'Strong Families' drug prevention approach and have held sessions aimed at strengthening parenting skills, improving family functioning, and reducing the risk of substance use among children with 156 families (126 mothers in Nangarhar and 30 fathers in Laghman, along with their children).

75

male youth, peer group members and community leaders in Laghman province were trained and sensitised on the negative health and social consequences of drug use and key prevention strategies. The efforts increased community awareness and early intervention capacity.

34,479⁴

people in need, particularly women and girls received integrated services at five temporary family health houses (FHHs) in Kunar province. In addition, 6,316⁵ people in need of health services were assisted at 10 newly established FHHs which became functional in Nangarhar in November 2024. Additionally, 12 trained and unemployed midwives were recruited and underwent a three-month in-service training at Nangarhar Regional Hospital and have been deployed to provide maternal and newborn health services to the communities. Five trained female counsellors provided individual and group services in private and safe spaces within the five FHHs in Nuristan. Additionally, a Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Technical Supervisor supervised the counsellors on the ground, ensuring they became better equipped with knowledge and skills to support women and girls.

34,100⁶

people received basic health care, reproductive health services, and mental health and PSS at two Mother and Child Health Centres (MCHCs), in Nangarhar province (also linked to Output 2). Also, 160 women benefited from vocational skills training (three-month tailoring programme) resulting in improved mental health well-being with positive coping strategies as well as skills development. A total 7,843 beneficiaries from the two MCHCs in Nangarhar province participated in awareness-raising sessions on topics including PSS, reproductive health, mental health, and personal and menstrual hygiene management for women and girls. A total of 3,773 women and girls received awareness raising on reproductive health from midwives, and 6,225 young and adolescent girls participated in the healthy lifestyle sessions conducted by youth educators. Additionally, 3,354 adolescents were reached through awareness sessions on menstrual hygiene management.

[4] 2,507 basic maternal, infant and young child nutrition services; 197 deliveries with skilled birth attendants; 5,606 outpatient services for children under five; 138 women receiving antenatal care services; and 196 women receiving prenatal care services.

[5] 162 family planning counselling; 51 deliveries with skilled birth attendants; 2,600 outpatient services for children under five; 42 women receiving antenatal care services; and 61 women receiving prenatal care services.

[6] 2,532 women and girls received individual PSS services, 2,475 benefited from group PSS services, 685 women and girls received essential health services provided by female medical doctors, 891 women received antenatal care services, 627 received postnatal care services, and 242 women with reproductive health concerns were referred to the nearest health facility.



The ASYREC system is now installed and tested and ready for implementation with Pashto and Dari language customizations.⁷ By automating and digitizing the consignment management process, the system enables quick response times in delivering essential relief supplies to disaster-stricken areas. Additionally, the system promotes transparency and accountability by maintaining a comprehensive record of consignments, tracking their movement, and ensuring accurate reporting. The first phase of the project concluded with comprehensive testing, business unit creation, and collaboration for feedback.



STFA and partners visit the construction site of a new clinic in Laghman Province, funded by STFA and other donors. © STFA

[7] ASYREC stands for ASYCUDA for Relief Consignments with ASYCUDA (Automated System for Customs Data) being a computerized system developed to assist customs authorities in processing declarations and managing revenue. The ASYREC module is specifically designed to facilitate and expedite the clearance of relief consignments during emergencies, ensuring that humanitarian aid reaches affected populations promptly.



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.

In 2024, over 17,810 people (9,885; 55.5% women and girls) benefited from livelihood support. Key outputs included UCT, CfW schemes and MSME support incorporating business training, asset replacement and employment retention initiatives. Highlights include the following:

4,386

individuals (298 female) across Laghman, Kunar and Nangarhar provinces received unconditional cash transfers. Of these, 3,986 individuals (45 female and 54 persons with disabilities) participated in CfW activities for the rehabilitation of 40 community-level infrastructures (reported under Output 1)⁸.

400

people (253 women and 129 persons with disabilities) across Laghman, Kunar and Nangarhar provinces also received UCTs to cover immediate household needs. The UCTs were a key source of financial relief, helping cover essential needs and reduce short-term economic vulnerabilities. According to beneficiary feedback, 61.9 percent reported that the assistance met their needs for one month, 26.7 percent for two months, 8.6 percent for three months, and 2.9 percent for four months. While the sufficiency of the transfer varied depending on household size, geographic location and specific needs, UCT played a critical role in addressing urgent financial constraints and stabilizing household expenditures among vulnerable groups.

61

women and girls with limited literacy and formal education received contextually adapted GET (Gender and Entrepreneurship Together) Ahead training to support economic participation and job creation. In parallel, 61 existing and potential women entrepreneurs participated in the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) training. Cumulatively, 122 women were equipped with entrepreneurial skills. Following the training, 25 select women-led businesses received additional technical support aimed at strengthening business operations and enhancing job creation potential. Technical assistance included support for market linkages, with financial support scheduled for disbursement.

150

MSMEs, including 80 that had previously received technical and financial support from UN agencies participated at a trade fair organized in collaboration with the Nangarhar Chamber of Commerce and Investment. The event showcased enterprises from high-potential sectors such as poultry, carpet weaving, handicrafts and agro-processing, contributing to the promotion of viable economic alternatives to illicit activities such as poppy cultivation in the region.

[8] Outcome monitoring data indicated that households participating in CfW activities spent an average of AFN 3,788.87 on food, AFN 1,530.67 on health and medicine, AFN 543.37 on agricultural inputs and tools, AFN 228.97 on livestock-related inputs, and AFN 741.46 on debt repayment.



34

participants, including agricultural extension agents, UN staff, and implementing personnel were trained on the Market Systems Development approach focused on private sector engagement to drive sustainable agricultural practices and facilitated direct linkages between 18 extension officers, input suppliers and farmers to enhance market connectivity and service delivery. Given the field-based nature of extension officers' roles and their deployment in remote areas, no women participated.

100

MSMEs (51 female-owned) were selected for asset replacement support after assessment of 160 MSMEs. The asset replacement support enabled creation of 115 new jobs (27 male, 88 female), including 43 returnees, eight IDPs, and 64 individuals from host communities. Additionally, 578 existing jobs (318 male, 260 female) were safeguarded, benefiting 121 returnees, 53 IDPs, and 404 individuals from host communities. The asset replacement support included provision of tools, equipment, raw materials and solar panels. Of the 100 supported enterprises, 54 MSMEs received solarization support to promote the use of renewable energy.

499

female apprentices completed a six-month on-the-job training and apprenticeship programme in vocations such as textile and fabric crafts, food processing, shoemaking and healthcare. Training was conducted in partnership with 150 MSMEs. Among the graduates, 135 were returnees, eight IDPs, and 356 from host communities, including 18 persons with disabilities. All graduates received toolkits to support the establishment of micro businesses.

1,613

individuals (970 male, 643 female) were placed in 170 businesses (107 in Nangarhar, 32 in Laghman and 31 in Kunar) for employment retention support for a five-month period across Nangarhar (1,014), Laghman (349) and Kunar (250) provinces. Among the supported individuals, 110 were newly hired, while 1,503 were existing employees. The group included 406 returnees, four IDPs, 1,203 individuals from host communities, and 10 persons with disabilities.

50

lead farmers and small local business owners (30 male, 20 female) from Nangarhar and Laghman provinces received four rounds of training on 'Generate Your Business Idea', 'Improve Your Business', and 'Start Your Business' modules. End-of-training evaluations indicated high satisfaction among participants regarding the quality of training, materials, methods and trainers' interaction. Pre- and post-training assessments showed significant improvement in entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. The average pre-test score was 3.56 out of 20, increasing to 16.5 in the post-test, reflecting marked gains in participant capacity. The training helped participants strengthen their entrepreneurial abilities, enabling them to identify viable business fields, formulate business ideas, and apply foundational business development knowledge.

[8] Outcome monitoring data indicated that households participating in CfW activities spent an average of AFN 3,788.87 on food, AFN 1,530.67 on health and medicine, AFN 543.37 on agricultural inputs and tools, AFN 228.97 on livestock-related inputs, and AFN 741.46 on debt repayment.



60

women with limited access to 4.5 months tailoring training courses in Jalalabad and \$225 stipends over the training period to support basic needs. Upon completion, all trainees were provided with start-up kits to support their transition into income-generating activities. Due to restrictions on large gatherings of women, training was conducted in smaller groups of five, delivered in participants' homes.

120

women completed six-month vocational training in carpet weaving and another 120 women in bead sewing in Jalalabad, Nangarhar province, provided \$240 stipend to support their basic needs as well as equipment and start-up materials. As a result, 92 women (77%) successfully launched bead sewing businesses following completion of the training. Although conducted over six months with the same stipend, the carpet weaving training yielded limited outcomes. While equipment was provided, start-up materials were not included, resulting in only 10 women (8%) initiating carpet weaving businesses by the end of December 2024.

Five

community-based production buildings, each designed to accommodate 10 users and support local business and income-generating activities were constructed. These facilities aim to strengthen economic resilience, promote sustainable livelihoods, and create a foundation for complementary support by other UN agencies, enabling a coordinated and sustained impact on beneficiaries.

795

female-owned MSMEs received asset transfers and financial support while 1,865 individuals (940 female) benefited from training and income generation opportunities aimed at boosting economic self-reliance.

815

individuals (775 female) received targeted technical and vocational education and training programmes to enhance access to economic opportunities. These interventions contributed to private sector development, women's economic empowerment, and the resilience of IDPs and returnees, supporting broader community recovery and stability.

17,661

farmers (7,484 female) in Nangarhar and Laghman provinces were supported with alternative livelihood options to address the economic impact of the poppy ban and reduce dependency on illicit crop cultivation. Support included the provision of livestock packages, establishment of citrus orchards equipped with solar-powered drip irrigation systems, vegetable production inputs, and training on sustainable farming practices, business development and market linkages. In addition, 1,111 individuals (755 female) received support through the provision of dairy processing kits, livestock stable improvements, vaccination services, market development assistance, distribution of beetle goats and fodder seeds, as well as training in animal care and disease control. Six Veterinary Field Units in Nangarhar and Laghman provinces were also upgraded, equipping them with tools for artificial insemination, vaccination and emergency veterinary services. These units now provide improved services to livestock owners, contributing to a documented reduction in animal diseases and increased livestock productivity.



50

individuals (20 female) received entrepreneurship training, and 30 input suppliers and extension officers were trained on market systems development. The collaboration enhanced participants' ability to manage and grow their businesses, improved access to markets, and contributed to the development of sustainable, locally driven agricultural value chains.

18

university graduates with backgrounds in agriculture and veterinary sciences were recruited and trained in market systems development. They are now providing extension services to target communities and are positioned to continue their roles beyond the project duration. Their engagement has strengthened local service delivery, increased farmers' access to technical support and market information, and built a cadre of locally rooted professionals who can sustain agricultural development efforts.

500

Afghan women entrepreneurs received business training and 300 women returnees from Pakistan received vocational training on livestock, poultry keeping, and tailoring. Among them, 100 women entrepreneurs and all 300 returnees in Chamtala in Khogyani district in Nangarhar province received in-kind and asset support to initiate income-generating activities (160 in livestock keeping, 70 in poultry keeping and 70 in tailoring).

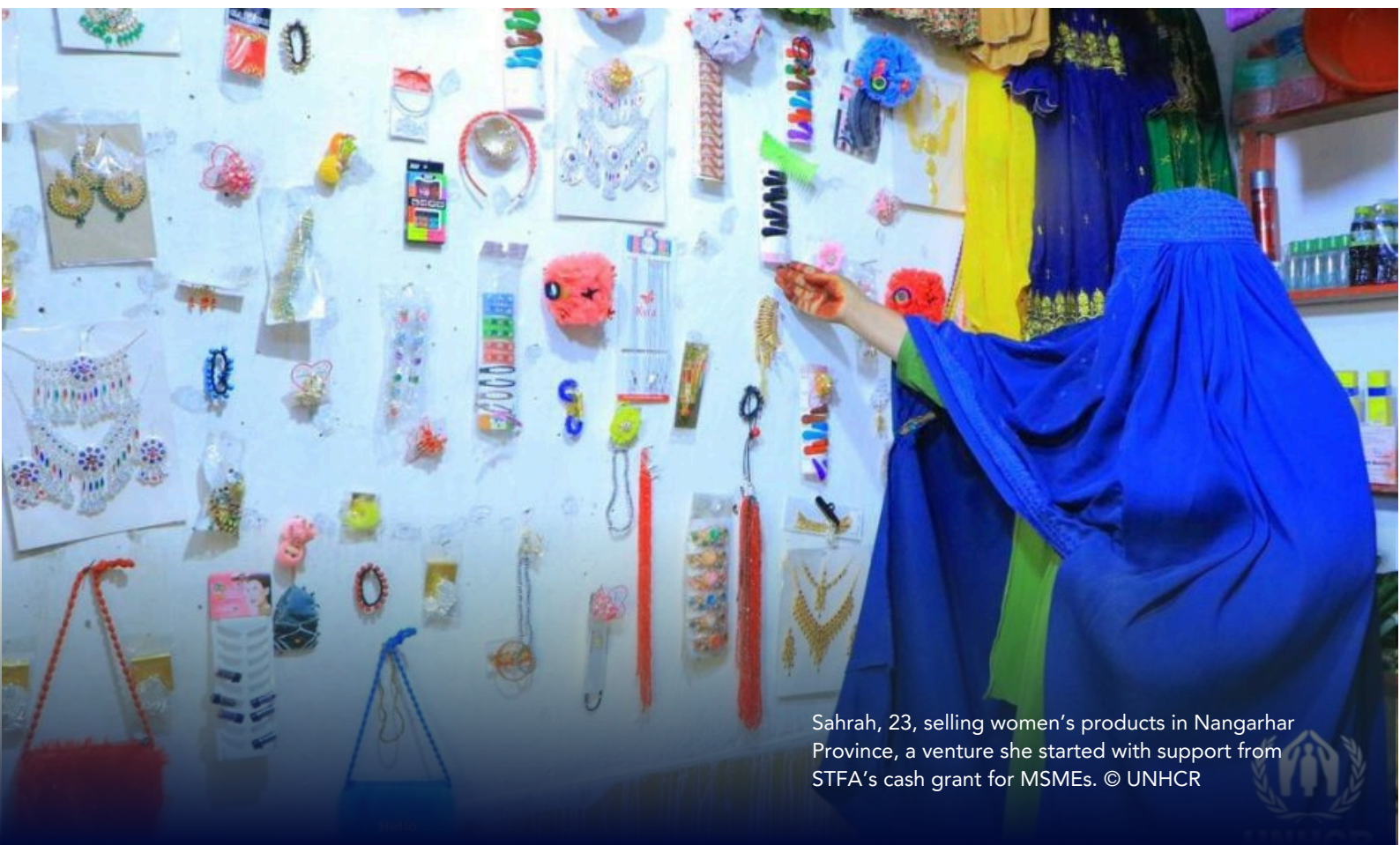
20

Afghan women received ToT on the SIYB module, equipping them with business facilitation skills and alternative livelihood opportunities. Of these, 17 trainers subsequently delivered SIYB training to 500 women entrepreneurs in Nangarhar using tailored modules – Generate Your Business, Start Your Business, and Improve Your Business. These modules were adapted to meet the specific learning needs of Afghan women and provided a structured approach to identifying, launching, and managing sustainable enterprises. Following the training, 100 of the most promising business plans were selected for additional support, including start-up kits and sector-specific assistance in tailoring, food processing, carpet weaving and other trades. Beneficiaries also received mentoring for two months to strengthen business operations and improve sustainability.

50

women were mentored through an apprenticeship programme implemented in partnership with I/NGOs. Under this initiative, 12 established women entrepreneurs mentored the apprentices over a three-month period, enhancing their technical skills and business capacity. While the programme was originally designed to support women-led MSMEs, the JP leveraged additional STFA funds to extend income-generation support to women returnees, exceeding initial targets. The initiative contributed to women's economic empowerment and helped strengthen community trust and cohesion by fostering collaborative relationships between mentors, apprentices and local stakeholders.





Sahrah, 23, selling women's products in Nangarhar Province, a venture she started with support from STFA's cash grant for MSMEs. © UNHCR



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.

In 2024, climate change adaptation, disaster preparedness and early warning support activities benefited over 324,528 people (147,038; 45.3% female) in improving their capacity and resilience. Highlights include the following:

One⁹

Community-Based Drought Early Warning System (CB-DEWS) established across five districts of Nuristan province benefiting 3,940 people. These systems have improved community-level awareness of early warning indicators and strengthened preparedness for drought-related risks. Although the proportion of female beneficiaries was not quantified in the outcome monitoring, and women play a significant role in household-level decision-making and response planning, due to cultural constraints and limitations on female staff engagement, direct outreach to women was limited. However, as early warning messages are disseminated within families, women have access to critical information indirectly, and this contributed to improved household preparedness, food security and resilience to drought and flood events.

[9] This brings the total number of CB-DEWS established in the Eastern region to seven, including six systems set up in 2023 – five in Nangarhar and one in Laghman provinces.



1,393

smallholder farmers and herders trained on early warning systems, community-level anticipatory mitigation measures, and preparedness mechanisms across targeted districts in Laghman and Nangarhar. Women accessed critical information through intra-household communication, contributing to improved preparedness, food security and reduced impact from drought and flood events. CB-DEWS committees convened on a regular basis – monthly or quarterly – with increased meeting frequency during high-risk periods. These meetings were instrumental in strengthening early warning systems and promoting adaptive agricultural practices, including the use of drought-tolerant seeds, drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting. With the programme providing technical guidance focused on resilience-building rather than input distribution, recommended agricultural practices included the adoption of drought-resistant crops, soil moisture retention techniques, alignment of planting schedules with rainfall forecasts, and crop diversification. Infrastructure efforts (reported under Output 1) such as the construction of dams, ponds, check dams and improved water distribution systems further supported local water conservation strategies.

8,125

smallholder farmers and herders (5,483 female) trained on Climate-Smart Agriculture and Climate-Smart Livestock management techniques across Laghman, Kunar and Nangarhar provinces. The training aimed to improve productivity, pest and disease control, and resource efficiency through sustainable agricultural practices. Beneficiaries received technical training along with micro greenhouse and home gardening packages, which included seeds, tools, and guidance on good practices. These interventions promoted improved water use, enhanced pest management and strengthened post-harvest storage methods. Beneficiaries pledged to disseminate acquired knowledge within their communities.

12,000

individuals (5,880 female) benefited from the rehabilitation and/or construction of disaster-resilient community infrastructure and nature-based solutions. Key infrastructure works included the rehabilitation of 20 culverts and the construction of 19 new community water access points, improving safe and convenient access to canal water, particularly benefiting women for domestic water use. Additionally, 39 steel gates for off-takes were installed to enhance water management and distribution. Other interventions comprised the construction of a one-sided intake structure, five stone masonry protection walls along canal banks, and the cleaning of six canals. These combined efforts contributed to enhanced community-level resilience to climate-induced hazards, improved water infrastructure, and strengthened local capacity to mitigate the impacts of disasters.

211

farmers (20 female) in Nangarhar (195) and Laghman (16) provinces received essential tools and equipment for orchard management. This included the establishment of 167 new citrus orchards equipped with solar-powered drip irrigation systems to reduce water consumption and promote sustainable farming practices. A total of 83.5 ha of land was planted with 41,750 citrus saplings, achieving a 100 percent survival rate and contributing to improved fruit production. In addition, 44 farmers (managing orchards with an average size of 0.6 ha, totalling 26 ha) received tools to remodel existing orchards to optimize air and light penetration, key factors in enhancing citrus yields. All 211 farmers (20 female) were trained on irrigation management, soil fertility, and Integrated Pest Management. These combined efforts contributed to the long-term sustainability of orchard-based agriculture by enhancing farmer capacity, improving resource management, and supporting increased productivity.



41,468

individuals (20,319 female) have reduced vulnerability to flash floods following the construction of flood protection structures, and provision of disaster risk reduction related training to 1,425 individuals (510 female). Communities that experienced flooding in 2024 were equipped to formulate localised disaster response plans to enable them to respond in an organized and effective manner, following established evacuation procedures and using personal protective equipment, emergency kits, including flashlights and safety vests.

354

female farmers received technical training and assets to further strengthen climate resilience, by enabling them to adopt climate-resilient agricultural practices that contribute to long-term food security and livelihood sustainability.

2,420

people (1,210 female) participated in capacity-building and awareness sessions on intangible cultural heritage, illicit trafficking of objects from monuments and archaeological sites, safeguarding cultural infrastructure and community held assets for future generations, and operation and maintenance of karezes. The initiative also documented traditional skills, practices and knowledge related to karez management through questionnaires, individual interviews, focus group discussions and the collection of short stories with the aim of enhancing sustainability of karez operation and maintenance. This 'soft' initiative has proven to be highly effective, as many people in the local community were previously unaware of these critical issues.



A 681-meter flood protection wall built with support from STFA to protect the community from seasonal floods in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province. © UN-Habitat



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.

In 2024, community outreach and engagement programmes benefited over 13,621 (11,071; 81.3% female) with activities focusing on capacity-building and awareness raising in communities and via radio broadcasts. Highlights include the following:

The Community Resource Centre

In Chamtala in Khogyani district in Nangarhar province, served as a safe and inclusive space for displaced populations to access tailored support in areas of return. Services delivered included vocational training, child protection initiatives, health and hygiene interventions, shelter assistance, community engagement activities, awareness-raising campaigns, and referral services to ensure comprehensive support. The Centre serves a total of 17,600 households (9,600 returnee households and 8,000 IDP households). During the reporting period, 4,953 individuals (2,113 male, 2,840 female) benefited, contributing to enhanced community resilience and reintegration outcomes.

In partnership with Radio Begum,

STFA supported multimedia campaigns aimed at promoting women's empowerment, social cohesion, and mental health awareness among vulnerable communities. This included social media and radio campaigns to raise awareness of the challenges faced by displaced populations, promote community acceptance, and strengthen social cohesion, with a focus on women's empowerment and mental health. One initiative, the 'Healing Hearts' radio series, broadcast 15 episodes containing PSS messages and practical guidance to address mental health issues affecting displaced individuals. Another initiative, 49 episodes of the 'Sweet and Bitter' radio drama, followed fictional stories of three displaced women to raise awareness about the challenges experienced by displaced persons. Radio Begum reported an estimated indirect reach of 2,427,318 individuals across nine provinces and a listener survey conducted by Radio Begum found that 45 percent of respondents rated the content as very helpful, 35 percent as helpful, 15 percent as neutral, and 5 percent as not helpful.

13,621

individuals (11,071 female) from 40 communities received awareness on human rights, with a specific focus on GBV prevention and response, this promoted social cohesion across in the region. This approach enabled trained community members to disseminate key messages more widely, contributing to increased community understanding of rights, protection mechanisms, and the importance of inclusive, peaceful coexistence.



Delays in Implementation, Challenges, Lessons Learned & Best Practices

A six-classroom school built through a STFA intervention in Nangarhar Province, allowing students to move from tents into proper learning spaces. © UN-Habitat

IV. Challenges

In 2024, implementation of activities under the JP in the Eastern region faced a number of challenges, including conditions imposed by the DfA, security and climate risks, inflation and exchange rates, adverse weather conditions, and remote project locations. The following are the most significant challenges reported by STFA PUNOs in 2024.

Challenging operating environment: The DfA decree issued on 24 December 2022 and its subsequent extension in April 2023 remained a key operational constraint. The decree hindered women's employment with UN agencies and NGOs, and limited women's participation in field-based activities. Although coordination efforts resulted in exemptions that enabled most female personnel to resume their roles, the environment remains volatile, with ongoing risks of further restrictions. These challenges also extended to bureaucratic delays in project registration and MoU finalization, along with mandated design changes that increased operational complexity and costs.

Female beneficiary participation: DfA bans affected female beneficiary participation and project delivery at implementation sites. In some cases, the ban on women and girls' education and training resulted in limited availability of training venues, and women in particular hesitated to share personal experiences, making data collection difficult in some instances. Female participation in CfW and disaster risk mitigation initiatives was also limited by cultural norms.

Security and climate risks: The fragile security situation, compounded by adverse weather conditions such as floods, heavy rainfall, and low winter temperatures, posed significant threats to livelihoods, infrastructure, and agricultural productivity. These challenges resulted in crop losses, damaged solar installations, and temporary halts to construction activities. To mitigate impacts, implementing partners adjusted timelines, adopted climate-resilient approaches, and introduced localized risk-informed planning to enhance programme continuity and safeguard results.

Market volatility and inflation: Inflation, exchange rate fluctuations, and unstable market conditions drove up costs for construction materials and agricultural inputs. This led to higher-than-expected bids, delayed contracting, and reduced income predictability for farmers, complicating efforts to establish stable, licit livelihoods.

Coordination challenges: Some delays in implementation resulted from coordination issues under the DaO framework. In one case, differences in data-sharing policies between the two agencies hindered coordination, causing setbacks in planned activities. These interdependencies exposed the programme to reputational and audit risks, emphasizing the need for improved joint planning and contingency alignment.



V. Lessons Learned

The following are key lessons learned during 2024:

Challenging operating environment: Continuous monitoring was required to ensure timely and context-appropriate mitigation strategies to DfA restrictions. The JP maintained its commitment to gender representation across its own and implementing partners' workforces as well as beneficiary targeting and selection, guided by a principled approach and localized operational adaptations, exemptions and solutions. To mitigate risks for female beneficiaries and staff, the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Network in Afghanistan introduced the Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Risk Overview (SEARO) tool, which identifies SEA risks across Afghanistan, guiding targeted and evidence-based interventions. The PSEA Network also ensured that aid workers operate in a safe and supportive environment with Zero Tolerance for Sexual Harassment (SH), emphasizing the dual responsibility of protecting communities and safeguarding the humanitarian and Basic Human Needs workforce. Regional sub-working groups established in the North, South, Central, and West regions provided direct community engagement and localized responses¹⁰.

Female beneficiary participation: To address DfA restrictions on women's participation in field-based activities, proactive, context-specific strategies to foster women's inclusion were required. These included alternative approaches such as making arrangements and budgeting for mahram (male guardians) and hiring female facilitators. This emphasized the importance of building relationships with key community influencers to navigate cultural challenges. Despite these efforts, restrictive directives and prevailing social norms continued to limit women's full engagement underscoring the importance of proactively creating opportunities for women, even amid the prevailing operational challenges. It also became apparent that women-owned MSMEs require more comprehensive support than short-term training and cash or asset assistance.

DfA involvement: Advocacy efforts were successful in some cases to secure approval for women's participation, and negotiation and handover coordination with the DfA was essential to ensure approval for implementation planning, activities and delivery. Flexibility in timelines and budgets, stakeholder engagement, risk assessments, community engagement and innovative construction methods proved necessary, along with adaptive coordination, persistence and agility in implementation modality. Engaging with the DfA through social partners, especially employers' organizations, was effective for ensuring timely project implementation.

Inflation and exchange rates: The strategic combination of different funding streams maximizes impact. Engaging with local NGOs and the private sector proved effective in risk mitigation and ensuring project sustainability. Local partnerships played a crucial role in implementing interventions effectively, overcoming bureaucratic challenges, and enhancing community ownership of development projects.

Adverse weather conditions: Construction work was suspended during the worst of winter. Challenges to agricultural production were required repairs and adaptations to solar installations.

Market Instability: To mitigate market instability, farmers were supported with off-season vegetable production and small-scale processing units to enable them to add value and increase shelf life. Additionally, market linkages initiatives provided farmers with better access to stable markets, reducing their vulnerability to price fluctuations.

[10] STFA is implementing in North, South, and West regions where Regional PSEA sub-working groups are active.



Low literacy levels: Trainers were required to utilize a range of different training methods and strategies to overcome low literacy levels and help participants understand the topics better and participate in classes effectively.

DaO collaboration, coordination and innovation: Collaboration between PUNOs amplifies impact and should be prioritized. In many cases PUNO working groups successfully collaborated through regular meetings to share experiences and knowledge. Coordinating between PUNOs helped minimize duplication of efforts, ensuring interventions were complementary and resources were optimized. However, to prevent delays, it is essential to assess inter-agency policies on data sharing and collaboration during the planning phase and address any potential barriers in advance. Likewise, early coordination on milestones and site selection is required to minimize external interference that could hinder implementation.

Community engagement: Community engagement was often critical in achieving project acceptance and sustainability and helped shift restrictive norms in some instances. The involvement of formal and informal community groups and influential community members was instrumental in ensuring community buy-in. This approach not only strengthened relevance but also fostered a sense of ownership among community members which is key to sustainability. Strengthening local ownership through capacity-building initiatives, cooperative models and community-driven solutions proved essential in fostering self-reliant systems and ensuring that interventions remained locally owned, adaptable to evolving challenges, and capable of sustaining impact.

Participation and continuous innovation: Flexibility and innovation in developing pragmatic solutions through bottom-up, participatory and localized approaches are critical. Participation enhances buy-in, transparency, local ownership and sustainability with structures such as Provincial Advisory Committees (PACs) playing a crucial role.

VI. Risk Analysis

During the planning and development of the JP for the Eastern Region, a risk management framework was developed to categorize risks into contextual (political, security), programmatic, operations/financial, and organisational types. In 2024, although there were no new reported risks, several previously identified risks from 2023 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	[Risk status: Materialized and Open] In 2024, 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.
Risk#18: Further restrictions on women and girls' participation in social and economic life. (De-facto Authorities (DfA) issued a decree banning women from working in NGOs (national and international) across the whole country)	Contextual	Likelihood: Very Likely Consequence: Major Rating: Very High	PUNOs/TFMU	[Risk status: Materialized and Open] 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.



VII. Qualitative Assessment

In 2024, the STFA Joint Programme in the Eastern region of Afghanistan successfully achieved nearly all planned activities and outputs, demonstrating strong alignment with local priorities and effective coordination among PUNOs. The JP significantly advanced resilience, human development and community stability. Its integrated, multi-sectoral design was central to this success, enabling complementary outcomes across essential services, livelihoods, climate adaptation and social cohesion. The programme's integrated and principled approach, enabling the delivery of inclusive, sustainable and adaptive solutions that addressed both immediate needs and structural drivers of fragility, ensured that support reached the most vulnerable populations, including women, returnees and IDPs.

Community engagement emerged as a critical enabler of sustainability, with local structures active in planning, implementation and maintenance, especially in infrastructure and service delivery. Similarly, efforts to empower women – through tailored skills training, business support and community engagement, for example – represented an important step toward inclusive development, despite the restrictive context. Community consultations were instrumental in securing local buy-in, which facilitated implementation and strengthened accountability.

Infrastructure investments played an important dual role, both expanding access to essential services and providing temporary employment and incomes, particularly for displaced populations. Access to essential services contributed to better human development outcomes and strengthened community resilience. Expanded health service delivery, with improvements in drug treatment and harm reduction services complemented by targeted awareness-raising, deepened community understanding of substance use and prevention strategies. These services, particularly those targeting youth and peer groups, contributed to more informed and cohesive community responses to health and social risks.

Livelihoods interventions reached a wide range of vulnerable groups, enhancing household stability and food security. CfW and UCT helped meet immediate financial needs while supporting infrastructure rehabilitation and reducing negative coping strategies. Diverse forms of livelihood support – including vocational training, asset transfers and agricultural inputs – enabled communities to build economic self-reliance. Livelihoods interventions promoted self-reliance through market-based support, with a strong focus on women, returnees, and displaced populations. Other initiatives – such as livestock protection packages and promoting climate-smart practices – improved household nutrition, safeguarded productive assets, and laid the foundation for more resilient and sustainable rural economies.

Support to MSMEs was a core element of the private sector engagement strategy. Business development services – including diagnostics, tailored training, and access to tools and equipment – enabled entrepreneurs to improve operations and expand market access. Women entrepreneurs, in particular, reported significant gains in business management skills, confidence and profitability. With interventions emphasizing environmentally responsible business practices, wage standards and workplace safety, a focus on marginalized groups fostered more inclusive economic participation and strengthened labour market integration.



Social cohesion and human rights programming complemented these efforts by fostering inclusive attitudes, promoting protection awareness, and advancing gender equality. Radio campaigns reached a wide audience with messages on mental health, women's empowerment, and displacement-related challenges, contributing to community acceptance and shared understanding. The establishment of safe spaces, such as community resource centres, offered multi-sectoral support – including vocational training, shelter, and referral services – further strengthening reintegration and local stability.

However, the programme also faced constraints. Cultural and institutional limitations on female participation continued to restrict direct outreach to women in certain areas. Short project cycles and the predominantly short-term nature of some interventions, such as CfW and vocational training, risked limiting the durability of outcomes without adequate follow-up or integration into broader development frameworks. Data availability and sharing also presented challenges with gaps in disaggregated output data constraining efforts to fully assess impact, particularly in terms of employment sustainability and economic empowerment for women. While collaboration across agencies was a strength, coordination in implementation varied, occasionally leading to fragmented delivery or missed opportunities for cross-sectoral synergies.

Despite these challenges, the programme demonstrated that inclusive, community-driven and conflict-sensitive approaches can yield tangible results, even in complex and constrained contexts. Strong local partnerships, demand-driven skills development, and flexible implementation modalities were key enablers. Lessons learned point to the importance of participatory design, long-term systems thinking, and sustained investment in women's economic empowerment and alternative livelihoods.

Nevertheless, the evolving political and security landscape continues to pose risks to programme access, women's participation, and civil society engagement. Economic instability, including inflation and limited access to capital, may erode gains in MSME development and income generation. Climate-related shocks, such as drought and flooding, remain a persistent threat to both livelihoods and service infrastructure. Likewise, social cohesion gains may be vulnerable to reversal if exclusion risks – particularly for marginalized or hard-to-reach groups – are not continuously addressed.

Notably, the programme maintained strong alignment with the UN's principled approach, upholding neutrality, impartiality and independence while embedding rights-based and conflict-sensitive programming throughout its activities. Climate adaptation and disaster preparedness activities helped safeguard lives and livelihoods, strengthened local risk management, and supported environmentally sustainable practices through community-led solutions. Human rights and social cohesion programming further reinforced inclusive, peaceful engagement and increased awareness of protection issues, including gender-based violence. Through these efforts, the programme operationalized principled engagement across all sectors, contributing to resilience, social inclusion, and community trust in a complex and evolving context.

Overall, the STFA Joint Programme delivered important outcomes across multiple dimensions of resilience, inclusion and rights-based development. Continued attention to locally led solutions, adaptive programming and principled engagement will be essential to sustaining and expanding these gains in Afghanistan's challenging context.



VIII. Partnerships

Strategic positioning and coordination: STFA's strategic positioning within the UN's coordination framework has been a cornerstone of its effectiveness in Afghanistan. STFA has ensured seamless engagement in key UN coordination bodies and clusters, enabling optimal programmatic impact through identification of synergies and complementarities across funding streams and agencies. Under the strategic leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC/HC), STFA is positioned to still be responsive to the evolving context in Afghanistan. STFA is actively involved in critical coordination platforms, including the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), the Risk Management Team (RMT), the National Durable Solutions Secretariat, the Programme Management Team (PMT), and the RCO-led Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group. This collaboration allows STFA to align with broader UN strategies, fostering coordinated actions with humanitarian and development partners to deliver durable solutions for vulnerable communities. Furthermore, STFA's engagement with these coordination mechanisms ensures its interventions are prompt, effective, and aligned with UN-wide risk management measures. These platforms strengthened STFA ability to adapt to dynamic needs, supporting long-term stability and resilience through integrated, complementary programming.

Inter-fund coordination and joint efforts: In 2024, STFA continued to coordinate with other key funding streams, such as the Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund (ARTF) and humanitarian funding mechanisms. Notable initiatives included the joint ARTF/STFA briefings held in Istanbul and Dubai, where the funding streams shared updates and proved how the combined resources of different funding streams were effectively used to support programme activities. These joint briefings reinforced the importance of coordinated action, highlighting the alignment and complementarity of various funding sources to maximize their collective impact on Afghanistan's recovery and development.

Private sector partnerships: A significant milestone in 2024 was the launch of the STFA crowdfunding campaign. A dedicated campaign page (<https://bethehope4afg.org>) was developed, and a donation platform was established in partnership with the UN Foundation through an administrative arrangement. The campaign was officially launched during the STFA Steering Committee meeting on 1 October 2024. In 2024, TFMU also started outreach efforts to the private sector to raise awareness and foster partnerships. As part of these efforts, the STFA Steering Committee Chair delivered a keynote speech at the Afghan American Chamber of Commerce (AACC) Afghanistan Private Sector Programme held in Dubai on 28 September 2024. TFMU also engaged with prominent Afghan business leaders, including representatives from banks¹¹, among others, to underscore the importance and critical role of the Afghan private sector in the country's economic future. These efforts laid the groundwork for expanded networking and partnership opportunities. As a result of TFMU's efforts in engaging with the Ghazanfar Bank Group for financial access to women entrepreneurs beyond the support provided by STFA. Since December 2024, close to 40 enterprises have benefited from loans ranging from AFN 120,000 – AFN 4.5 million (\$1706 - \$63,984)¹².

Collaborative initiatives: Under the strategic leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator, STFA continued to apply the delivering as one (DaO) modality remained central to its operations, fostering synergies across UN agencies and enhancing programme quality, cost-effectiveness, and socio-economic impact. Through these partnerships, STFA co-created four thematic initiatives which the STFA Steering Committee approved for allocation and implementation. These collaborative efforts exemplify how the DaO approach uses the comparative advantages of each agency to maximize impact and ensure sustainable, coordinated solutions for vulnerable communities.

[1] Ghazanfar Bank and Afghanistan International Bank (AIB)

[2] Converted at 70.33 - UN Operational Rate of Exchange for 31 December 2024



The JP demonstrates the benefits of the STFA 'Delivering as One' (DaO) modality whereby multiple agencies work together in a complementary and synergistic manner capitalizing on each agency's areas of expertise and comparative advantages. Such collaborations bring greater value to end-users at a greater scale delivering higher programmatic returns on investments compared to uncoordinated stand-alone interventions. Ultimately, they seek to contribute to:

- a. greater quality in programmatic interventions (i.e. tapping more effectively into the advantages of greater division of labour).
- b. greater cost-effectiveness in the use of limited programmatic resources (reducing unnecessary overlaps or duplications); and
- c. improved knowledge generation and dissemination.

Such benefits, in turn, contribute to:

- a. improved coverage (outreach to end users/end-beneficiaries) and greater socio-economic impact (i.e. higher returns on programmatic investments).
- b. greater sustainability; and
- c. improved advocacy (i.e. helping to communicate more effectively, and with one voice, with other stakeholders).



Two young girls with smiles full of courage, stand outside a health center that was built through STFA support in Laghman Province. © STFA



Annexes

Annex I. Indicator-Based Performance Assessment

**Numbers in parentheses are female figures.*

JP output indicator	Unit	Baseline	2024 Target	2024 Progress	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target	Source of Verification
Output 1. Essential services and community infrastructure - including for health, agriculture and energy supply - are functional, sustained and expanded to meet different needs of women and men.						
1a. Number of people that have benefited from UN-supported essential services and/or new/rehabilitated infrastructure, disaggregated by type of service and sex.	People	689,936	77,200 (35,682)	372,871 (192,966)		PUNO reports
	Households	0	100 (30)	17,661 (7,484)		
1c. Number of people that have benefited from drug-treatment, drug rehabilitation services (health)	People	8,400	380 (0)	1,763 (39)		PUNO reports
1d. Number of functional, UN-supported, facilities providing basic health assistance (including basic health assistance services for women and girls)	Facilities/Inf rastructure	0	10 (10)	20 (10)		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)	People	0	1,440 (840)	815 (775)		PUNO reports
1g. Hectares of rehabilitated and/or newly irrigated land for agricultural activities	Hectares	0	960 (240)	11,500 (0)		PUNO reports
	Orchards	0	50 (15)	227 (0)		
Output 2. Livelihoods, businesses and local economy are able to recover and are more resilient to instability						
2b. Number of people who have benefited from newly-created income-generation opportunities, disaggregated by sex, age and province	People	938	9,015 (840)	10,443 (8,443)		PUNO reports
	MSMEs	0	1,280 (980)	1,865 (940)		
2b.1. Number of people who have benefited from productive employment through CfW schemes (at least 30% women; 50% youth)	People	1,604	4,980 (480)	7,367 (1,442)		PUNO reports
2c. No. of worker-days generated with UN-support	Work days	0	66,240 (0)	106,160 (13,200)		PUNO reports
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	People	0	30 (21)	122 (122)		PUNO reports
	Other	0	0 (-2,997)	11,060 (60)		
	MSMEs	146	1,033 (905)	1,309 (1,194)		

JP output indicator	Unit	Baseline	2024 Target	2024 Progress	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target	Source of Verification
Output 3. Communities have improved infrastructure, access to water and preparedness mechanisms to protect farm-based livelihoods and cope with climate shocks and natural disasters						
3a. Number of districts with functional early warning systems and other preparedness mechanisms for climate shocks and natural disasters	Other	0	1 (0)	0 (0)		PUNO reports
	Districts	0	27 (0)	1 (0)		
3b. Number of people who acquired knowledge and skills on disaster preparedness (including explosive hazard awareness) and climate-resilient livelihoods (at least 30% women)	People	0	1,100 (539)	1,425 (510)		PUNO reports
3c. Number of farmers who benefited from training and assets for improved, climate-smart, agriculture (at least 30% women)	People	0	8,785 (425)	8,690 (5,857)		PUNO reports
3d. Number of people that benefit from rehabilitated and/or newly constructed disaster-resilient community infrastructure and nature-based solutions	People	241,750	153,180 (49,463)	314,413 (140,671)		PUNO reports
3e. Number of enabling initiatives implemented or knowledge products produced.	Researches	0	3 (0)	0 (0)		PUNO reports
Output 4. Social cohesion, human rights, access to justice are strengthened at local level.						
4a. Number of CBOs/CSOs with improved capacity for participatory and inclusive community planning (at least 20% women-led)	Other	0	50 (25)	0 (0)		PUNO reports
	CSOs	0	6 (0)	15 (0)		
	Communities	0	5 (0)	0 (0)		
4b. Number of people with better awareness about human rights, social cohesion and conflict prevention (at least 50% women)	People	0	3,500 (2,260)	13,621 (11,071)		PUNO reports
	Households	0	100 (100)	1,111 (755)		



Annex II: Real-Life Stories: From the Field

Supporting Dairy Entrepreneurs and Livelihoods in Nangarhar Province



Mohammad, a 40-year-old entrepreneur in his Dairy Company in Nangarhar Province. © UNDP

“
Empowering farmers isn’t just business—it’s building a future.
”

Mohammad Habibzai, a 40-year-old entrepreneur who grew up in Pakistan as a refugee, has made targeted investments to address local development challenges in Nangarhar province. Situated on the border with Pakistan, the province has seen a significant influx of returning refugees and hosts a large number of IDPs.

Nangarhar’s economy is largely driven by agriculture, with many residents engaged in farming and livestock. Dairy products form a core part of the local market. However, dairy items processed at the local level often lack technical input and do not meet quality standards. As a result, these perishable goods spoil quickly, leading to financial losses for farmers and producers. To address these issues, Habibzai established Melma Dairy, a small processing facility near Jalalabad. He imported machinery and equipment from neighbouring countries and began purchasing surplus milk from local farmers. The facility produces yogurt, cheese, buttermilk, cream and pasteurised milk, which are sold in the local market.

While the enterprise initially grew, it encountered setbacks due to the COVID-19 pandemic, political instability, and competition from imported dairy products. Recognizing the need to improve product safety and quality, Habibzai sought to upgrade his processing line through modern equipment.

Following engagement with the STFA JP, Habibzai was selected for financial support. In March 2024, his enterprise received funding to procure key machinery, including a shrink-wrap machine, air compressor, and freezers. This investment increased production capacity, improved product quality, and created employment for 10 additional workers – bringing the total workforce to 26.

Melma Dairy sources milk from 750 women farmers in rural areas, purchasing it at a rate of AFN 35 per litre and selling to local retailers at AFN 45. With improved packaging and quality control, the enterprise has expanded its customer base to include restaurants, hotels and grocery stores, ensuring greater profitability. Drawing on his experience in livestock and skills in production, marketing and team management, Habibzai continues to strengthen Melma Dairy’s role in supporting local livelihoods and resilience in Nangarhar province.



From Poppy Fields to Citrus Orchards: A New Dawn for Farmers in Nangarhar

“
**All my concerns
have faded away. I
no longer worry
about how to feed
my children and
family**”



Former poppy fields in Surkhroad district in Nangarhar province, are being transformed into citrus orchards, offering sustainable alternatives to farmers previously dependent on opium poppy cultivation. One such farmer, Ghazi from Fateh Abad village, relied on poppy farming for many years. However, following the ban on poppy cultivation by the DfA, he faced a significant income shortfall and had not previously considered cultivating legal crops.

Through the STFA JP Ghazi received training and inputs to establish a citrus orchard, including the installation of a drip irrigation system to improve water efficiency which is now fully operational. He estimates that his annual income will range from AFN 800,000 to AFN 1,200,000 (approximately US\$11,420 to US\$17,140), more than triple his previous earnings from poppy cultivation. “I’m really happy with the project support,” he said.

Nangarhar’s soil and climate are well-suited for citrus production, particularly sweet oranges, which are well-known across Afghanistan. Most citrus farmers in the region are smallholders relying on traditional orchard management techniques. However, recurring droughts and rising temperatures have adversely affected food security and rendered conventional methods less viable.

To address these challenges, the STFA JP established 470 citrus orchards across Nangarhar and Laghman provinces in 2023 and 2024. The initiative aims to strengthen rural livelihoods, reduce dependence on illicit crops, and support climate-resilient agricultural practices.

By promoting long-term alternatives to poppy cultivation, the intervention has contributed to increased economic stability for farming households.



From Addiction to Awareness: A Story of Recovery and Hope in Laghman



Nazar, a former drug addict in the Drug Treatment Centre (DTC) in Laghman Province. © UNODC

“
I am grateful to
have a space
where to meet
others and
receive guidance.

”

“When I was younger, I fell in love but after the relationship ended, I was overwhelmed by sadness and grief,” recounted Nazar (a pseudonym) from Qalai Mehtarlam in Laghman province. “Then one of my friends noticed my distress and offered me a cigarette, saying it would ease the pain. Later, he introduced me to hashish, claiming it was even more effective in relieving loneliness.”

Over time, Nazar moved from cigarettes to hashish and eventually to shesha (methamphetamine). “Unfortunately, I destroyed my life. The drugs did not help. I lost the one I loved. Later, I had an arranged marriage and now have children, but they too are affected badly by my addiction.”

Nazar expressed appreciation for the support he received at the DIC. “The staff are supportive and provide useful information that motivates me to reduce drug use.” He shared that he is now ready to be referred to a DTC for formal rehabilitation.

Nazar concluded with a message for young people: “I blame myself for believing what my friends told me about drugs. I know now that drugs are self-destructive. They damage families and isolate you from your community. To lead a joyful life, I advise youth to focus on education, engage in sports, and respect their parents.”



Annex III: Programmatic Revisions

- The prodoc was revised in 2024 to reflect joining of UNMAS as a new PUNO to this JP and an increase of budget for ILO. The adjustment of budgets for UNMAS and ILO were managed through deductions from the total budget of the PUNOs with budget of greater than US\$5 million, while keeping the total budget of the JP unchanged.
- Under the JP, UN-Habitat initially committed to providing water supply solutions for two communities. While the intervention was successfully completed in one community, efforts to secure water in the second location were unsuccessful despite geophysical assessments and additional drilling. Following community consultations, it was agreed to reallocate the remaining project funds to construct a flood protection wall identified as the second community priority and aligned with the same STFA funding window. This revision was a minor programmatic revision and was approved by the Secretariat, as guided by the STFA Operations Manual.



Residents fetch clean water from a tap stand in Woch Tangi, Nangarhar, Province, supported by STFA, part of a broader water supply intervention. © UN-Habitat



DELIVERING AS ONE

Cover Photo:

A returnee at the Torkham border sits with all he owns, waiting for a new beginning in Afghanistan. © STFA



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