

# **ANNUAL REPORT** 2024

CONSOLIDATED FUND LEVEL

**SPECIAL TRUST FUND FOR AFGHANISTAN**



# Contributing Donors



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*The order is by the size of contributions.*

UNDP and STFA names curved on a hill prepared for afforestation in Nangarhar Province. © STFA





# Participating UN Organizations



United Nations  
Development Programme



United Nations Human  
Settlements Programme



United Nations Population  
Fund



United Nations Conference  
on Trade and Development



International Trade Centre



International Labour  
Organization



United Nations Office on  
Drugs and Crime



United Nations Industrial  
Development Organization



United Nations Refugee  
Agency



United Nations Entity for  
Gender Equality and the  
Empowerment of Women



International Organization  
for Migration



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



United Nations Office for  
Project Services



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the United  
Nations



United Nations Capital  
Development Fund



United Nations Mine  
Action Service



World Health Organization

The UN organizations are listed in the order of joining STFA



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A returnee's child on the swings at UNHCR's Encashment Centre in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province. © STFA





# List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>ABADEI</b>	Area-Based Approach for Development Emergency Initiative
<b>ACG</b>	Afghanistan Coordination Group
<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>AFPs</b>	(UN) Agencies, Funds and Programmes
<b>AHTF</b>	Afghanistan Humanitarian Trust Fund
<b>ANC</b>	Antenatal Care
<b>ARTF</b>	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
<b>BHN</b>	Basic Human Needs
<b>CBE</b>	Community Based Education
<b>CBO</b>	Community Based Organization
<b>CDC</b>	Community Development Council
<b>CfW</b>	Cash for Work
<b>CME</b>	Community Midwife Education
<b>DaO</b>	Delivering As One
<b>DfA</b>	De Facto Authorities
<b>DIC</b>	Drop-in Centres
<b>DTC</b>	Drug Treatment Centre
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>FHH</b>	Family Health House
<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
<b>HCT</b>	Humanitarian Country Team
<b>HDP</b>	Humanitarian-Development-Peace (Nexus)
<b>ICCT</b>	Inter-Cluster Coordination Team
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>IFI</b>	International Financial Institution
<b>IG</b>	Income Generation
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>IP</b>	Implementing Partner
<b>JP</b>	Joint Programme
<b>MHPSS</b>	Mental Health Psychosocial Support
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MPI</b>	Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index





<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>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>OPD</b>	Outpatient Department
<b>PDM</b>	Post-Distribution Monitoring
<b>PNC</b>	Postnatal Care
<b>PSS</b>	Psychosocial Support
<b>PUNO</b>	Participating United Nations Organization
<b>RCO</b>	(UN) Resident Coordinator's Office
<b>RH</b>	Reproductive Health
<b>RMNCAH</b>	Reproductive, Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>STFA</b>	Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan
<b>TEF</b>	(UN) Transitional Engagement Framework (for Afghanistan)
<b>T-FHH</b>	Temporary Family Health House
<b>TFMU</b>	Trust Fund Management Unit
<b>UCT</b>	Unconditional Cash Transfer
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNAMA</b>	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
<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>UN-HABITAT</b>	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
<b>UNHCR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<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>UN WOMEN</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization





# Foreword

Indrika Ratwatte, DSRSG/RC/HC © UNAMA





## Dear colleagues and partners,

It is my great pleasure to present the 2024 Annual Report of the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA). This report is a testament to the extraordinary resilience of the Afghan people and the transformative power of collective action in the face of profound adversity.

Afghanistan continued to confront immense challenges in 2024. Economic fragility endured, climate shocks intensified, and displacement persisted. The space for women and girls to participate in public life narrowed further. Funding cuts made it increasingly difficult to meet rising needs, especially as more than 300,000 people returned from Iran and Pakistan, many without homes, jobs, or a clear path forward.

These pressures tested our systems and our resolve. Yet they also reinforced the need for coordinated, principled, and sustained support. Under the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan (UNSFA), extended to 2027, the United Nations and its partners worked to address immediate needs while laying the foundation for long-term stability.

The STFA played a critical role in that effort. As a pooled funding mechanism, it enabled joint United Nations programming and action through brought together resources, capacities, and local knowledge to deliver area-based, multi-sectoral support. These efforts were community-driven, inclusive, and focused on reaching those most in need.

In 2024, the STFA mobilized US\$36.92 million, representing a 33% increase from the previous year. Since its inception, in 2021, the Fund has raised US\$240.77 million, of which US\$202.81 million has been allocated to regional joint programmes, thematic projects, and the Trust Fund Management Unit (TFMU). Fifteen of the seventeen Participating UN Organizations (PUNOs) have received funding. To date, STFA-supported programming has reached over six million people.

In 2024 alone, more than 1.3 million people – nearly half of them women and girls – benefitted from our interventions. These activities were rooted in a bottom-up, community-led process, with inclusion of the most vulnerable populations at the heart of project design and delivery.

These achievements did not come easily, however. The operating environment remained complex. Women's mobility was restricted. MoU signings were delayed. In some areas, interference from the de facto authorities disrupted recruitment and procurement processes. These constraints affected timelines and limited participation. In response, and concurrently with multi-pronged engagement and advocacy with the de facto authorities to address challenges, STFA and PUNOs adapted, introducing women-only service spaces, home-based delivery models, and localised engagement strategies. These innovations remain essential to ensuring inclusive, responsive, and effective programming going forward.

In 2024, I had the opportunity of witnessing this work firsthand during several field visits, including two STFA missions to the Southeastern and the Eastern Regions. The latter was conducted alongside Michael Tawanda, Co-Chair of the STFA Steering Committee and Head of Cooperation of Norway to Afghanistan. These visits reaffirmed the critical impact of STFA-funded interventions and provided an opportunity to listen directly to communities, particularly women, youth, and returnees.

What we witnessed was deeply inspiring: communities reclaiming their futures, returnees determined to rebuild their lives, women leading local solutions, and young people embracing hope amidst hardship. Their stories send a powerful message: progress is possible, even under pressure, when it begins with people and is supported by trust. These moments also reminded us that when we deliver as one, we deliver more effectively, more efficiently, and with more impact.







Indrika Ratwatte, DSRSG/RC/HC on one of his field visits. © UNAMA

The year also marked the beginning of STFA engagement with the private sector. While still nascent, these efforts hold promise. Through collaboration with Ghazanfar Bank, nearly 40 women-led enterprises received financial support. Additionally, Afghanistan International Bank contributed US\$30,000 to our Crowdfunding Campaign to support livelihoods for displaced persons. These early partnerships point to emerging models for resource diversification and sustainable impact.

Yet, the gap between needs and resources continues to widen. Drastic funding cuts and shrinking humanitarian aid are compounding challenges, even as deportations and voluntary returns from Pakistan and Iran are expected to increase in 2025. More families will require access to basic services, shelter, food, livelihoods, and protection. Without renewed international solidarity as well as sustained and predictable support, hard-won development gains are at risk.

I therefore call on the international community to act by:

- Scaling up investment in basic services and livelihoods, particularly in underserved and hard-to-reach areas;
- Prioritizing gender-responsive programming, to ensure that women and girls are not left behind;

- Supporting flexible, multi-partner financing mechanisms like the STFA that can adapt quickly, operate transparently, and deliver at scale.

I extend my deepest gratitude to all who make this work possible. To our donors, United Nations partners, and implementing agencies, thank you for your unwavering commitment. And to the Afghan communities, thank you for your strength, your courage, and your resilience. You continue to inspire and guide our work.

I invite you to read this report. It reflects both what we have achieved and what lies ahead. With continued collaboration, we can expand opportunity, deepen inclusion, and empower communities to not only recover, but also to thrive and lead their own future.

**Indrika Ratwatte**

Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General  
United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator  
Chairperson of the STFA







The Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan - Annual Progress Report 2024

# Executive Summary

A group of patients and children waiting to receive care at a Family Health House in Pul-e-Alam, Logar Province. © STFA



The Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan - Annual Progress Report 2024

# Executive Summary

A group of patients and children waiting to receive care at a Family Health House in Pul-e-Alam, Logar Province. © STFA





The Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan continued to be an important funding instrument for basic human needs programming with support from 13 Contributing Partners<sup>[1]</sup>. The current resource-constrained environment has necessitated downsizing the STFA's level of ambition in terms of scale, scope, and geographic coverage. Recognizing these constraints, the STFA Steering Committee is focusing on a narrower set of priorities within the UNSFA, as articulated in the STFA Strategic Note. In 2024, joint programmatic activities continued in the North, South, East, South-East regions. In addition, in March and June 2024, the Steering Committee approved allocations to commence four thematic initiatives focusing on strengthening support to women led civil society organizations (CSOs), durable solutions, drug use prevention and post-earthquake response.

In 2024, the STFA received US\$36.92 million from eight contributing donors and \$0.03 million from crowdfunding; this is a 33 percent increase from \$27.81 million received in 2023. Since inception of the fund, STFA has mobilised \$240.77 million of which \$202.81 million was allocated to the four joint regional programmes, five thematic projects and the TFMU project. So far, 15<sup>[2]</sup> out of 17 PUNOs have received funds for programme implementation.

In 2024, STFA supported 1,367,728 people (661,239; 48.3% women and girls) to access essential services, livelihood opportunities, climate mitigation and adaptation support and promote social integration. At least 787,870 people (406,559; 48.3% female) accessed essential health services, literacy and community-level service infrastructure (e.g. for water and sanitation, energy supply); 58,067 people (19,579; 33.7% women and girls) benefited from livelihood support; 458,331 people (198,709; 43.4% female) benefited from interventions on disaster risk reduction, climate mitigation and adaptation and 63,460 people (57.3% female) participated in the

community engagement activities to promote integration and social cohesion. These activities were identified through a bottom-up, community-driven, approach to programming – with inclusion and participation (of women and men) at the core of the design of such interventions. Cumulatively, since inception, STFA has supported at least 6,539,790 people (3,092,691; 47.3% women and girls)

Findings from monitoring missions suggested that most project interventions were effective and aligned with the needs of the community, the intended result outcomes had also been achieved. A quarter of the assessed project interventions have been partially effective due to weak operations and maintenance mechanisms post-implementation and limited mentoring to newly established enterprises. Recommendations are being co-opted and incorporated in current programming and future pipeline development as lessons learned.

The operating environment remained challenging, with shrinking space for women's engagement. The Secretariat, PUNOs, and implementing partners have worked to identify innovative solutions while ensuring a principled approach. This included tailoring project interventions for women-only spaces or implementation in home settings. Other challenges on modifications of technical designs by local authorities affected approved and allocated budgets resulting in revisions of targets. The PUNOs also had to manage inconsistent regulatory frameworks at sub-national and national levels, which subsequently delayed project execution.



[1] Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, UNDP, Luxembourg, Qatar, Türkiye, Czechia, Iceland, Italy  
[2] ILO, FAO, IOM, UN-Habitat, UN Women, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNODC, UNOPS, UNHCR, UNIDO, WHO, UNMAS





# Purpose

Solar panels installed for communities in Jalalabad,  
Nangarhar Province. © STFA





# Scope of STFA Support

In 2024, the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA) reinforced its role as the UN's key pooled financing mechanism to address basic human needs under the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan (UNSFA). With UNSFA extended through December 2027, the UN Country Team (UNCT) reaffirmed its commitment to a more integrated, joined-up approach, crucial amid projected funding declines. STFA remains key to delivering coherent, efficient, and impactful assistance across Afghanistan.

The 2024 to 2025 investment priorities, guided by the STFA Strategic Note, ensure alignment with UNSFA's strategic objectives. The Fund's flexible framework enables responsive, principled programming in a dynamic context.

Recognizing resource constraints, STFA has recalibrated its ambition to focus on targeted, high-impact interventions. Investments now prioritize women's empowerment, durable solutions, and climate change adaptation within a more selective geographic footprint.

Throughout 2024, the Trust Fund Management Unit (TFMU) strengthened coordination, quality assurance, and knowledge management systems to support joint planning, implementation, and monitoring across 15 Participating UN Organizations (PUNOs). The portfolio stays fully aligned with UNSFA's priorities, reinforcing collective results through a unified UN approach. Day to day programming is linked to four programme outputs summarised below:

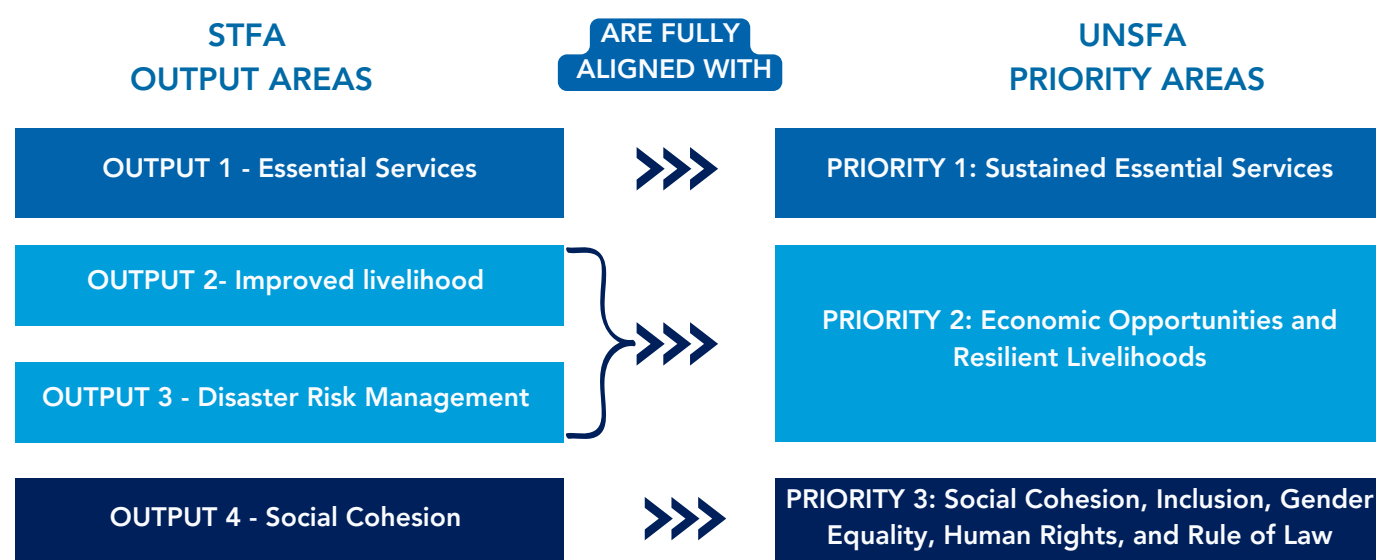


Figure 1: Illustrative alignment of STFA Outputs with the UNSFA Strategic Priorities



## STFA OUTPUT AREAS

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.

2

Livelihoods, businesses and the local economy can recover, become more sustainable and be more resilient to instability.

### OUTPUTS

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.

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.



Women in their sewing business that was supported by STFA interventions in Kandahar Province. © IOM



# PUNOs that received allocations














Participating UN organisations		Joint Programmes			
		North	South	East	South-East
 International Labour Organization	International Labour Organization	Yes		Yes	
 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
 IOM UN MIGRATION	International Organization for Migration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
 UNHABITAT FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE	United Nations Human Settlements Programme	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
 UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women	Yes	Yes	Yes	
 UNITED NATIONS UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
 UN DP	United Nations Development Programme	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
 unesco	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
 UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
 UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services	Yes		Yes	Yes
 UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency	United Nations Refugee Agency	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
 UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization				Yes

Table 1: List of STFA PUNOs that received allocations for Joint Programmes



# PUNOs that received allocations











Participating UN organizations	Sectoral Projects			
	CSO Twinning	Herat Response	Drug Use Prevention	Durable Solutions
 International Labour Organization		Yes	Yes	Yes
 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations				Yes
 International Organization for Migration		Yes		Yes
 United Nations Human Settlements Programme				Yes
 United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women	Yes			Yes
 United Nations Development Programme		Yes	Yes	Yes
 United Nations Population Fund		Yes	Yes	Yes
 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime			Yes	
 United Nations Office for Project Services		Yes		
 United Nations Refugee Agency		Yes		Yes
 World Health Organization			Yes	
 United Nations Mine Action Service				Yes

Table 2: List of STFA PUNOs that received allocations for Sectoral Projects



# STFA Report Card for 2024

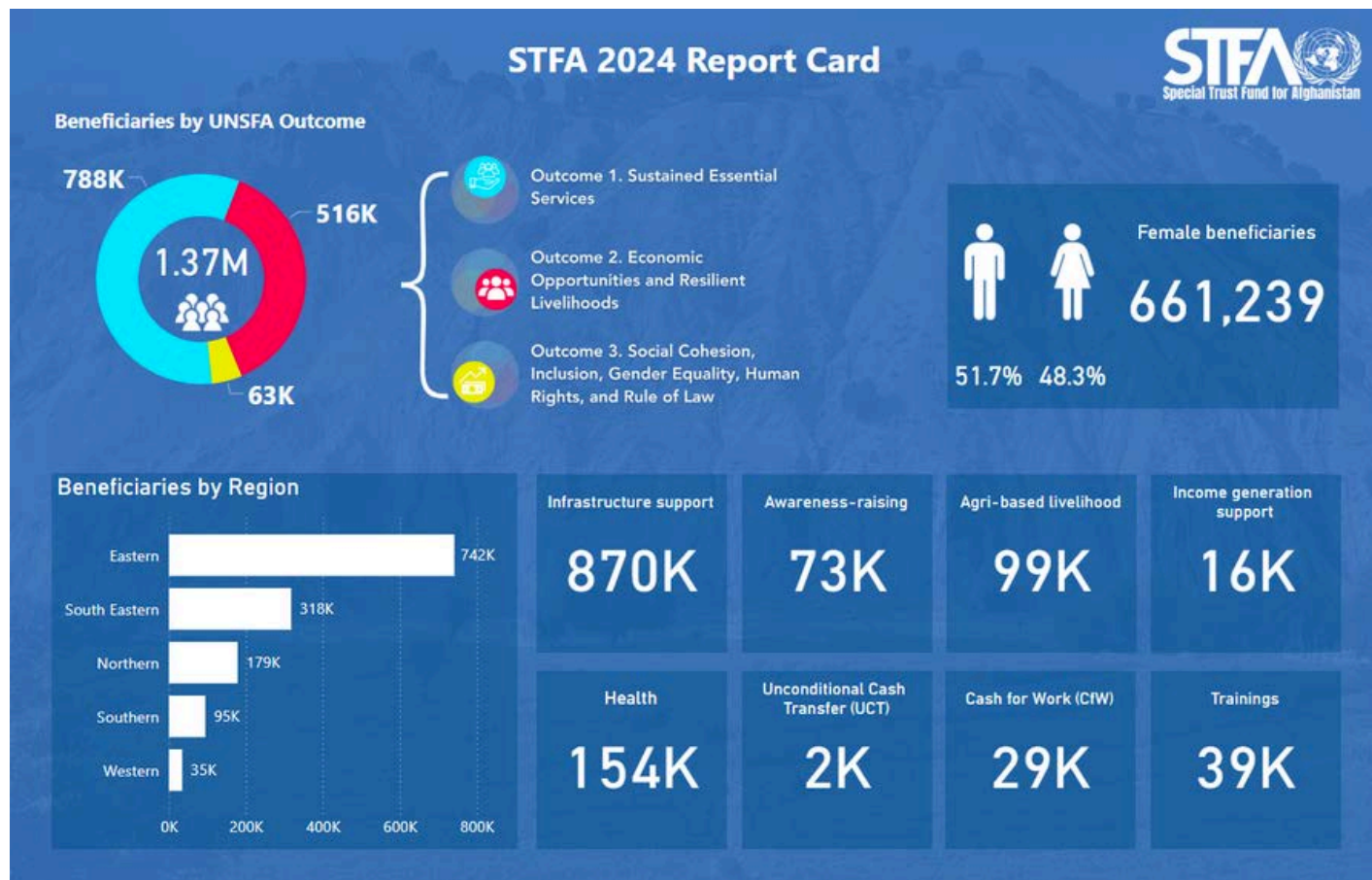


Figure 2: STFA Report Card for 2024



# STFA Progress until December 2024

**\$241**

million USD

Resources  
mobilized from  
13 donors



**9**

**Programmes/Projects**

4 Regional Joint Programmes +  
4 Sectoral Projects + 1 TFMU Project

**17**



Participating UN Organizations



**53%**



**47%**

**3.1**

million  
female  
beneficiaries

**6.54**

MILLION PEOPLE



**5.1M**

**953K**

**492K**



Output 1. Sustained Essential Services



Output 2. Economic Opportunities and Resilient Livelihoods



Output 3. Social Cohesion, Inclusion, Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Rule of Law



## Beneficiaries reached through STFA

Health

**1.3M**



Basic community infrastructure

**3.7M**



Awareness-raising

**424K**



Unconditional cash transfers

**189K**



Agri-based livelihood

**169K**



Cash for work

**121K**



Access to education  
**18K**



Trainings  
**48K**

Income generation support

**121K**





# STFA Governance

Throughout 2024, the STFA sustained its structured governance model, enabling inclusive and prompt decision-making across its operations. Strategic oversight was provided through regular convenings of the Fund's primary coordination bodies – namely, the Steering Committee and the Technical Coordination Working Group. From January to December 2024, STFA held five Steering Committee meetings and five Technical Coordination Working Group meetings.

Date	Key Decisions
29 January 2024	<p>No decisions taken.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reflections on STFA Donor Mission.</li> <li>2. Discussion on draft STFA Strategic Note and outline of tentative proposals for potential resource allocation consideration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening women-led CSOs – Twinning programme</li> <li>• Herat Earthquake Recovery Response</li> <li>• Durable Solutions for IDPs/Returnees</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
5 March 2024	<p>Four decisions taken.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. STFA Strategic Note 2024 – 2025 approved.</li> <li>2. Proposal and Allocation for Herat Earthquake Recovery Response approved.</li> <li>3. Proposal and allocation for Strengthening women-led CSOs – Twinning Initiative approved.</li> <li>4. Allocation of second tranche for Regional Joint Programme – South-Eastern Afghanistan approved.</li> </ol>
19 June 2024	<p>Two decisions taken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposal and allocation for the Durable Solutions Initiative: Rebuilding Together: Enhancing Integration and Social Cohesion for Returnees and IDPs (Eastern Region) approved.</li> <li>• Proposal and allocation for Drug use prevention, treatment and rehabilitation Initiative (South-Eastern Region) approved.</li> </ul>
1 October 2024	<p>No decisions taken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflections on Resident Coordinator's Mission to South-Eastern Region.</li> <li>• Discussion on Consolidated Data Proposal for IDP/Returnees.</li> <li>• Launch of STFA Crowdfunding Campaign.</li> </ul>
3 December 2024	<p>Two decisions taken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposal of STFA Strategic Note (2024-2025) approved.</li> <li>• Proposal of Revised STFA Operations Manual approved.</li> <li>• Discussion on Consolidated Data Proposal for IDP/Returnees continued.</li> </ul>



# Results

Women working in a Carpet Weaving Centre in Balkh Province. © UNDP



# Outcome-level Results: STFA Contributions to UNSFA

The Strategic Fund for Afghanistan has continued to demonstrate a principled, inclusive and adaptive approach to building resilience in the communities where interventions are being implemented. STFA consistently prioritized needs-based service delivery, supporting the self-reliance of vulnerable populations, while promoting gender-responsive and locally owned solutions. Consequently, the joint programmes have contributed to improved access to essential services, livelihood recovery, improved climate resilience, and fostered social cohesion while keeping a conflict-sensitive and community-driven approach. The joint programmes contributed to improved access to essential services by expanding infrastructure for health, water, energy, and agriculture. Health outcomes improved through enhanced functionality of rural health facilities, while investments in climate-resilient infrastructure supported increased agricultural productivity and safe mobility. The combined effect of these interventions reduced community vulnerability, supported fair service delivery for both women and men, and reinforced local capacities to sustain essential services over time.

Livelihoods support strengthened household economic security, improved opportunities, and enhanced resilience of local economies. Through targeted support, including cash-based assistance, agricultural inputs, and business development support, communities were better able to meet immediate needs, recover from economic shocks, and invest in income-generating activities. Both short-term relief and longer-term economic recovery were supported through unconditional cash transfers, technical training and livelihood inputs to kickstart socio-economic enterprises. Employment-intensive public works also created temporary jobs and built community assets, while efforts to support Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), particularly those led by women helped restore productive abilities and expand access to markets. Although female participation remained constrained due to contextual limitations, the programme fostered inclusive economic participation where possible, notably by supporting women-owned businesses and easing access to markets through tailored asset support and training. These efforts collectively contributed to more diversified, sustainable, and resilient local economies.



Men in a cash for work project, supported through STFA interventions in Paktia Province. © FAO



Community abilities to anticipate, respond to, and recover from climate-related and environmental shocks were also strengthened, thereby safeguarding farm-based livelihoods and improving resilience. By enhancing local preparedness, promoting early warning systems, and disseminating climate-smart practices, the programme enabled communities to better manage risks associated with droughts, floods, and other natural hazards. Participatory risk assessments and planning processes fostered greater local ownership and helped integrate anticipatory action into agricultural and livelihood practices. Climate-smart agricultural and livestock management training supported adaptive practices to cope with environmental stressors. Collectively, these interventions reduced vulnerability, strengthened the sustainability of farm-based livelihoods, and improved community readiness to face future climate and disaster risks. While cultural and operational constraints limited direct engagement with women in some areas, knowledge sharing within households contributed to improved preparedness across the households.

Findings from monitoring missions showed that at least 68 percent of visited project interventions were effective, as they were aligned with the needs of the community and intended result outcomes had been achieved. In addition, at least 25 percent of the assessed project interventions have been partially effective due to lack of structured operations and maintenance mechanisms post-implementation and limited follow-on support to newly established enterprises. Furthermore, 5 percent of the assessed project interventions were rated as ineffective due to lack of sustainable exit strategy post-STFA funding, technical gaps in the design as well as limited community engagement and ownership. At least 1.5 percent of the visited projects were classified as failed projects. Of note is a water supply intervention where a geophysical survey suggested availability of water, yet drilling at the selected site and surrounding sites within the catchment area yielded no result.

Post-implementation monitoring targeting 30 percent of MSMEs supported through STFA, showed relatively positive business sustainability, with 95 percent of pre-existing businesses and 60 percent of newly established businesses remaining functional. Also, there were estimates of 56 percent average increase in gross revenue. There are opportunities to further strengthen MSME support through sectoral diversification, added follow on coaching and technical support post-training and linkages to private sector partners and financial services. Through STFA engagements in the last quarter of 2024, at least 40 women entrepreneurs were linked to financial services through a private bank and have received loans and grants ranging from AFN 120,000 to AFN 4.5 million (\$1706 - \$63,984)<sup>3</sup>. While vocational training is promising with prospects for employment or self-employment, this can be strengthened by adopting an integrated model to align courses and curricula with market needs; provide training with high probability for market uptake or employability; providing essential tools, startup kits, or seed capital and post-training business mentorship.

STFA has been working with communities to increase adoption of disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation and adaptation practices. The interventions are three-fold with training and preparedness planning, infrastructural support, basic tools and equipment. Monitoring findings suggest that protection walls and gabion walls have strengthened resilience against flash floods and other environmental shocks and protected land from erosion. In some sites, poor workmanship or use of poor-quality materials was noted, this may reduce the projected durability of the structures. There is scope to strengthen quality control and oversight during construction to ensure irregularities are found while there is opportunity to rectify the anomalies. Excavation of trenches created temporary employment, and recharging of groundwater. The 50,000 assessed trenches have potential to recharge approximately 3.37 million litres of groundwater on an annual basis.

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





Community engagement incorporating local implementation structures, advocacy and awareness raising progressed in earnest in some regions. The community engagement efforts, in particular, local development plans are enablers for programming across all outputs and include voices across various socio-economic groups. The community action plans are being disseminated widely across the clusters to serve as foundation for identification of community-centric interventions and a pulse check of organizations actively working in those communities. This contributes to reduced fragmentation and reduced overlaps, which has become critical in the wake of reduced international support.

STFA has now reached 6,539,790 people (3,092,691; 47.3% women and girls) since inception of activities in 2022. In 2024 alone, 1,367,728 people (661,239; 48.3% women and girls) benefited from STFA interventions. It is of note that despite continued challenges and imposed restrictions to engage with women, the overall ratio of female beneficiaries has continued to increase from 46.2 percent in 2022 to 46.8 percent in 2023 and 48.3 percent in 2024.

## Output-level Results



A group counselling session at the STFA supported Drug Treatment Center in Laghman Province. © UNODC



## 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.

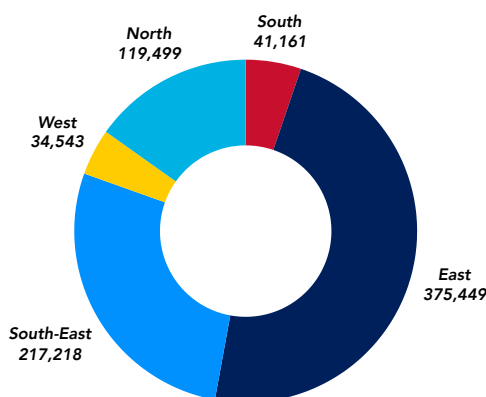
In 2024, the STFA joint programme activities resulted in provision of essential services, including basic service infrastructure (e.g. for water and sanitation), health, and education services, to approximately 787,870 people (406,559; 51.6% women and girls). Some key highlights are provided below:

### Output 1 Results – 2024

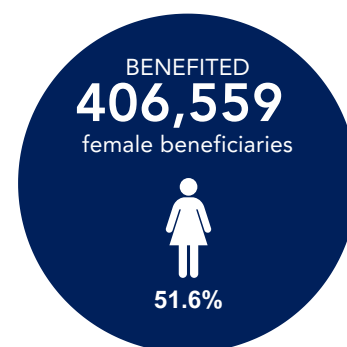
TOTAL NUMBER  
OF BENEFICIARIES



REGIONAL BREAKDOWN  
OF BENEFICIARIES



TOTAL NUMBER  
OF FEMALE BENEFICIARIES



**500,244**

people (247,973; 49.6% female) benefited from community infrastructure.

**236,272**

people (149,847; 63.4% female) benefited from basic health services.

**47,359**

people (6,014; 12.7% female) benefited from drug treatment and drug rehabilitation services.

**3,995**

people (2,681; 67.1% female) benefited from basic general literacy and vocational education interventions.





Cumulatively, since start of STFA: At least 5,094,803 people (51.1% female) have benefited from essential health services, basic literacy, and community infrastructure as follows:

- 3,601,497 people (48.8% female) have benefited from community infrastructure support. The infrastructure support activities assisted communities in meeting their basic requirements, such as access to clean water, shelter, electricity, roads, and sanitation infrastructure. They also assisted communities in improving and expanding local irrigation schemes. PUNOs prioritised local skilled and low-skilled labour resulting in the creation of significant employment opportunities (cross-fertilising progress under Outputs 2 and 3).
- 1,306,134 people (58.1% female) benefited from access to health services, including Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) services, drug prevention and treatment, mental health and psychosocial counselling services and Covid-19 related services. The health support services were mostly delivered in remote areas where access to health services is almost non-existent.
- 92,169 people (23.1% female) accessed drug treatment, drug rehabilitation services, drug prevention and harm reduction services at drop-in centres and drug-treatment centres. Linkages to livelihood services are helping to curb the relapse rate, observed to be above 70 percent within the first 12 months of treatment. Aligning the treatment with vocational training or livelihood support will help to promote some economic resilience and social reintegration.
- 18,355 people (67.0% female) have benefited from basic literacy and informal education. The literacy classes had notable participation of women and girls. Monitoring missions suggest that at least 62 percent of literacy classes are high performing.
- 544 health personnel (50.2% female) were trained through the health sector project.



AA man constructing a permanent shelter for one of the returnees in Nangarhar Province. © STFA



## 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.

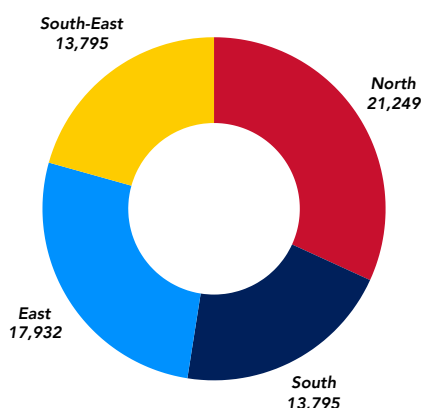
In 2024, STFA provided livelihood support to 58,067 people (19,579; 33.7% women and girls) in the form of Cash for Work (CfW), Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCTs), Income Generation activities, MSME support, vocational training, and agriculture-based livelihood support.

### Output 2 Results – 2024

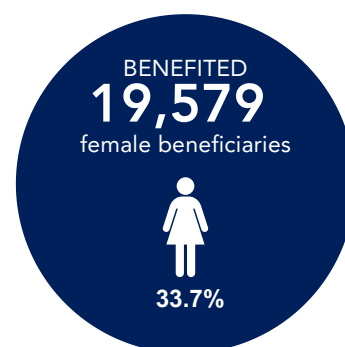
TOTAL NUMBER  
OF BENEFICIARIES



REGIONAL BREAKDOWN  
OF BENEFICIARIES



TOTAL NUMBER  
OF FEMALE BENEFICIARIES



**29,332**

people (700; 2.4% female) benefited from the Cash for Work (CfW) support to targeted communities. This support created temporary job opportunities to help fulfil immediate financial needs – and, at the same time, yielded positive ‘multiplier’ effects through the revitalization of local economies and through improvements in basic community infrastructure within target areas. Some 198,635 workdays were created (24,741; 12.5% by female community members). Female participation in the CfW activities were particularly challenging due to cultural barriers and the immediately prioritised activities, as informed by their community action plans. However, PUNOs sought proactive ways to engage females in appropriate CfW activities, when possible.

**15,937**

people (10,813; 67.8% women and girls) received support to start income generation activities. The individuals for this initiative were selected through direct consultation with the community on the selection of targeted beneficiaries and business initiatives that best fit the skill sets and conditions in the target communities.

**6,575**

people (5,995; 91.2% female) engaged in agriculture-based livelihood activities such as soya bean cultivation to diversify household diets and boost nutritional intake; home gardening to promote food production; mushroom cultivation, poultry and bee keeping supporting diversification and improve household nutrition.



## 2,000

people (1,453; 72.7% female) benefited from the unconditional cash transfers (UCTs). The UCT support mainly targeted vulnerable members in the community, including people with disabilities who could not participate in CfW activities. Beneficiary feedback collected through post-distribution monitoring, 61.9 percent reported that the cash covered their needs for one month, 26.7 percent for two months, 8.6 percent for three months, and 2.9 percent for four months. The sufficiency of support varied depending on household size, location, and specific needs, and was crucial in addressing immediate financial challenges and stabilizing household expenses.

## 4,223

people (618; 14.6% female) benefited from various livelihoods related trainings through vocational training or apprenticeships. The scope of vocational skills training was varied, some vocational training graduates are now either gainfully employed or self-employed. Skills training covered sectors that include tailoring, embroidery, handicraft, mobile phone repairs and food processing.

By the end of 2024, cumulatively 408,753 people (106,017; 25.9% women and girls) had received livelihood support through the STFA activities. At least 121,461 people (2.0 % female) benefited from cash for work; 84,172 people (39.4% female) received support to start income generation activities; 189,322 people (32.1% female) from unconditional cash transfers; 9,575 people (93.4% female) from agriculture-based livelihoods and 4,223 from vocational skills training. Cumulatively 12,699 MSMEs (6,913; 54.4% women-led), received cash and in-kind support to sustain and expand their businesses. The MSME support resulted in hundreds of new MSME start-ups; and in the retention and/or creation of jobs for thousands of men and women in the target locations. The livelihood support under the STFA JPs was delivered at a time when poverty had started to rise, employment opportunities in the country were declining, and a large part of the population, especially in rural areas, were resorting to migration to neighbouring countries, often through perilous routes.



A female beneficiary showing off the food she cooked in Laghman Province. © UNDP





**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.

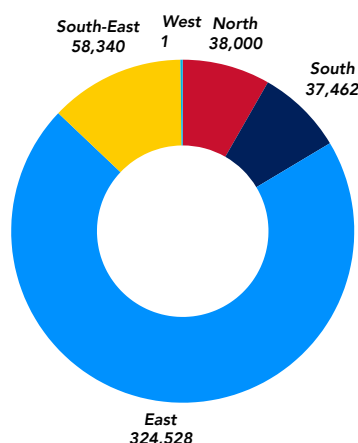
Directly intertwined with livelihoods support are STFA efforts on disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Such support mainly includes improved infrastructure to protect communities against disasters, training and equipping communities on preparedness and response to climate shocks. In 2024, 458,331 people (198,709; 43.4% female) benefited from interventions to improve capacity to cope with disasters and shocks. STFA implemented three types of activities, notably skills training on disaster risk reduction, combined with equipment support where possible; technical training and provision of seeds, tools or asset support for climate smart agriculture as well as community infrastructure to improve resilience to climate related shocks such as flash floods. Overall, these interventions aimed to improve resource utilization while promoting water conservation, pest control, and storage of agricultural produce. The trainees also committed to share their newly acquired knowledge and skills within their communities.

## Output 3 Results – 2024

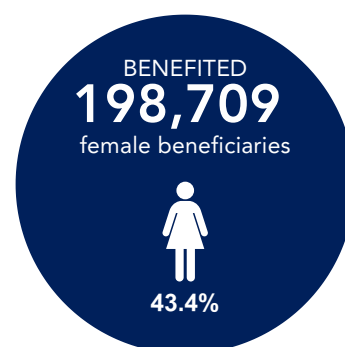
TOTAL NUMBER  
OF BENEFICIARIES



REGIONAL BREAKDOWN  
OF BENEFICIARIES



TOTAL NUMBER  
OF FEMALE BENEFICIARIES



**26,426**

people (48.3% female) were trained on disaster risk reduction. This also included trainings and awareness raising on early warning systems.

**62,402**

people (27.9% female) benefited from technical training, seeds and equipment support such as improved irrigation infrastructure and greenhouses.

**369,503**

people (45.6% female) benefited from disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation infrastructure for environmental protection.

Since inception, 543,756 people (230,608; 42.4% female) have benefited from the disaster risk reduction and climate mitigation and adaptation support.



## 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.

The STFA joint programmes have contributed to promote community engagement, localized decision making and protection of community-level systems in target areas through a range of interventions. In 2024, STFA continued to conduct community-based awareness raising and training on conflict mitigation, legal aid services, gender and psychosocial support; capacity development support to civil society organizations and local media; and strengthening of community planning processes and community level governance structures (including local implementation committees). At least 63,460 people (57.3% female) participated in the community engagement activities to promote social cohesion.

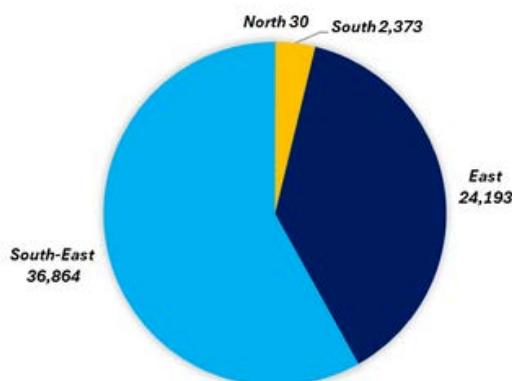
Through this engagement, the STFA leveraged these localised governance and community structures to inform locally driven, bottoms-up, solutions.

### Output 4 Results – 2024

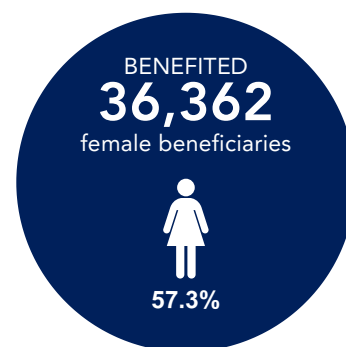
TOTAL NUMBER  
OF BENEFICIARIES



REGIONAL BREAKDOWN  
OF BENEFICIARIES



TOTAL NUMBER  
OF FEMALE BENEFICIARIES



Cumulatively, over 492,478 people (151,692; 30.8% female) have benefited from awareness raising and capacity building activities to promote integration and foster social cohesion. Furthermore, multiple country-wide radio and social media campaigns reached tens of thousands of Afghans nationwide – including women. The radio programmes also delivered content tailored and designed for women, sensitising them about their rights.

- 40,000 people (all female) have benefited from awareness raising sessions on gender rights and topics that included women's rights, business rights, women inheritance and self-care.
- 37,582 people (53.5% female) benefited from provision of alternative livelihood opportunities to integrate drug use affected people in their respective communities.



- 414,756 people (22.1% female) participated in awareness raising sessions and discussions covering human rights, legal awareness, Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and conflict prevention, among other topics. This also included various social engagements such as sports events and various recreational activities.
- 140 journalists, media workers, civil society activists and Shura members (17.9% female) benefited from training on various topics such as conflict-sensitive reporting and educational broadcasting and awareness raising about the importance of access to information.

Monitoring missions suggested that awareness raising has been well received while the trainings were deemed rather short. The effects of community engagement also found to be cross-cutting across the various outputs. In addition, social ties and integration were relatively stronger among communities where STFA was implementing interventions that benefit both host and returnee communities and consequently managing previous competition to access limited resources.



Two football teams posing for a photo at a STFA-supported playground in Pul-e-Alam, Logar Province.  
© STFA







# Delays in Implementation, Challenges, Lessons Learned & Best Practices

STFA staff member talking to a beneficiary on one of the field visits in Paktia Province. © STFA



## Challenges

**Operational environment:** The evolving decrees imposed by the de facto authorities (DfA) represented a significant barrier to effective programme implementation. These included restrictions on women's participation in programme activities, limitations on mobility, and gender-specific decrees that impacted the ability to conduct gender-sensitive programming. Furthermore, the delayed signing of memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and bureaucratic delays in sub-national and national coordination caused additional setbacks. There were also challenges related to compliance with local governance structures and the inconsistent regulatory frameworks which subsequently affected project execution.

**Financial and funding challenges:** The uncertainty and withdrawal of funding from key donors led to the downsizing and rescheduling of crucial operational activities, particularly in mine action interventions. Global funding constraints have also affected STFA's operations. While the resources mobilized in 2024 were slightly higher than in 2023, the escalating needs on the ground, driven by the substantial influx of returnees from neighbouring countries, internally displaced persons (IDPs), other vulnerable communities, and climate-induced shocks underscored the urgent need for additional resources. In response to these challenges, efforts were strategically focused on addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations. However, despite these efforts, many others equally deserving and in need of support could not be reached due to resource limitations. Unforeseen costs, such as changes in exchange rates and inflation, further strained the financial sustainability of some projects.

**Logistical and operational complexities:** The remote and often difficult-to-access project locations presented logistical challenges, including high transportation costs, limited infrastructure, and difficulties in coordinating activities. Harsh weather conditions, such as floods and heavy snow, further disrupted construction timelines and field operations. Clear communication and more structured coordination mechanisms are necessary to ensure a unified approach. However, the poor communication infrastructure in some regions, slowed down progress and made coordination more challenging. Coordination among stakeholders at local, provincial, and national levels contributed to delays in assessments, procurement, and beneficiary selection.

**Gender and social inclusion barriers:** Restrictions on female participation, both among staff and beneficiaries, hindered the participation of women in some interventions that could not be tailored for implementation in women only spaces or at their homes. These barriers were exacerbated by cultural norms and the limitations imposed by the DfA decrees. As a result, programmes faced difficulties in effectively engaging women in training, employment, and decision-making roles. Efforts to overcome these challenges involved finding culturally sensitive approaches and adapting activities to ensure the inclusion of women and marginalized groups. The UN agencies explored alternative ways to ensure women's participation in leadership roles and decision-making processes, despite the prevailing constraints. This necessitated a focus on building partnerships with women-led organizations and ensuring gender-responsive programming that could adapt to the challenges at hand.





## Lessons Learned

**Local ownership & capacity building:** Strengthening local ownership and capacity is fundamental for ensuring the sustainability and long-term impact of interventions. Community Action Plans (CAPs) have proven to be an effective enabler of local ownership, allowing communities to actively shape and drive programme outcomes. Empowering local actors and organisations fosters resilience and ensures that communities can take responsibility for sustaining the results post-implementation.

**Stakeholder engagement & partnerships:** Proactive, multi-level engagement with stakeholders, including local authorities, community leaders, and trusted social partners, is essential for securing timely approvals, ensuring smooth implementation, and maintaining community buy-in. Strong partnerships enhance programme efficiency, prevent delays, and improve overall impact.

**Gender & cultural sensitivity:** Early integration of gender-inclusive approaches and a focus on cultural sensitivities enables meaningful participation of women and vulnerable groups. Providing safe, culturally appropriate spaces for engagement and employing women facilitators ensures broader inclusion and fosters equitable access to programme benefits.

**Flexible planning & responsive M&E:** Adaptive financial, procurement, and monitoring planning have proven to be crucial to remain responsive to shifting market conditions and emerging needs. Flexibility ensures the integration of sustainability features, maintains quality standards, and allows for evidence-based decision-making, which keeps the programme aligned with the evolving needs of the community. Consequently, through continuous flow of third monitoring findings into design of thematic projects has resulted in the incorporation of best practices, incorporation of lessons learned and subsequent elimination of interventions that have proven to be less effective.

## Best Practices

**Integrated, community-centric programme approach:** Multi-sectoral approaches (e.g., combining shelter, livelihoods, and WASH) alongside community-led implementation models, such as shelter committees and beneficiary advisory groups, have proven highly effective in ensuring inclusive, sustainable recovery outcomes. These models enhance accountability, local ownership, and community resilience, while integrated planning and data sharing across agencies foster coordination and efficiency.

- **Actionable strategy:** Adopt a multi-sectoral, community-driven design that ensures local ownership and integrates transparent, coordinated decision-making. Involve stakeholders from the start to ensure interventions are tailored to local needs and build long-term impact.
- **Culturally and gender-sensitive service delivery:** Tailored service models that reflect local cultural norms, such as women-only spaces, have significantly improved access and utilisation, especially in conservative or underserved areas.
- **Actionable strategy:** Design and deliver services that are culturally appropriate and ensure gender-sensitive approaches to enhance accessibility and participation, particularly for vulnerable groups.

**Proactive risk management and agility:** Ongoing risk monitoring, adaptive planning, and contingency strategies are critical for ensuring that programmes remain agile and responsive to changes in the operational environment.

- **Actionable strategy:** Build adaptive mechanisms into project planning and continuously assess risks to ensure that responses can be adjusted in real-time, reducing delays and operational challenges.



## Programmatic revisions undertaken during the reporting period

**Eastern Region 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. Also, 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 approved during the reporting period.

**South-Eastern Region revisions:** The prodoc was revised in 2024 to reflect the joining of ILO and WHO as new PUNOs to this JP and addition of budget of ILO and WHO. The budget adjustments were accommodated through deductions from the total budget of the PUNOs with budget of greater than \$5 million, while keeping the total budget of the JP unchanged.

**Durable Solutions Initiative revision:** In 2024, the revision of targets/milestones for the shelter intervention increased the overall beneficiary reach from 3,115 to 4,340 persons using savings linked to reduced cost of each housing unit.



A flood protection wall built through STFA support in Khost Province. © UN-Habitat





# Qualitative Assessment

STFA and PUNOs in a monitoring visit to Mazar-e-Sharif, Balkh Province. © STFA



## Overview of Achievements

In 2024, STFA made significant strides in enhancing programmatic coherence, resource mobilization, and strategic impact under the UN Strategic Framework for Afghanistan (UNSFA). Guided by a recalibrated strategic vision in response to resource constraints and shifting operational dynamics, STFA focused its efforts on high-impact, targeted interventions that prioritized women's empowerment, durable solutions, and climate change adaptation, implemented within a streamlined geographic footprint. This shift led to the replacement of the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) with a new prioritization model, guided by the STFA Strategic Note, enabling more responsive, needs-driven programming aligned with local community priorities. The four newly launched joint projects are (1) Women-led CSO twinning initiative, fostering social cohesion through grassroots empowerment; (2) Post-earthquake recovery response in Herat, addressing immediate recovery and resilience needs; (3) Drug use prevention and rehabilitation initiative, integrating medical, livelihood, and social reintegration support, and (4) Durable Solutions initiative, supporting the reintegration of IDPs and returnees.

STFA's continued collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and participation in key coordination platforms enhanced constructive collaboration with non-STFA actors and other funding streams. The Fund also played a proactive role in the UN Risk Management Team, ensuring risk-informed decision-making across all levels. Meanwhile, the area-based joint programmes continued to serve as an essential delivery mechanism, complementing short-term humanitarian aid with long-term development support in livelihoods, education, health, infrastructure, and resilience-building. In total, approximately 6.54 million Afghans – nearly half of them women and girls – benefited from STFA-supported interventions. The STFA's achievements in 2024 reflect its capacity to adapt to a complex operating context while keeping a clear results focus. By using the 'Delivering as One' approach and building on the collective strengths of 15 actively implementing Participating UN Organizations, STFA has reinforced its position as a pivotal mechanism as one of the funding streams for basic human needs programming.

## Key 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 well positioned to 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 further enhanced its collaboration with other key funding streams, including the Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund (ARTF) and humanitarian financing mechanisms. Among the notable initiatives were the joint ARTF-STFA briefings held in Istanbul and Dubai, where the funding partners provided updates and demonstrated how the combined use of pooled and bilateral funds effectively supported complementary programme activities. These joint efforts reinforced the value of coordinated action, emphasizing the alignment and complementarity of diverse funding sources to maximize their collective impact on Afghanistan's recovery and development.





**Private sector partnerships:** A key achievement 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 on 1 October 2024 during the STFA Steering Committee meeting. In 2024, TFMU capitalized on this initiative to engage the private sector, raise awareness, and foster partnerships. As part of these efforts, the Chair of the STFA Steering Committee delivered a keynote address at the Afghan American Chamber of Commerce (AACC) Afghanistan Private Sector Programme Conference in Dubai on 28 September 2024. TFMU also engaged with prominent Afghan business leaders, including representatives from banks<sup>4</sup>, among others, to underscore the importance and critical role of the Afghan private sector in the country's economic future. These engagements helped lay the foundation for broader networking and partnership opportunities. One notable outcome was TFMU's collaboration with the Ghazanfar Bank to expand financial access for women entrepreneurs beyond the scope of STFA-supported activities. Since December 2024, close to 40 enterprises have benefited from loans ranging from AFN 120,000 – AFN 4.5 million (\$1706 - \$63,984)<sup>5</sup>.

**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.



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

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



## UN principled approach and cross-cutting issues

In 2024, STFA-supported programming was designed and implemented in strict alignment with the UN's principled approach, focusing on 'do no harm', leave no one behind, climate resilience, inclusion and participation, gender equality and women's empowerment. These principles were integrated into every stage of the programming, from planning to execution, ensuring that interventions were sensitive to the local context and responsive to the needs of the most vulnerable populations.

**Do No Harm:** The programme adhered to the 'do no harm' principle by ensuring that interventions did not worsen existing inequalities or create unintended negative consequences. All activities were designed to minimize risks and ensure that vulnerable populations, particularly women, returnees, IDPs, youth, and persons with disabilities, were not further marginalized. The leave no one behind principle was operationalized through needs-based, non-discriminatory interventions, providing fair access to essential services like health, education, water, sanitation, and livelihoods. Efforts were made to ensure that women, marginalized groups, and vulnerable communities were prioritized in both the delivery and design of programming. The inclusion and participation principle was a cornerstone of the programming, with active efforts to ensure the participation of local communities in decision-making processes and ownership of interventions. Programming was designed to be inclusive of the various socio-economic groups, promoting social cohesion and community trust.

**Climate resilience:** STFA remained firmly committed to environmental sustainability and risk-informed programming by integrating environmental due diligence across all interventions. Activities were designed and implemented in line with the "do no harm" principle, ensuring compliance with UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards (SES) and relevant frameworks of participating UN organizations. This approach minimized potential environmental impacts while enhancing positive outcomes. From climate-resilient infrastructure to nature-based disaster risk reduction solutions, STFA initiatives promoted resource efficiency, biodiversity conservation, and the restoration of ecosystem services.

Programmatic design incorporated environmental safeguards screening, community capacity-building, and environmental risk assessments, all of which informed the adaptive management of projects to ensure sustainability and resilience. Where applicable, environmental mitigation and monitoring measures were incorporated into implementation plans. These measures collectively enhanced community resilience, reduced environmental degradation, and ensured that recovery and development efforts aligned with national and global sustainability goals. Climate resilience was a cross-cutting priority, integrated across the programme through climate-smart infrastructure, disaster preparedness initiatives, and sustainable natural resource management practices. These efforts helped reduce long-term community vulnerabilities while promoting environmentally sustainable, community-led solutions.

**Gender equality and human rights based approaches:** STFA remained steadfast in promoting gender equality and human rights despite a highly restrictive operational environment shaped by limiting directives and entrenched cultural norms. Despite significant barriers—most notably the De facto Authorities' bans on female participation in education, training, and field-based activities—the programme employed proactive, context-specific strategies to support women's inclusion. These included the establishment of women-only service facilities, recruitment of female staff, facilitation of participation through mahram arrangements, and support for home-based enterprises and women-friendly workspaces. Community engagement, cultural sensitivity, and the application of gender-responsive approaches were central to overcoming access limitations and fostering local ownership. The programme also prioritized inclusive private sector development, with a focus on women-owned micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Efforts to improve the accessibility of information and services for persons with disabilities further demonstrated STFA's commitment to leaving no one behind.





Although challenges persisted, the programme's nearly 50 percent female beneficiary reach and strategic focus on women's empowerment, social cohesion, and inclusive governance reflect its continued dedication to equitable, rights-based development. Effective coordination among PUNOs, local authorities, and stakeholders was key to these achievements. Through joint planning and capacity-building efforts, the programme ensured that interventions were both effective and sustainable. Even in areas with restricted access, STFA demonstrated agility and resilience, taking proactive measures to maintain implementation and deliver results.

**Risk management:** Throughout 2024, risk management remained a cornerstone of STFA's operational and strategic decision-making. Operating in a highly volatile environment shaped by political uncertainty, restrictive directives imposed by the DFA, and a fragile socio-economic landscape, STFA proactively identified, assessed, and mitigated risks across its implementation modalities, fiduciary processes, and safeguarding responsibilities.

A dynamic programme-level risk register and real-time risk monitoring enabled the programme to swiftly adapt to emerging challenges while safeguarding programme integrity and ensuring continuity. The deployment of Third-Party Monitoring (TPM) and strengthened oversight mechanisms provided robust accountability in high-risk operational settings. At the same time, strong stakeholder coordination, contingency planning, and flexible delivery mechanisms supported sustained engagement with affected communities. These efforts helped preserve hard-won development gains and enabled effective delivery by proactively managing uncertainties in Afghanistan's challenging operational context.

Overall, STFA-supported programming in 2024 effectively operationalized the UN's principled approach, combining immediate relief with long-term sustainable development, while promoting social inclusion, resilience, and community empowerment. These principles guided all aspects of the programme and will continue to inform future programming to ensure lasting impact and progress toward sustainable development goals.



A woman posing for a photo with her family when leaving the drug treatment center in Balkh Province. © UNDP



# 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
JP Output: 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	690,436	194,543 (91,612)	688,990 (357,914)		PUNO reports
	Facilities/ Infrastructure	0	2,567 (0)	215 (0)		
	Kits	46,08	3 (0)	0 (0)		
	Households	0	615 (41)	43,299 (19,846)		
	Other	0	10 (0)	998 (443)		
	Consultation sessions	0	10 (4)	9 (0)		
1b. Number of people that have benefited from UN-supported maternal/reproductive health care services (health)	People	0	66,014 (58,000)	47,482 (39,862)		PUNO reports
1c. Number of people that have benefited from drug-treatment, drug rehabilitation services (health)	People	8,8	12,383 (2,030)	47,359 (6,014)		PUNO reports
	Facilities/ Infrastructure	5	3 (0)	0 (0)		
1d. Number of functional, UN-supported, facilities providing basic health assistance (including basic health assistance services for women and girls)	Facilities/ Infrastructure	84	69 (10)	72 (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	570	4,949 (2,759)	4,039 (2,769)		PUNO reports
	Facilities/ Infrastructure	2	1 (0)	0 (0)		
1g. Hectares of rehabilitated and/or newly irrigated land for agricultural activities	Facilities/ Infrastructure	0	0 (0)	17,317 (0)		PUNO reports
	Hectares	0	1,200 (240)	11,500 (0)		
	Orchards	0	50 (15)	227 (0)		
1k. # of irrigation systems rehabilitated and/or maintained	Facilities/ Infrastructure	0	16 (0)	0 (0)		PUNO reports
	Other	0	30 (0)	33 (0)		
	Kms	0	30 (0)	0 (0)		
Overall number of people who benefited under Output 1 (2024)			787,870 people (406,559; 48.3% female)			



JP output indicator	Unit	Baseline	2024 Target	2024 Progress	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target	Source of Verification
Output 2. Livelihoods, businesses and local economy are able to recover and are more resilient to instability						
2a. Number of people who benefited from UCT (at least 80% women)	People	0	2,100 (1,680)	2,000 (1,453)		PUNO reports
2b. Number of people who have benefited from newly-created income-generation opportunities, disaggregated by sex, age and province	People	1,756	12,204 (1,309)	23,413 (15,844)		PUNO reports
	Households	0	8,743 (7,767)	550 (3)		
	Activities	0	0 (0)	1,982 (1,998)		
	MSMEs	200	1,305 (993)	1,865 (940)		
	Trainings	0	0 (0)	3,125 (3,121)		
2b.1. Number of people who have benefited from productive employment through CFW schemes (at least 30% women; 50% youth)	People	410,802	29,425 (1,533)	32,494 (2,202)		PUNO reports
2c. No. of worker-days generated with UN-support	People	0	20,000 ()	0 (0)		PUNO reports
	Work days	0	103,840 (7,200)	198,635 (24,741)		
2d. % of people with disabilities (PWD) that have benefited from newly-created income-generation opportunities	MSMEs	0	2 (2)	0 (0)		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	170 (71)	212 (122)		PUNO reports
	Households	0	160 (80)	160 (80)		
	Other	0	0 (-2,997)	11,060 (60)		
	MSMEs	68,146	1,923 (1,331)	1,679 (1,469)		
Overall number of people who benefited under Output 2 (2024)			58,067 people (19,579; 33.7% women and girls)			





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	45 (0)	45 (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	4,516	8,700 (2,799)	26,426 (12,760)		PUNO reports
	Other	0	0 (0)	2 (0)		
3c. Number of farmers who benefited from training and assets for improved, climate-smart, agriculture (at least 30% women)	People	77,994	19,988 (4,418)	62,402 (17,441)		PUNO reports
3d. Number of people that benefit from rehabilitated and/or newly constructed disaster-resilient community infrastructure and nature-based solutions	People	241,75	194,190 (69,759)	369,503 (168,508)		PUNO reports
	Facilities/ Infrastructure	0	13 (0)	13 (0)		
	Households	3,29	1,750 (945)	1 (0)		
	Other	0	0 (0)	2 (0)		
	Hectares	946	135 (0)	40,098 (0)		
3e. Number of enabling initiatives implemented or knowledge products produced.	Researches	0	3 (0)	0 (0)		PUNO reports
Overall number of people who benefited under Output 3 (2024)			458,331 people (198,709; 43.4% female)			
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	70,052 (25)	0 (0)		PUNO reports
	CSOs	882	76 (0)	105 (41)		
	Communities	0	12 (0)	0 ()		
	Knowledge products	6	3 (0)	0 (0)		
4b. Number of people with better awareness about human rights , social cohesion and conflict prevention (at least 50% women)	People	5,862	43,472 (22,020)	63,460 (36,392)		PUNO reports
	Households	0	100 (100)	1,111 (755)		
	Consultation sessions	6	6,062 (90)	0 (0)		
Overall number of people who benefited under Output 4 (2024)			63,460 people (57.3% female)			



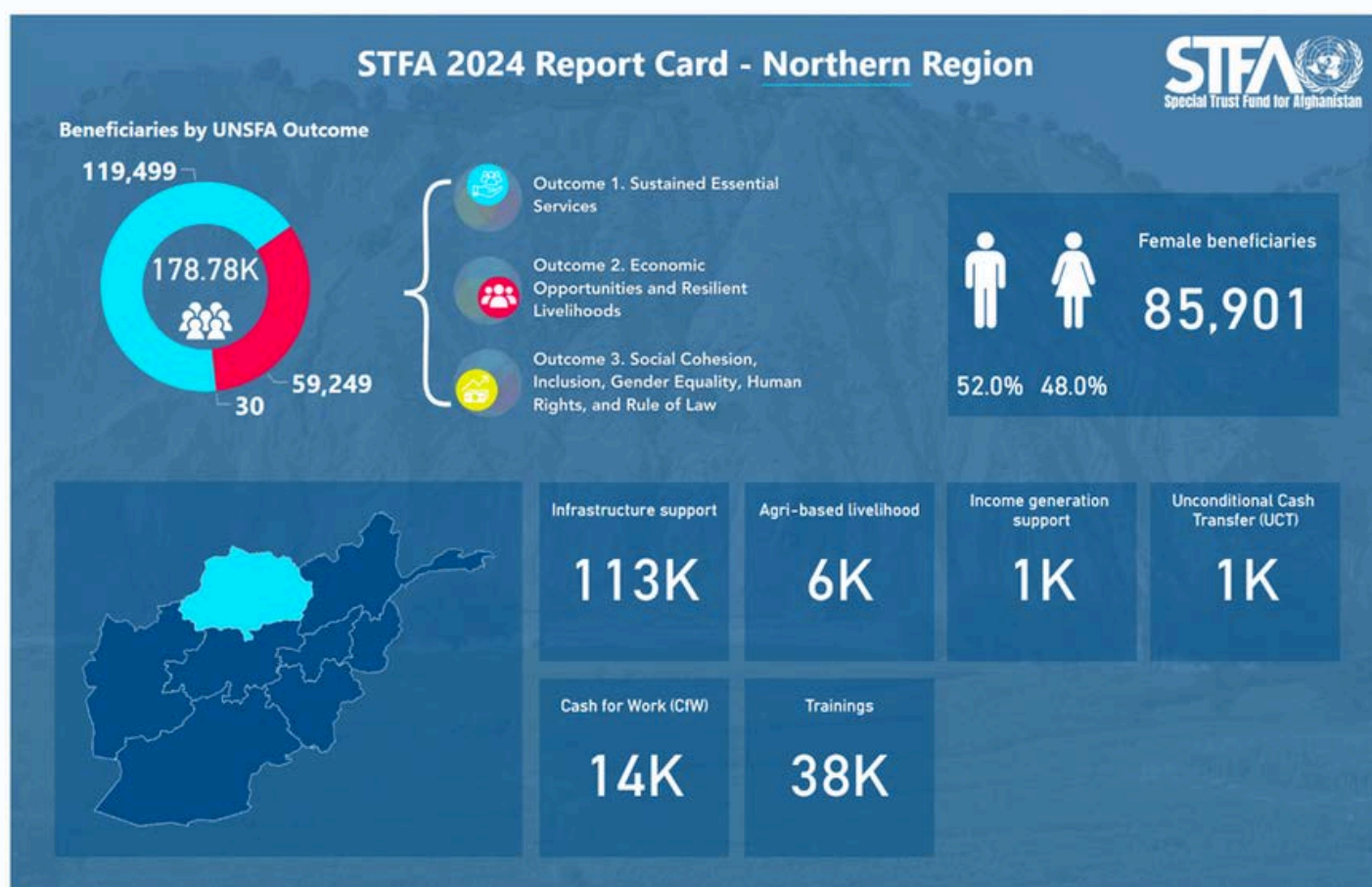
## Annex II. Key Results per Joint Programme/Joint Project

Below are snapshots from the regional joint programmes and sectoral projects.

### Regional Joint Programme for Northern Afghanistan

Five<sup>6</sup> of the 12 UN<sup>7</sup> agencies continued implementation, reaching 178,778 people, including 85,901 women (48.0%).

- 119,499 individuals, (51.1% female), benefited from enhanced infrastructure, including irrigation systems, roads, and solar-powered health centres.
- 21,249 individuals (32.9% female) received livelihood support through Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCT), Cash for Work (CfW), agricultural inputs, nutrition training, and support for women-led businesses.
- 38,000 individuals (46.8% female) participated in community resilience and disaster risk reduction initiatives such as drought early warning systems and training on climate-resilient agriculture.
- 30 women were engaged in social cohesion activities focused on gender equality, disability inclusion, and human rights, strengthening their roles as leaders and change-makers.



STFA 2024 report card for Northern Region Joint Programme

[6] Five UN agencies continued with implementation. These are FAO, ILO, IOM, UNDP, and UN Women.

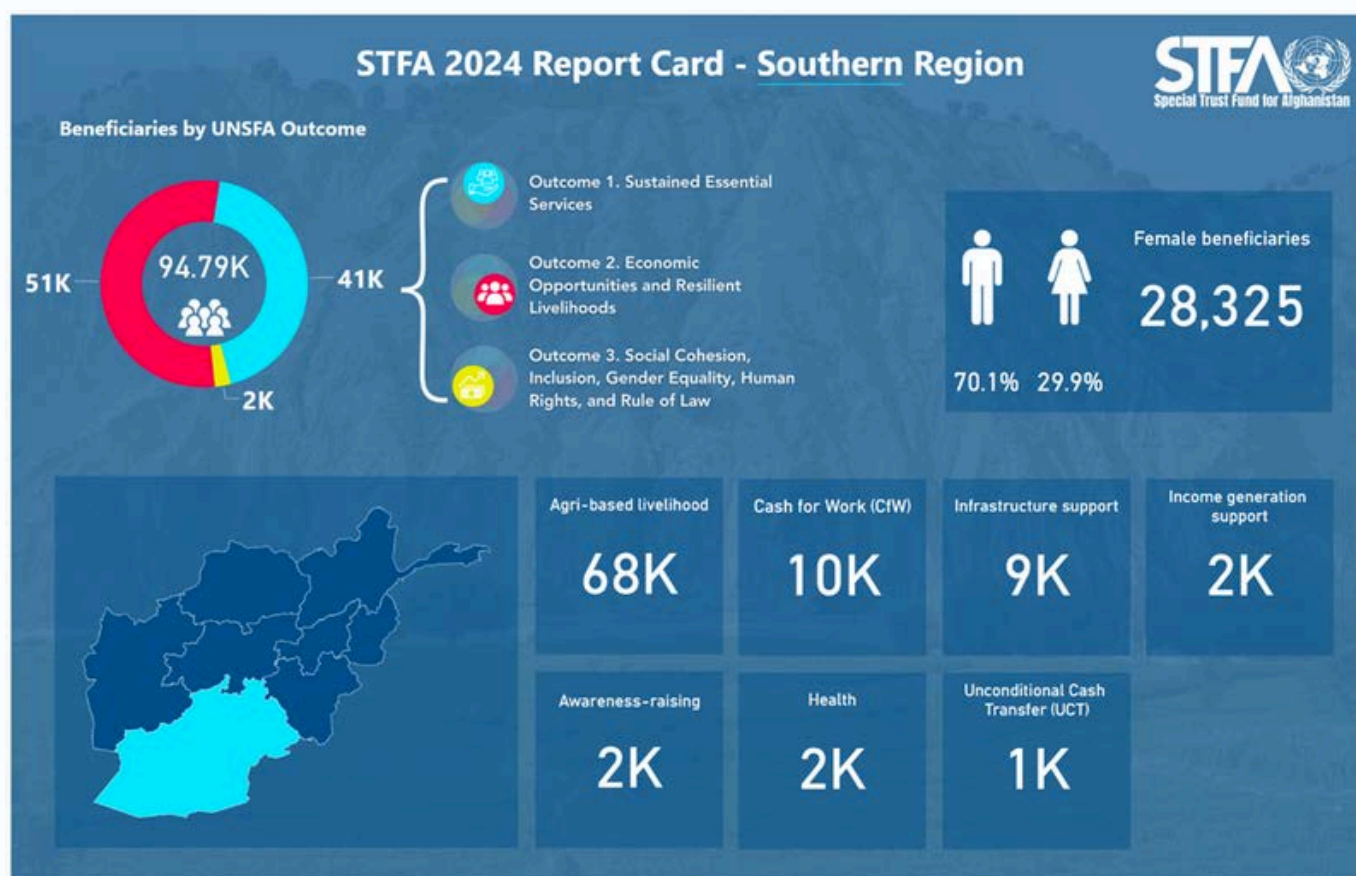
[7] ILO, FAO, IOM, UN Habitat, UN Women, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNODC, UNOPS, UNHCR



## Regional Joint Programme for Southern Afghanistan

In 2024, STFA Joint Programme activities in the Southern region reached 94,791 people, including 28,325 women (29.9%), through the following interventions:

- 41,161 people (43.7% female) benefited from improved basic community infrastructure, including access to irrigation and healthcare services, as well as evidence-based drug prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and psychosocial support.
- 13,795 people (13.97% female) received livelihood support through Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCT), Cash for Work (CfW), agricultural support packages, and assistance to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in areas such as market access, skills training, and employment retention.
- 37,462 people (16.1% female) engaged in community resilience and disaster risk management activities, including drought early warning systems (CB-DEWS), rainwater harvesting, and training in climate-resilient agriculture. Several infrastructure efforts also contributed to disaster preparedness.
- 2,373 people (100% female) participated in social cohesion efforts, including CSO and media capacity building, and data collection and analysis to inform advocacy and programming.

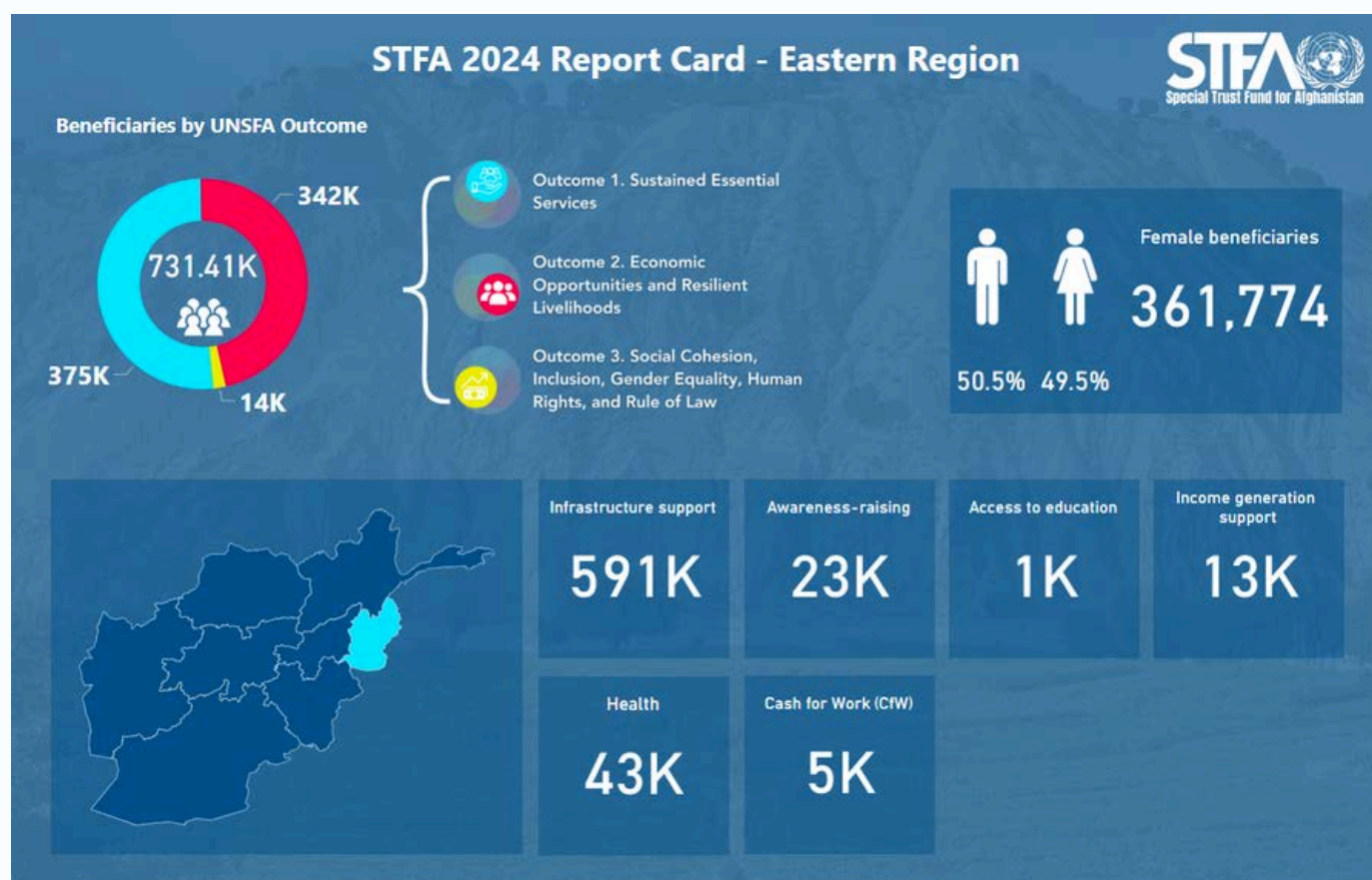


STFA 2024 report card for Southern Region Joint Programme

## Regional Joint Programme for Eastern Afghanistan

In 2024, a total of 731,408 people (361,774; 49.5% women and girls), benefited from STFA-supported Joint Programme (JP) activities in the Eastern region, as follows:

- 375,449 people (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 (55.5% female) received livelihood support, including Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCT), Cash-for-Work (CfW), and assistance to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through diagnostics, business training, asset replacement, and employment retention initiatives.
- 324,528 people (45.3% female) benefited from community resilience and disaster risk reduction activities, including drought early warning systems (CB-DEWS) and climate-resilient agricultural training. Infrastructure support also contributed to risk management.
- 13,621 people (81.2% female) engaged in social cohesion efforts, including community capacity-building, awareness campaigns, and multimedia initiatives.



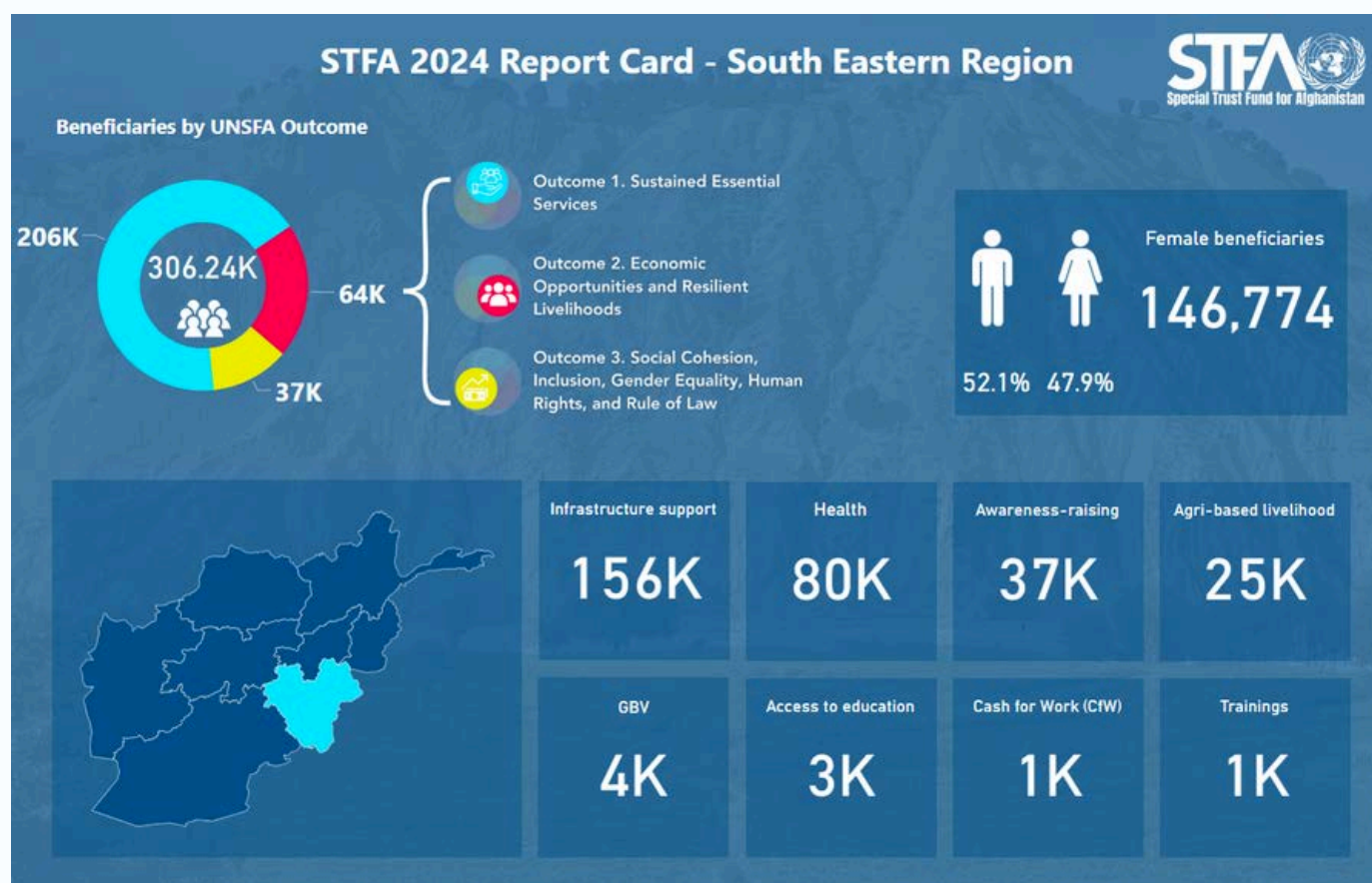
STFA 2024 report card for Eastern Region Joint Programme



## Regional Joint Programme for South-Eastern Afghanistan

In 2024, a total of 306,240 people (146,774; 47.9% women and girls), benefited from STFA JP activities in the South-Eastern region, as follows:

- 205,823 people, (48.9% female), benefited from access to essential services. Of these, approximately, 101,026 people (48.7% female) benefited from enhanced basic community infrastructure, including access to irrigation, healthcare services, including evidence-based drug prevention, treatment and harm reduction services, gender-based violence and psychosocial support (GBV/PSS) services, and literacy programmes.
- 5,213 people (14.7% female), benefited from livelihood support such as Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCT), Cash for Work (CfW) (with results merged with infrastructure under output 1), income-generating agricultural support packages, and support to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) including market access, training, and employment retention initiatives.
- 58,340 people (47.7% female) benefited from community resilience and disaster risk management interventions such as community-based drought early warning systems (CB-DEWS) and irrigation systems. Moreover, some infrastructure support activities also contributed to disaster risk management.
- 36,864 people (47.3% female) benefited from activities to improve social cohesion such as capacity-building and awareness-raising in communities and for journalists.



STFA 2024 report card for South-Eastern Region Joint Programme

## Annex III: Risk Analysis: Update

During the design of the STFA Programme Portfolio, a comprehensive risk matrix was developed to identify key risks across several categories, including contextual (political, security), programmatic, operational/financial, and organisational risks. Throughout 2024, the majority of these risks and their corresponding mitigation measures remained broadly relevant and applicable. However, updates to the risk profile are necessary to reflect evolving dynamics, particularly in relation to two critical risks: human rights and resource mobilization. These updates are summarized below.

Risk Description (as per JP document)	Type	Rating	Owner	Response
Risk#7. Abuses of human rights or unlawful behaviour are committed by de facto authorities and/or local authorities.	Contextual	Likelihood: Likely Consequence: Major Risk Rating: High	Programme Management, PUNOs	Increased regularity of engagements between the UN and international community on the one hand, and between the UN leadership and DfA on the other hand, to advocate for a reversal of the restrictions places on women work in I/NGOs and the UN.
Risk#18. Further restrictions on women and girls' participation in social and economic life. (De-facto Authorities -DfA) announced restrictions on Afghan women employees working in the UN)		Likelihood: Very Likely Consequence: Major Rating: Very High	TFMU/ PUNOs	<p>PUNOs continued to regularly assess the situation on the ground and to identify locally accepted work modalities and approaches for female personnel to safely work; innovative ways of ensuring access to female beneficiaries (e.g. by identifying alternative, more suitable, venues) also continue to be rolled out. These measures are being adopted as part of the continues efforts to ensure a principled approach to delivery (in line with IASC's principles).</p> <p>PUNOs have also been engaging with Shuras, village literacy committees, religious leaders, and community elders, to assess and monitor the situation and continue advocacy for participation of women and girls in the activities.</p>
Risk#17. Programme unable to mobilise required financial resources.	Programmatic	Likelihood: Possible Consequence: Moderate Rating: High	Programme Management & PUNOs	STFA, in close consultation with PUNOs, have allocated available resources based on priority needs. More efforts by all STFA stakeholders, including, in particular, STFA contributing partners, need to be made to mobilise resources to capitalise the Fund, in light of the downward trend in resource mobilization. This will be critical to be able to support more people in need – and to prevent an increasing humanitarian caseload. Such additional resources will also contribute to strengthening measures to improve and expand the outreach to women and girls, given the increasingly challenging context.





## Annex IV: Voices from the Field: Real-Life Stories

### *Rehabilitation of Traditional Water Systems Improves Livelihoods in Nangarhar*



Tahir Khan tending his agricultural fields — a quiet testament to resilience and tradition, Nangarhar Province. © UNESCO

“  
**With the karez restored, I can now farm all my land, support my family, and sell surplus in the market. It changed everything.**  
”

Tahir Khan, a farmer from Cheno village in Ghani Khil district, Nangarhar province, cultivates coriander, spinach and wheat on approximately five jeribs (one hectare) of land. In previous years, he faced significant challenges due to water scarcity. The reduced flow in the Cheno karez prevented him from cultivating his full land area and led to disputes among community members over limited water resources.

Upon learning of the STFA JP's plans to rehabilitate the Cheno karez and its associated structures, Mr. Khan chose to remain in the village. Following the rehabilitation, the water flow increased substantially. Key infrastructure – including a water reservoir, community access points and laundry facilities – was constructed. These developments have especially benefited women, who now have improved access to water for household use.

As a result of the intervention, Khan's agricultural productivity has improved. The newly constructed reservoir has enabled sufficient water storage for irrigation, allowing him to meet his family's needs and sell surplus produce in the local market. He expressed appreciation for the programme's efforts, highlighting the short-term employment created during the rehabilitation process. Community members were also trained in modern techniques for maintaining and repairing the karez system. The initiative demonstrates the importance of community engagement in infrastructure projects. Local consultation, participation in site selection, data collection, and historical knowledge of the karez proved vital to the successful rehabilitation and sustainable management of the system.



## Strengthening Woman-Led Dairy Farming in Nawur in Ghazni Province

“

**“Not only has our income increased, but we also feel more confident in the quality of our products and our ability to compete in larger markets.”**

”



Zahra among her livestock in Nawur, Ghazni Province. © FAO

In Nawur district in Ghazni province, dairy farming has traditionally served as a key source of income. Women are responsible for all production activities, while men typically manage the marketing. However, challenges such as unpredictable weather, dated farming practices, and limited access to markets have kept incomes low and food insecurity high. Many farmers face difficulties related to hygiene, limited technical knowledge, and a lack of necessary resources. With few opportunities to sell beyond their local areas, they often market small quantities of lower-quality products at low prices, restricting their financial advancement.

To address these constraints, the Joint Programme (JP), in partnership with Afghanistan National Re-Construction Coordination, supported women-headed households with comprehensive dairy packages. These included essential tools and hygiene equipment such as stainless-steel milk buckets, filters, mugs, and 40-litre milk cans to improve hygiene and product quality. In addition to equipment provision, farmers received practical training on improved dairy farming techniques, hygiene standards, and approaches to enhance both product quality and marketability.

Recognizing the limitations of supporting individual farmers in isolation, the project established common interest groups in each village. Each group brought together 20 women farmers to facilitate collaboration, knowledge exchange, and joint production and marketing efforts. This collective approach enabled them to access provincial markets, where they were able to secure better prices and expand their income-generating potential.

Prior to the intervention, farmers sold 7 kg of whey (chakidah) for AFN 250 in local markets. With improved production practices and market access, the same quantity now sells for AFGN 750 – a threefold increase. On average, each household now produces 120 kg of diverse, high-quality dairy products per month, contributing to improved household incomes and greater food availability. The additional earnings have enabled families to invest in essential equipment, improve nutrition, and reinvest in their farming activities.

“The difference is huge,” said Zahra, a local farmer. In an area where food insecurity and limited economic opportunities persist, the initiative has expanded the role of women in local economies, increased household earnings, and strengthened the rural dairy value chain.



## Helping a former migrant recover from addiction and rebuild his life in Kandahar



Sabir, a former drug-addicted patient undergoing medical checkups in the Drug Treatment Center (DTC), Kandahar Province. © UNODC

“  
I cannot express  
enough thanks to the  
team that supported  
me through this  
journey.”

Ten years ago, Sabir (a pseudonym), a 45-year-old married man from Kandahar province, faced prolonged unemployment, which led him to consider migrating to Iran in search of work. Acting on advice from a friend in Pakistan, he first travelled to Quetta with the intention of continuing onward to Iran.

While in Quetta, he joined a group of men seeking to cross the border into Iran irregularly. They negotiated with a smuggler who agreed to facilitate their passage for AFN 25,000 per person, though without any guarantee of safe entry. However, before reaching their destination, the group was apprehended by Iranian border authorities and subsequently deported to Afghanistan.

Upon returning to Kandahar, Sabir, then 35 years old, began using drugs in an effort to cope with stress and unemployment. What began with the use of hashish with peers eventually progressed to methamphetamine and heroin. Over time, his dependency grew, and drug use became a persistent part of his life. In July 2024, Sabir was referred to an STFA-supported DIC.

He was first introduced to the DIC's laboratory services, where he was tested for hepatitis, HIV and syphilis – all of which returned negative results. Following the medical screening, a psychosocial counsellor provided information on the health, social and economic impacts of drug use, along with motivational counselling to support cessation. Sabir began reducing his drug intake gradually, following guidance from the counsellor, and was later referred to a DTC for further support. After 10 years of dependency, Sabir has begun to lead a drug-free life and has expressed a firm commitment to maintaining his recovery.



## Parisa's Journey: From Struggling to Thriving

**“  
Women are  
capable of doing  
any job if given  
the right support.”**

**”**



Parisa in her shop selling items to the customers in Herat Province. © ILO

In Khuaja Gulbid village, Kushk Rabat Sangi district, 18-year-old Parisa has emerged as a local example of resilience and transformation. Born into a family of seven with limited income from a small shop run by her father, and with her elder brother seeking work in Iran, Parisa once believed she had no role in shaping her family's future.

Supported by the JP through the STFA, Parisa participated in entrepreneurship training and received in-kind financial support. This marked a turning point in her life and that of her family. "The training and financial support have completely changed our lives," Parisa said. "We can now afford better food, and my family trusts my decisions. My father even asks me to prepare the shop's restocking list."

Although she had to leave school after seventh grade, Parisa's passion for education and entrepreneurship remains strong. Today, she helps manage the family shop, applying business skills learned during her GET Ahead training. She and her father have created a collaborative environment where knowledge is exchanged – he teaches her shopkeeping while she introduces him to marketing strategies and financial planning. "Our home is now filled with peace, respect, and teamwork," she said. "I feel valued and respected. I am now a breadwinner, just like a man, for my family."

Parisa hopes that other women in her community will also receive the support they need. "Please continue helping more women – we truly need it."



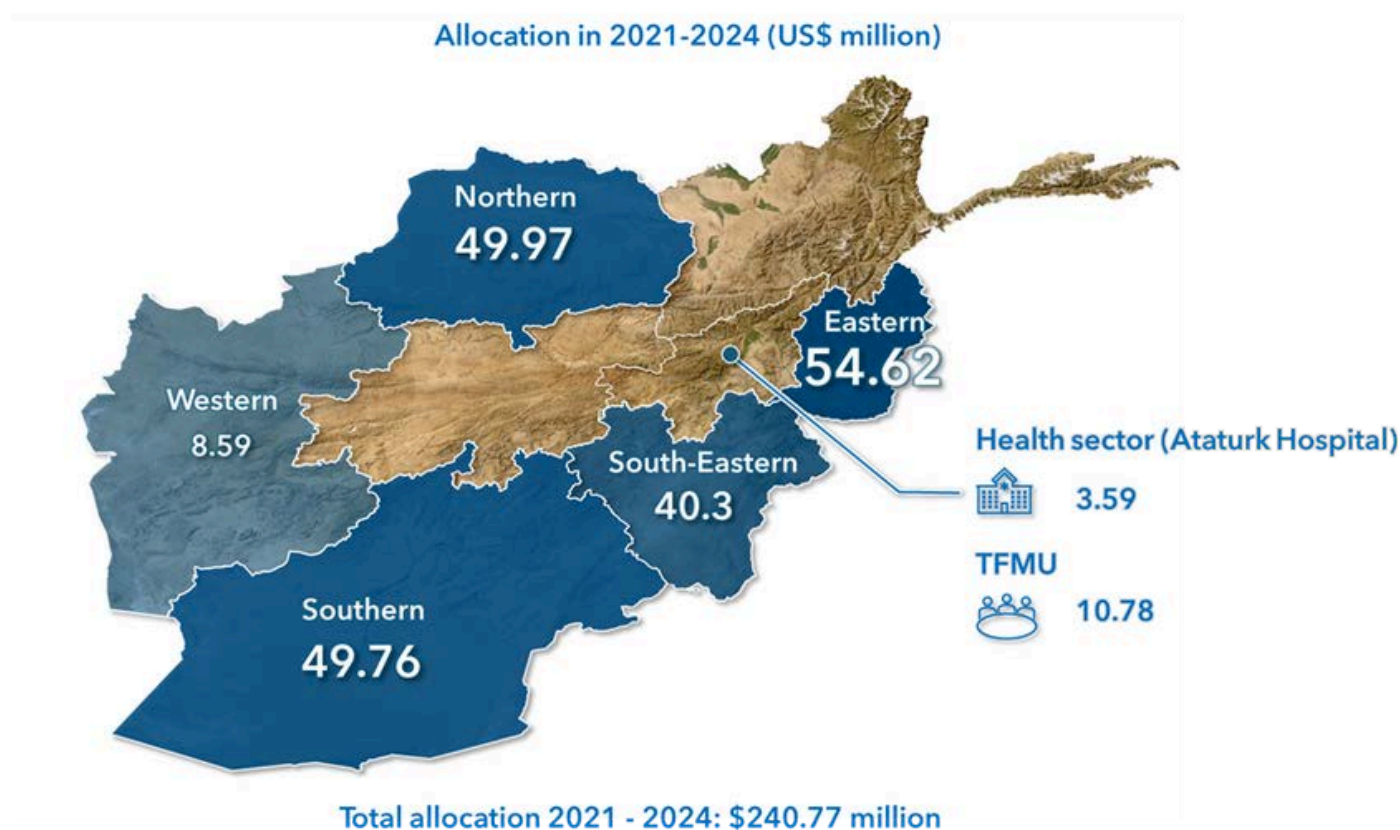


## Annex IV: A Brief Note on Resources

In 2024, the STFA received US\$36.92 million from eight contributing donors<sup>8</sup>, along with an additional \$0.03 million raised through crowdfunding—representing a 33 percent increase from the US\$27.81 million received in 2023.

Despite this increase, the overall resource mobilization trend remains relatively modest. This can be attributed to at least two key factors. The first pertains to the operating environment, following the continued restrictions announced by the de facto authorities on Afghan women workers and participation of women as beneficiaries. The second possible contributing factor was the emergence of other global crisis and competing international priorities, in other regions of the world, which might have impacted on contributing partners' decisions for overall contribution to Afghanistan. As of 2024, 90 percent of the total contributions received amounting to US\$240.77 million have been allocated to ongoing STFA joint programmes.

Below is the update on resource allocation since inception of STFA:



[8] Contributing donors: Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg, Italy, Czechia, Iceland, Türkiye

# DELIVERING AS ONE

**Cover Photo:**

A mother and child visiting the Family Health House supported by the STFA in Pul-e-Alam, Logar Province. © STFA



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