STFA
Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan



ANNUAL REPORT

SECTORAL PROJECT

HERAT EARTHQUAKE RECOVERY RESPONSE

2024

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A house demolished by the earthquake in Herat Province. © STFA

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<tr><th colspan="2">Programme Title & Project Number</th><th colspan="2">Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s)/ Strategic Results</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Programme Title: Post-Earthquake Recovery & Resilience-Building in Herat

MPTF Office Project Reference Number: 140669-72</td><td colspan="2">Country: Afghanistan
Region: Western

Priority areas/Strategic Results: UNSFA Outcomes 1, 2, 3

Outcome 1: Sustained Essential Services
Outcome 2: Economic opportunities and resilient livelihoods
Outcome 3: Social Cohesion, Inclusion, Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Rule of Law</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Participating Organization(s)</th><th colspan="2">Implementing Partners</th></tr>
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1. International Organization for Migration (IOM)
2. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
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6. International Labor Organization (ILO)
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Yes ☑ No
Mid-Term Evaluation Report – if applicable please attach
Yes ☑ No</td><td colspan="2">o Name: Hiroko Massey
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A woman and her kids in front of their new shelter supported by STFA in Herat Province. © UNHCR

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BHC	Basic Health Centre
CAP	Community Action Plan
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CfW	Cash for Work
CHC	Comprehensive Health Clinic
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DaO	Delivering As One
DfA	De Facto Authorities
FHH	Family Health House
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HVAC	Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JP	Joint Programme
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPI	Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
Mw	Moment Magnitude (earthquake scale)
PDNA	Post-Disaster Needs Assessment
PSN	Person with Specific Needs
PUNO(s)	Participating United Nations Organization(s)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
STFA	Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan
ToT	Training of Trainers
UCT	Unconditional Cash Transfer
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNSFA	United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Executive Summary

A woman sewing in her STFA-supported business to recover from the earthquake in Herat Province. © IOM

In October 2023, three earthquakes of 6.3 magnitude (Mw) struck the region, killing more than 1,500 people, injuring over 2,000, and destroying homes, infrastructure, and livelihoods, particularly in Khusk District, one of the hardest-hit areas. In the wake of one of the most devastating disasters in recent Afghan history, the Herat Earthquake Recovery Response Joint Programme (JP) mobilized a coordinated and gender-responsive effort to support recovery and resilience in Herat Province.

Launched in April 2024, the JP is jointly implemented by seven UN agencies, UNDP, ILO, UN-Habitat, IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR, and UNOPS. These Participating UN Organizations (PUNOs) coordinated closely to ensure efficient information-sharing, technical alignment, and a community-driven approach to recovery. The JP provides support across the following key areas:

- Critical infrastructure repair: homes/shelters, water systems (drinking and irrigation), health facilities, schools, and markets,
- Livelihoods restoration: income-generating activities and MSME support, particularly targeting women, and
- Community Action Planning: participatory local development planning to guide and enable sustainable recovery.

A total of 34,543 people, including 31,962 women and girls (92.5%) have directly benefited from the project. Essential health services provided at seven family health houses reached 18,078 individuals (86.2% women and girls). Another 16,096 women and girls received psychosocial counselling and awareness raising.

Also, 362 individuals with specific needs (74.6% female) received cash assistance to help address their specific needs. In addition, 88 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), 86 of them women-owned (97.7%), received support through entrepreneurship training, financial literacy, and cash support. Also, seven Community Action Plans (CAPs) were developed, laying the groundwork for sustained recovery, through STFA and other sources of funding.

A gender-equity and women's empowerment lens was integrated throughout the JP. Interventions responded to the specific needs of women and girls, promoting their participation in decision-making and ensuring they benefited from all recovery investments.

As with other STFA initiatives, the JP faced operational constraints, including restrictions on women's mobility, delayed signing of MoU, and pressure from de facto authorities to influence selection of the project interventions. These challenges affected timelines and implementation of some planned infrastructural rehabilitation in some areas. It is anticipated that the Herat earthquake recovery response can demonstrate the value of integrated, community-driven, and inclusive recovery, laying the foundation for long-term resilience in a region still healing from deep loss.

DELIVERING AS ONE

Purpose

A shelter under construction for an earthquake-affected family in Herat Province. © UNHCR

The Herat Earthquake Recovery Response Joint Project (JP), implemented by seven PUNOs was launched in response to the devastating series of 6.3 magnitude earthquakes that struck Herat province on 7, 11, and 15 October 2023. The earthquakes resulted in over 1,500 deaths, more than 2,000 injuries, and extensive destruction across nine districts. According to the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), total recovery needs were estimated at US$402.9 million, including: $154.4 million for the first year, $206 million for years two to three, and $41.6 million for years three to five.

Housing accounted for 41 percent of total recovery costs, followed by education (17%), agriculture, livestock, and irrigation (15%), and transport (12%). More than 50,000 homes were damaged, leaving around 37,139 families sheltering in makeshift tents and open spaces by late October. The disaster deeply fractured community life destroying homes, displacing families, and disrupting essential services. Critical infrastructure, including health centres, water and sanitation systems, schools, and market facilities, sustained serious damage. Early assessments revealed that over 76 percent of households had lost income sources in key sectors such as agriculture, construction, and domestic work.

In Zindajan District, saffron production vital to both livelihoods and exports was halted entirely. Women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities faced disproportionate impacts, with heightened risks to their safety, livelihoods, and access to services. The JP responded to these urgent needs through a coordinated, multi-sectoral recovery approach designed to address short- and medium-term priorities, especially in shelter, social services, and livelihoods; and lay the groundwork for long-term resilience and durable solutions.

By leveraging the complementary expertise of its seven PUNOs, the JP ensured coherence, synergy, and added value through mutually reinforcing interventions. Building on initial humanitarian efforts, the JP embraced a "build back better" recovery model and aims to strengthen the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus at the local level.



A damaged house under repair in Herat Province.
© UNDP



Results

A High School damaged by the earthquake is under repair through STFA support in Herat Province.
© UN-Habitat

II. Outcomes

In 2024, the STFA JP contributed to improved access to essential health services through temporary family health houses. The JP also promoted economic recovery accelerated through MSME interventions that supported the revival of livelihoods. The entrepreneurship training, cash support, and continued mentoring expanded income-generating opportunities, especially for women. Social cohesion and participatory governance were reinforced through inclusive planning processes and the integration of diverse community voices in local recovery strategies. Community Action Plans informed by multi-stakeholder consultations served as a mechanism for collective priority setting and strengthened social accountability.

III. Outputs

UNSFA Priority Area 1: Sustained Essential Services



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

In 2024, approximately 34,543 people (31,962; 92.5% female) in Herat province benefited from the provision of essential services. As summarized below, initiatives addressed essential health services; psychosocial services and cash support to people with specific needs. Most output-level results are yet to be delivered.

Infrastructure & Essential Health Services

The JP distributed essential reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH) medicines to seven family health houses (FHHs) in Herat province, ensuring provision of primary healthcare services to 18,085 individuals (86.2% women and girls).

- All seven FHHs provided skilled birth attendance, antenatal and postnatal care, outpatient services for children under five, and adolescent reproductive health.

16,096

women and girls received psychosocial counselling to address their mental health needs and reproductive health awareness at three psychosocial support (PSS) clinics. These integrated services strengthened immediate emotional recovery and contributed to longer-term mental health resilience at the community level.

- 9,802 individuals participated in reproductive health awareness sessions.
- 844 individuals received individual psychosocial support
- 5,450 individuals benefited from group counselling.

362

individuals with specific needs (74.6% female) received cash assistance to help address their specific needs.

Other process level highlights include the following:

The JP conducted an infrastructure assessment in nine villages, selecting eight priority projects rural roads, kareze restoration, protective structures, and school repairs expected to benefit over 10,000 people (49% women) by improving access, mobility, disaster resilience, and education in earthquake-affected areas.

The planned work related to reconstruction and rehabilitation of health care facilities was hindered due to the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) of the DFA withholding approval for both the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the targeted clinics. Despite completing needs assessments, technical designs, and procurement preparations for five clinics in Injil and Keshk-e-Kohna districts, the JP was required to devise a new scope of work that aligns with the community needs. This new scope will be submitted for approval at the STFA Steering Committee of June 2025.

The JP conducted a household-level post-earthquake assessment in nine vulnerable communities of Kushk district, surveying 242 households using IOM's DTM methodology. The data, collected by a gender-inclusive team, informed multi-sectoral recovery planning and was shared with partners to guide targeted programming and advocacy.

The JP conducted gender-sensitive outreach in nine villages, reaching 939 people, and established inclusive Community-Based Shelter Committees to lead beneficiary selection. By December 2024, 400 households (82 women-headed) were selected for shelter support using an owner-driven, Cash-for-Shelter approach. One demonstration shelter with anti-seismic techniques was completed, promoting local capacity in resilient construction.

The JP conducted a participatory assessment of 26 schools in Herat, integrating gender and disability considerations. Of these, 14 schools serving 16,805 students were prioritized for rehabilitation or reconstruction based on damage severity. Technical designs were developed, and by December 2024, technical documents were finalized and five contractors mobilized.

The JP selected 158 earthquake-affected households in five Khusk Rubat Sangi communities for disaster-resilient shelters. By December 2024, construction was 48 percent complete. Shelters are reinforced, culturally appropriate, and built with local materials.



A man in front of his shelter in Herat Province. © UNHCR

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, the JP provided entrepreneurship and financial education training to 240 women in Kushk district and Herat city, focusing on business development, financial literacy, and market access. Following the training, 82 women received seed funding ranging between $450 to $500 to establish or expand their businesses. In addition, six MSMEs, (4 women-led), selected through a competitive process also received technical and financial support, creating and sustaining 352 jobs. These MSMEs also offer on-the-job vocational training, with a focus on women and youth. This initiative strengthened women's economic participation and contributed to local market revitalization.

- 362[1] persons with specific needs (74.6% female) received once off cash assistance (avg. US$256) to address urgent health, livelihood and protection needs. Beneficiaries were identified through community-based mechanisms and included women at risk, persons with disabilities, older persons, and those with serious medical or legal vulnerabilities. The process ensured age, gender, and diversity sensitivity, with integrated GBV risk mitigation and accountability measures.

- The JP conducted two Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions using the GET Ahead and Financial Education curricula. A total of 34 trainers were capacitated. Of these, 18 GET Ahead trainers cascaded the training to 82 women entrepreneurs in Kushk and 160 in Herat. These trained entrepreneurs are expected to replicate the knowledge gained within their communities, contributing to programme sustainability and expanding outreach beyond the initial intervention.



Arezo selling an item to a customer in her shop supported by the STFA in Herat Province. © ILO

[1] Reported under output 1 in Annex-1

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.

Under Output 3, progress in 2024 was primarily preparatory, setting the stage for delivering tangible results in 2025. Leveraging its owner-driven construction approach, the JP initiated reconstruction, repair, and retrofitting of earthquake-affected houses for 400 households, including 82 women, in Kushk Robat Sangi district. By year-end, one damaged house in Muhajir Abad village was retrofitted as a demonstration shelter using anti-seismic techniques, also serving as a community learning tool.

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 year 2024 efforts focused on preparatory activities to lay the groundwork for community-led recovery. Fourteen community-based organizations (CBOs) were engaged in outreach and capacity-building initiatives on resilience, women's empowerment, and social cohesion. The JP facilitated the development of seven community action plans (CAPs) across 23 underserved, earthquake-affected villages in Kushk e Rubat Sangi, engaging 497 diverse community members. Identified priorities include agriculture, market access, and disaster risk reduction. Additional villages were selected in November 2024, with final CAP results expected in early 2025 to guide implementation.



A man speaking in a community consultation meeting after the earthquake in Herat Province. © STFA



Delays in Implementation, Challenges, Lessons Learned & Best Practices

A man in front of his demolished house in Herat Province. © UNHCR

IV. Challenges

In 2024, implementation of activities under the JP in Herat province faced a number of challenges, including conditions imposed by the DfA, lack of access, harsh weather conditions and coordination complexities. The following are the most significant challenges reported by STFA PUNOs in 2024.

DfA Involvement: Extensive clearance processes and late-stage objections led to postponed activity start dates and revised workplans. Changing decrees and restrictions affected access, particularly for women and vulnerable groups. Barriers to women's participation in data collection and service delivery required negotiation and adaptation.

- **Seasonal Constraints:** Winter weather disrupted construction timelines, especially in more remote areas.
- **Coordination Complexities:** Engaging multiple stakeholders across different levels (local, provincial, national), delayed assessments, procurement, and beneficiary selection. Uncoordinated awareness efforts by different actors led to reduced efficiency.
- **Resource Gaps for Protection Support:** Limited availability of essential services and funding constrained response to PSNs.
- **Procurement Delays:** Restricted vendor eligibility and limited competition resulted in unsuccessful tenders and re-tendering delays.

V. Lessons Learned

The following are key lessons learned during 2024:

- Early and multi-level stakeholder engagement is essential for timely approvals and smoother implementation.
- Adaptive and inclusive planning enables rapid adjustment to political, environmental, and social constraints, including winter-related disruptions and cultural sensitivities.
- Unified communication and coordination among all actors enhances programme coherence and aligns community expectations with programme modalities.
- Gender-inclusive operations should be prioritized and planned early to ensure the meaningful participation of women in both implementation and benefit.
- Synchronized use of CAP findings improves alignment with community needs and optimizes resource targeting.
- Flexible financial and procurement planning is needed to adjust to price changes, integrate sustainability features, and ensure quality through broader vendor outreach.
- Robust eligibility and prioritization mechanisms are vital in addressing growing needs with limited resources, especially for protection services.

Key best practices identified during 2024 include:

Integrated, multi-sectoral interventions (e.g. combining shelter, livelihoods, and WASH) deliver more sustainable and inclusive recovery outcomes.

Community-led implementation models (e.g. use of shelter committees and beneficiary advisory groups) promote accountability and local ownership.

Tailored service models that reflect cultural norms (e.g. women-only spaces) increase access and utilization in conservative or underserved areas.

Continuous risk monitoring and contingency planning enable responsiveness to fluid operational contexts.

Principled and transparent engagement with local authorities maintains programme integrity while enabling access and alignment.

Joint planning and data sharing among agencies enhances efficiency, reduces duplication, and supports coordinated decision-making.

VI. Risk Analysis

The Herat Earthquake Recovery Response JP adopted a context-sensitive risk management approach to address political, security, and environmental risks identified in the Western Region JP document. This approach ensured that the JP remained responsive and relevant to the evolving dynamics. A systematic risk management process was implemented, incorporating collaborative assessments with all participating agencies. These assessments leveraged local expertise and the extensive experience of PUNOs in the region to develop and maintain a comprehensive understanding of risks. Adaptive management mechanisms provided flexibility in response to the rapidly changing context, while capacity building in negotiation, cultural sensitivity, adaptive management, and continuous monitoring and reporting remained integral. Open communication with local communities fostered trust and ensured that activities were aligned with local needs. Given Afghanistan's complex and evolving context, the JP encountered diverse and multifaceted risks.

- The JP did not provide any direct or indirect support to the DfA. Instead, interventions were designed to align with the immediate needs of local populations, as determined through in-depth UN-led assessments and joint assessments conducted with the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the European Union. These efforts were further informed by proactive community consultations and engagement.

- To mitigate security risks in a volatile environment potentially impacting safety and project continuity, the JP implemented robust security protocols, conducted ongoing risk assessments, and leveraged local insights for risk mitigation. In high-risk areas, remote management approaches were employed to ensure continuity in project implementation.

- Societal and cultural risks were primarily associated with prevailing social norms and cultural practices, particularly concerning gender roles and human rights. These factors influenced community engagement and programme implementation. The JP employed culturally sensitive strategies that respected local traditions while adhering to UN principles. Engagement with local leaders and community groups was prioritized to foster understanding and support.

- Operational and logistical risks, including regulatory constraints affecting logistics and resource mobilization, were addressed through contingency planning and the development of strong local supplier and partner networks. These measures ensured operational continuity and resource availability.

- Environmental risks arising from the region's challenging climate and geography were integrated into project planning through environmental risk assessments. The JP also considered the risk of disease outbreaks linked to damaged water and sanitation infrastructure, incorporating contingency planning for healthcare services to effectively respond to such emergencies.

VII. Qualitative Assessment

In 2024, the JP made minimal progress at the output level. Aligned with identified national and local priorities, the JP focused on four interlinked pillars: provision of essential services, sustainable livelihoods, community engagement, and community-based disaster risk reduction. Despite operational challenges including delays related to coordination, access, and approvals, the project has laid the groundwork for integrated, multisectoral delivery across targeted areas.

The provision of essential services was foundational to restoring normalcy and improving living conditions for affected populations. Simultaneously, the livelihoods component created opportunities for income generation and economic stability, contributing to household recovery. Community engagement was central to the JP's recovery strategy. CAP and participatory assessments ensured that affected populations – particularly those in remote and underserved areas – were directly involved in identifying priorities and co-designing interventions. The project consistently operationalized the UN's principled approach. This guided both design and implementation and adapted to evolving contextual realities, including restrictive operating environments and cultural sensitivities. For example, the negotiated inclusion of women in field teams and the adaptation of service delivery models to local norms demonstrated flexibility while upholding core values.

Gender equity and inclusion were integral to all programme components. Gender and vulnerability analyses were systematically incorporated into assessments and planning processes, ensuring that the needs of women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups were reflected in both targeting and resource allocation. Women were deliberately engaged not only as beneficiaries but also as active implementers and decision-makers – strengthening gender-responsive governance and contributing to community resilience.

Investments in climate-conscious infrastructure, inclusive service delivery, and capacity building supported local systems while reducing long-term vulnerability. These efforts upheld a human rights-based approach by ensuring that access to services was treated as a right – particularly for those historically excluded. Integration and coherence were achieved through close collaboration among participating UN organizations with sustainability and resilience embedded across the programme. Cross-sectoral coordination, joint planning, and data sharing enabled the delivery of holistic interventions across infrastructure, health, livelihoods, and protection. This systems-oriented approach enhanced programmatic efficiency, minimized duplication, and allowed for a unified and context-sensitive response.

Overall, the JP's progress in 2024 reflects a comprehensive and principled approach to recovery. By intertwining service provision, livelihoods, community engagement, and resilience-building – while upholding equity, inclusion, and accountability – the programme has created a strong foundation for sustained, locally driven development in 2025 and beyond.

VIII. Partnerships

With the scale of the disaster requiring strategic coordination to link and transition from humanitarian response to recovery effectively, the strategic approach of the JP was guided by a collaborative and unified framework, leveraging the specialized strengths of each PUNO. This cohesive strategy ensured that efforts were not only aligned but also complementary, maximizing impact across key regional priorities such social and productive sectors.

The JP was a collaborative effort of seven agencies: UNDP, ILO, UN- Habitat, IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR, and UNOPS. UNDP and UNHCR led the housing and community development efforts, focusing on culturally sensitive and resilient rebuilding activities with work directed at ensuring that housing strategies were resilient, sustainable and responsive to the immediate needs of the affected populations. UN-Habitat led school rehabilitation and applied a rigorous selection process of the schools to be rehabilitated in close coordination with the education cluster and the communities. UNOPS contributed expertise in infrastructure, essential for the reinstatement of vital health facilities and enhancing the resilience of health services and infrastructure, in close coordination with the health cluster and other stakeholders. ILO supported job creation and improving livelihoods by restoring community and public infrastructure essential for economic recovery and stability; IOM addressed social and migration/population displacement aspects associated with the disaster; and UNFPA focused on the provision of life-saving maternal and reproductive health and psychosocial support, ensuring comprehensive healthcare and protection for the most vulnerable.

The JP demonstrates the benefits of multiple agencies work together in a complementary and synergistic manner capitalizing on each agency's areas of expertise and comparative advantages. Such collaborations bring greater value to end-users at a greater scale delivering higher programmatic returns on investments compared to uncoordinated stand-alone interventions. Ultimately, they seek to contribute to greater quality in programmatic interventions (i.e. tapping more effectively into the advantages of greater division of labour); greater cost-effectiveness in the use of limited programmatic resources (reducing unnecessary overlaps or duplications); and improved knowledge generation and dissemination. Such benefits, in turn, contribute to improved coverage (outreach to end users/end-beneficiaries) and greater socio-economic impact (i.e. higher returns on programmatic investments); greater sustainability; and improved advocacy (i.e. helping to communicate more effectively, and with one voice, with other stakeholders).



A mountain view in Herat Province. © STFA

Annexes

A tent and permanent shelters in Herat Province. © STFA

Annex I. Indicator-Based Performance Assessment

**Numbers in parentheses are female figures.*

JP output indicator	2024 Target	2024 Progress	Unit	Baseline	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target	Source of Verification
Output 1. Essential services and community infrastructure - including for health, agriculture and energy supply - are functional, sustained and expanded to meet different needs of women and men.						
1a. Number of people that have benefited from UN-supported essential services and/or new/rehabilitated infrastructure, disaggregated by type of service and sex.	21,860 (13,247)	16,458 (16,366)	People	0		PUNO reports
	158 ()	0 (0)	Households	0		
	0 (0)	998 (443)	Other	0		
	10 (4)	9 (0)	Consultation sessions	0		
1b. Number of people that have benefited from UN-supported maternal/reproductive health care services (health)	16,014 (13,000)	18,085 (15,596)	People	0		PUNO reports
Output 2. Livelihoods, businesses and local economy are able to recover and are more resilient to instability						
2b.1. Number of people who have benefited from productive employment through CfW schemes (at least 30% women; 50% youth)	1,150 (231)	0 (0)	People	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	30 (24)	88 (86)	MSMEs	0		PUNO reports
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						
3b. Number of people who acquired knowledge and skills on disaster preparedness (including explosive hazard awareness) and climate-resilient livelihoods (at least 30% women)	600 (160)	1 (0)	People	470		PUNO reports
3d. Number of people that benefit from rehabilitated and/or newly constructed disaster-resilient community infrastructure and nature-based solutions	1,750 (945)	1 (0)	Households	3,290		PUNO reports
Output 4. Social cohesion, human rights, access to justice are strengthened at local level.						
4a. Number of CBOs/CSOs with improved capacity for participatory and inclusive community planning (at least 20% women-led)	14 (0)	14 (0)	CSOs	0		PUNO reports
	7 ()	()	CAPs	0		

Annex II: Real-Life Stories: From the Field

From Despair to Hope: Marzia Regains Self-Confidence



Marzia attending a psychosocial counseling session in Herat.. © UNFPA

> **I was constantly exhausted, withdrawn, and hopeless. I had trouble sleeping, no appetite, and no motivation to keep going.**

In Khaja Qasem village, Robat Sangi district, 24-year-old Marzia has overcome severe emotional distress and economic hardship to rebuild her life. Living with her husband – who is deaf –and their three children in a relative's earthquake-damaged home, Marzia faced daily uncertainty.

"I felt lost," she said. Marzia learned about psychosocial support services available in her village through a centre supported by the JP through the STFA. With encouragement from neighbours, she began attending both group and individual counselling sessions. There, she acquired relaxation techniques, deep breathing exercises, and other coping strategies to help manage stress.

Her participation in vocational training enabled her to start a small weaving workshop, generating an income and restoring her sense of purpose. "I feel strong now. I know I can continue," Marzia said. "My biggest hope is to live a peaceful life with my family and enjoy good mental health."

A Shelter of Hope: Salima Rebuilds Her Life

I have now settled in one location, and my customers know where to find me. This has made a real difference for my business.



Salima and her family prepares to move to their new shelter, Herat Province. © UNHCR

Salima, a 39-year-old mother of eleven from Darwish Ali village, Kushk Rabat Sangi district, faced profound challenges after losing her home in the October 2023 earthquake in Herat. With her husband ill and unable to work consistently, the family had no means to rebuild and spent the winter in a small tent. “I didn’t know what to do. We had nothing left, no house to live in, and no money to rebuild,” she said.

Now, with support from the STFA through the JP and its local partner, the Afghan Community and Health Rehabilitation Organization (ACHRO), Salima and her family are preparing to move into a new permanent shelter designed to withstand future disasters. “Every day, I would go to the site and watch the progress, and my heart would fill with joy,” she said.

To Salima, the shelter is more than just a roof – it is a symbol of stability and a new beginning. Across Herat province, over 150 earthquake-resilient homes are being constructed through STFA funding, helping families like hers restore their dignity and rebuild their lives.

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DELIVERING AS ONE

Cover Photo:
A man and his family in front of their new permanent shelter, Herat Province © UNHCR

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