Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

## SOUTH-EASTERN REGION JOINT PROGRAMME

Two sisters in Paktia Province share a moment of joy with the poultry they received through STFA support. © STFA / Mohammad Omar Kamal

# Contributing Donors

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# Participating UN Organizations

United Nations Development Programme

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United Nations Industrial Development Organization

United Nations Refugee Agency

International Organization for Migration

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

*The UN organizations are listed in the order of joining STFA*

| **Programme[1] Title & Project Number** | **Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s)/ Strategic Results [2]** |
|---|---|
| Programme Title: STFA Joint Programme for the South-Eastern Region of Afghanistan: Addressing Basic Human Needs through UNSFA ('JP-South-Eastern')<br><br>MPTF Office Project Reference Number[3]:<br>• 140281<br>• 140282<br>• 140283<br>• 140284 | Country: Afghanistan<br>Region: South-Eastern<br><br>Priority areas/Strategic Results: UNSFA Outcomes 1, 2, 3<br><br>Outcome 1: Sustained Essential Services<br>Outcome 2: Economic opportunities and resilient livelihoods<br>Outcome 3: Social Cohesion, Inclusion, Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Rule of Law |
| **Participating Organization(s)** | **Implementing Partners** |
| Organizations that have received direct funding from the MPTF Office under this programme: 11 PUNOs (10 were active in 2025)<br><br>1. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)<br>2. United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)<br>3. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)<br>4. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)<br>5. International Organization for Migration (IOM)<br>6. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)<br>7. United Nations Programme for Human Settlements (UN-HABITAT)<br>8. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)<br>9. United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)<br>10. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) | Please refer to PUNO-specific reports |

| **Programme/Project Cost (US$)** | | **Programme Duration** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total approved budget as per project document: | 150,012,420 | Overall Duration | 35 months |
| MPTF /JP Contribution[4]: | 40,299,790 | | |
| Agency Contribution | N/A | Start Date [5] | 14 Aug 2023 |
| Government Contribution) | N/A | Original End Date [6] | 31 Dec 2025 |
| Other Contributions (donors): | N/A | Current End Date [7] | 30 Jun 2026 |
| Total Contributions: | 40,299,790 | | |

| **Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.** | **Report Submitted By** |
|---|---|
| Assessment/Review - if applicable please attach<br>Yes No ☑<br>Mid-Term Evaluation Report – if applicable please attach<br>Yes No ☑ | • Name: Peter Nordstrom<br>• Title: Senior Trust Fund Manager<br>• Participating Organization (Convening Agent): UNIDO<br>• Email address: peter.nordstrom@undp.org |

*[1] The term "programme" is used for programmes, joint programmes and projects.*
*[2] Strategic Results, as formulated in the Strategic UN Planning Framework (e.g. UNDAF) or project document;*
*[3] The MPTF Office Project Reference Number is the same number as the one on the Notification message. It is also referred to as "Project ID" on the project's factsheet page the MPTF Office GATEWAY*
*[4] The MPTF or JP Contribution, refers to the amount transferred to the Participating UN Organizations, which is available on the MPTF Office GATEWAY*
*[5] The start date is the date of the first transfer of the funds from the MPTF Office as Administrative Agent. Transfer date is available on the MPTF Office GATEWAY*
*[6] As per approval of the original project document by the relevant decision-making body/Steering Committee.*
*[7] If there has been an extension, then the revised, approved end date should be reflected here. If there has been no extension approved, then the current end date is the same as the original end date. The end date is the same as the operational closure date which is when all activities for which a Participating Organization is responsible under an approved MPTF / JP have been completed. As per the MOU, agencies are to notify the MPTF Office when a programme completes its operational activities.*

# Contents



A business owner in Khost Province in her shop, supported by STFA. © STFA / Mohammad Omar Kamal

# List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| **ASYREC** | Automated System for Customs Data for Relief Consignments |
| **CAP** | Community action plan |
| **FHH** | Family health house |
| **IDP** | Internally displaced person |
| **LIC** | Local implementation committees |
| **MSMEs** | Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises |
| **OPTC** | Outpatient treatment centre |
| **PUNO** | Participating United Nations Organization |
| **STFA** | Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan |
| **UNSFA** | United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan |

# Executive Summary

A farmer in his farmland that was supproted by the STFA-funded alternative livelihoods initiative in Paktia Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

In 2025, the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA) Joint Programme for the South-Eastern Region of Afghanistan: Addressing Basic Human Needs achieved strong results, contributing to relief, recovery and economic revitalization. It benefited:

**319,619**

**people, including 202,591 women and girls.**

improving services, livelihoods, infrastructure and social cohesion. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of community infrastructure in five[8] provinces enhanced access to social services, safety and the socioeconomic well-being of households, increasing community resilience. Achievements included more gender-inclusive healthcare facilities, better learning environments in schools, safer and less expensive water services, and drainage systems to reduce flood risks, improve sanitation and lower risks of mosquito-borne diseases. Drug prevention, treatment and rehabilitation services improved in Paktia Province, including through better-trained staff. Gains in the socioeconomic reintegration of people in recovery from drug use built on strengthened links to livelihoods.

The establishment of the Automated System for Customs Data for Relief Consignments (ASYREC) provided a structured and reliable mechanism for managing humanitarian and basic human needs exemption requests and relief consignments. The system's digital workflows and centralized data management bolster transparency, record-keeping and customs control at key entry and clearance points serving Paktia, Paktika and Khost provinces.

Livelihood recovery across 12 districts in Ghazni, Khost, Logar, and Paktia provinces drew on a comprehensive package combining asset replacement, employment retention, skills development, and business development services for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). These interventions improved income stability, strengthened enterprise resilience and supported local market recovery. Transformative progress in economic recovery and private sector development in Khost, Logar, Paktia and Paktika provinces built on a combination of market assessments, provincial investment forums and direct support for individually owned MSMEs as well as an innovative model of community-owned consortiums. Beneficiary co-investment deepened local ownership and business viability.

Climate resilience and disaster preparedness grew through capacity-building on disaster risk reduction, watershed management, natural resource protection and climate-smart agriculture. The rehabilitation of traditional water systems generated income for local communities and provided environmental benefits.

Local implementation committees (LICs) in Khost and Paktia provinces developed localized approaches to overcome cultural barriers and restrictions on women's participation, improving social inclusion. Through LICs in Paktia's Ghazni District, community action plans (CAP) identified local development priorities. Collective initiatives rebuilt trust, strengthened social networks and enhanced community ownership of local development. Engaging diverse community groups – including women, youth and vulnerable populations – enhanced the relevance and sustainability of project interventions overall.

*[8] Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Logar, Ghazni*

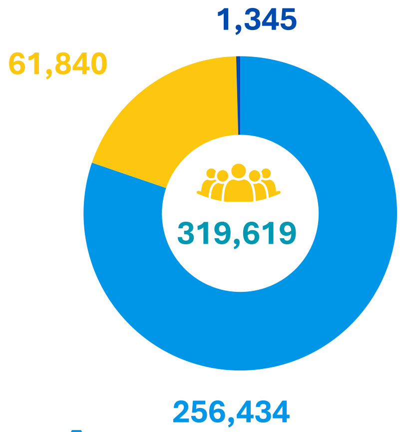
# Purpose

Women receiving treatment at an STFA-funded Drug Treatment Centre in Ghazni Province. © STFA / Mohammad Omar Kamal

The STFA Joint Programme for the South-Eastern Region of Afghanistan: Addressing Basic Human Needs covers Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Ghazni and Logar provinces. Since its launch in 14 August 2023, the region has received a total funding allocation of 42.62 US million dollars, based on the STFA Regional Allocation Strategy, which is guided by the population-adjusted Multidimensional Poverty Index.

2025 marked the second year of Joint Programme implementation by 10 (of 11[9]) active Participating United Nations Organizations (PUNOs).

**Below is the 2025 report card for the region.**

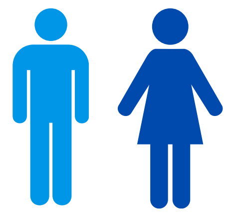



**Priority 1:** Sustained Essential Services

**Priority 2:** Economic Opportunities and Resilient Livelihoods

**Priority 3:** Social Cohesion, Inclusion, Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Rule of Law

**Percentage**



37% 63%

**65,630**
**Infrastructure support**

**30,643**
**Agri-based livelihood**

**434**
**GBV**

**3,124**
**Cash for work**

**2,000**
**Access to education**

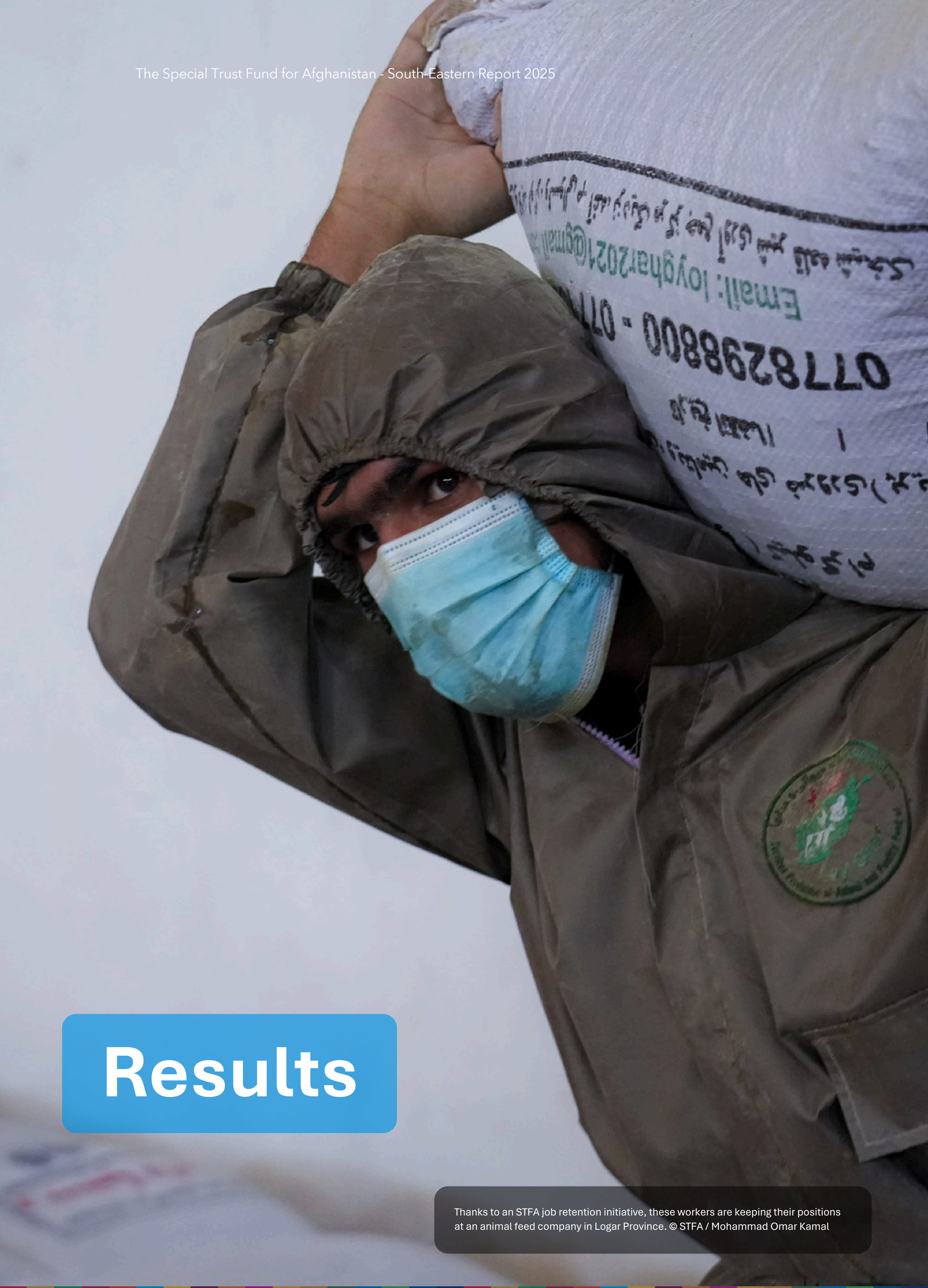
**815**
**Media support**

**212,292**
**Health**

**1,262**
**MSMEs**

**4,222**
**Trainings**

*[9] UNOPS has completed implementation.*



# Results

Thanks to an STFA job retention initiative, these workers are keeping their positions at an animal feed company in Logar Province. © STFA / Mohammad Omar Kamal

# Outcome

Since the inception of the Joint Programme for the South-Eastern Region of Afghanistan: Addressing Basic Human Needs, approximately 620,263 people (343,643 women, 55.4%) have benefited. In 2025, the programme reached 319,619 people, including 202,591 women and girls. It improved services, livelihoods, infrastructure and social cohesion, taking an integrated approach that created synergies across outputs and maximized impacts on community resilience and well-being.

Better services reached communities that were previously underserved or operating with unsafe or unreliable infrastructure. Newly constructed and rehabilitated schools improved academic performance, student health and teacher morale, fostering educational gains and social cohesion. Healthcare facilities became more accessible to women and girls. Household water services reduced the risk of water-borne diseases and cut costs, while saving time, especially for women and girls. Rehabilitated drug treatment centres (DTCs) increased the coverage and quality of rehabilitation services for persons with substance use disorders, including through specialized training for staff. Satisfaction with these voluntary services was demonstrated by a 100 percent bed occupancy rate during the reporting period.

No humanitarian or basic human needs exemption consignments were received or processed through the ASYREC system in the South-Eastern region in 2025. Yet installing the system marked an important step. It stands to significantly improve the speed, transparency, and accountability of emergency response operations, strengthening capacities to improve humanitarian responses for crisis-affected populations.

Overall, through service improvements, institutional collaboration grew among PUNOs and with provincial departments and community leaders, despite a challenging operating environment. This has fostered co-ownership and long-term sustainability. Local community bodies, equipped with new skills, are positioned to sustain gains in services.

An integrated approach to supporting MSMEs enabled beneficiaries to establish or expand operations across high-potential sectors identified through prior market analysis. It accelerated a transition from a situation where enterprises operated without access to capital, modern equipment or structured business support, to one where fully equipped, formally registered businesses have developed business plans and market linkages. This represents a fundamental shift towards economic resilience and self-sufficiency. The programme exceeded expectations in investment leverage and job creation quality, establishing resilient enterprises capable of withstanding market volatility and regulatory uncertainty.

Restoring traditional water management systems amplified climate resilience and agricultural productivity through irrigation. It increased crop yields and stabilized food production, directly contributing to economic growth and food security. Rehabilitation projects that operated through a cash-for-work modality generated income and boosted local economies while empowering individuals with new skills.

Social inclusion processes enabled LIC members to develop informed, community-led plans aligned with CAP findings. These drove a first round of collective initiatives to improve the quality of life in communities, and in doing so, to rebuild trust, strengthen social networks and enhance community ownership of local development processes. Engaging diverse community groups – including women, youth, and vulnerable populations – enhanced the relevance and sustainability of project interventions overall.

A child washes his face at an STFA-supported water supply network in Paktia Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

# Output-level Results

## 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.**

### Output 1 benefitted

| Number of Beneficiaries | Number of Women and Girls |
|---|---|
| 256,434 | 185,003 |

## 2,000

learners (992 women and girls, 49.6%) in Khost and Paktia provinces were reached by the Youth and Adult Literacy and Basic Education initiative. This skills-based literacy initiative combined foundational literacy and numeracy with practical livelihood skills. Implementation used community-based delivery models for safe access, particularly for adolescent girls and women. Literacy instruction was integrated with tailoring and dairy production, enabling learners to apply literacy skills within practical livelihood contexts. Tailoring accounted for most enrolment in both provinces; dairy production provided a complementary skills pathway linked to household-based income generation.

## 134

facilitators (63 women) led the Youth and Adult Literacy and Basic Education initiative, supported by four master trainers (two women, 50.0%), two provincial community mobilizers (one per province), eight district community mobilizers (four women, 50.0%) and two lay councillors (one per province), to provide psychosocial counselling to learners experiencing stress, anxiety, trauma or domestic challenges.

## 106

village skills committees comprising 678 men and boys supported delivery of the Youth and Adult Literacy and Basic Education initiative. It was not feasible to establish female membership within these committees, but men members were deliberately selected from among trusted village figures with a strong understanding of local dynamics and sensitivities. Their engagement proved effective in mobilizing female learners and supporting attendance, retention and the continuity of classes within a highly constrained context.

## 32,448

patients (approximately 312 patients per day) at Gardez Regional Hospital benefitted from the construction of culturally appropriate, gender-sensitive waiting halls, including toilet facilities (gender-separated) and designated hygiene stations (hand-washing areas). The halls protect patients from prolonged exposure to the cold, rain or other extreme weather events. Service delivery improved through a well-managed patient flow due to adequate space for patients to gather.

## 2,892

students (2,532 boys and 360 girls) and 82 teachers (all men) gained better educational infrastructure at three schools in Sabari District of Khost Province, based on priorities defined by communities. The construction work included a 385-metre boundary wall at Badi Band school, allowing children a safe learning space; five classrooms at Purkhai school; and three classrooms and a 296-metre boundary wall at Nooria school.

## 106

households with 742 people (367 women and girls, 49.5%) gained safe water supplies through the construction of water supply projects in Gardez District, Paktia Province. The work included conducting geophysical tests, drilling a 120-metre water well, conducting water quality tests (biological and chemical), constructing an elevated water tower and tank, installing a solar submersible water pump, and installing a water supply network. Households obtain over 20 litres of water per person per day. Water management committees, selected by LICs, were established to maintain water infrastructure. Six committee members (all men) were trained on technical and managerial skills.

## 400

households (2,800 people, including 1,392 women and girls, 49.7%) in the Ittefaq Mena community in Gardez District, Paktia Province gained infrastructure improvements through the construction of 950 metres of concrete pavements. These have increased local access to services and markets and improved safety by reducing slip risks. The use of concrete reduces the risk of frequent, resource-intensive repairs.

## 400

households (2,825 people, including 1,441 women and girls, 51.0%) in Gardez District, Paktia Province are better protected from floods and the risks of poor sanitation through the construction of 860 metres of drainage systems. The systems prevent water from damaging household foundations and reduce the accumulation of stagnant water, which otherwise breeds mosquitoes that carry illnesses such as malaria and dengue fever.

## 7

schools in Paktia Province underwent technical feasibility assessments to identify structural gaps, prioritize critical safety concerns, and validate accessibility challenges affecting students and teachers. Findings led to the rehabilitation of two priority schools: Samkany High School and Tajrobawee (Experimental) High School. Improvements (roof repairs, the replacement of doors and windows, better sidewalk access, and plastering and painting) directly enhanced the school environment.

## 4

FHHs in Khost Province were constructed, based on detailed technical feasibility assessments and in close collaboration with district authorities, community elders and the Provincial Public Health Directorate. Each FHH has a functional water well to ensure water availability and improve hygiene.

A family health house in Logar Province supported by STFA. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

# 2

DTCs were rehabilitated in Ghazni Province, including a 50-bed DTC in Ghazni Centre and a 20-bed DTC in Jaghori District. Upgrades markedly improved the operational readiness of both centres, addressing longstanding gaps in service delivery capacity. Major renovations included structural enhancements: roof repairs, door and window replacements, electrical repairs, better ventilation, plumbing and sewerage network improvements, boundary walls and patient wards, sanitation facilities, and service rooms for medical treatment, psychosocial support and patient recovery.

# 4,220

individuals (24 women, 0.6%) in Paktia Province were reached with drug prevention, treatment and reintegration services. Among them, 367 people who use drugs (24 women, 60.5%) received evidence-based treatment through the Paktia DTC, outpatient treatment centre (OPTC) and home-based treatment modalities. The DTC provided residential drug treatment services to 228 (male) persons with drug use disorders. OPTC services reached 139 clients (24 women, 17.3%), supporting women's access to treatment. Since women who use drugs face heightened stigma and additional barriers to accessing care, two female staff members were integrated into the OPTC services.

# 694

individuals (24 women, 3.5%) received psychosocial counselling and support services; 1,840 visits were conducted to provide follow-up to rehabilitated patients. Administrative data showed that 89 percent of rehabilitated people had not relapsed and were living with their families. Training built the skills of 27 professionals, including psychologists, counsellors and social workers (4 women, 14.8%), on patient screening procedures, assessing individuals with substance use disorders and developing individualized treatment plans.

# 3,786

individuals (341 women, 9.0%) benefited from drug prevention awareness-raising activities. These services minimized stigma and discrimination in communities and encouraged community and family members to proactively support patients during and after treatment through social and economic reintegration.

# 1,480

farmer households (88 women-headed households, 5.9%) participated in livelihood interventions to enhance agricultural productivity and promote sustainable and licit income generation. The programme brought 218 hectares of land under licit cultivation.

# 760

farmer households (all men) were supported in establishing fruit orchards. Each beneficiary received 70 certified apple or almond saplings along with inputs such as seeds and fertilizer. Farmers participated in training on orchard management, including irrigation, plant protection, and pest and disease control.

## 660

farmer households (74 women-headed households, 11.2%) were provided with vegetable seeds and training on sustainable farming practices to increase household food security and income.

## 60

individuals (including 13 women, 21.7%), mostly internally displaced people (IDPs), were given small grants of AFN 21,775 (approximately $300) as well as tailored training in business development and management. Grants supported them in establishing small businesses, including dairy processing, backyard poultry farming, vegetable processing, small shops and shoe repair services.

## 7

MSMEs from Paktia and Paktika provinces were supported to participate in the thirty-third Autumn Agricultural and Livestock Products Exhibition in Kabul. It attracted more than 30,000 visitors over four days. MSMEs successfully sold their products to traders, including apples, walnuts, pine nuts, honey and saffron, engaging in financial deals worth approximately AFN 8.7 million.

## 694

trash bins were installed near education and health facilities in Khost and Paktia provinces, improving urban sanitation and waste management.

## 3

water and road infrastructure projects in Paktia, Khost, Paktika and Logar provinces were completed in 2025; two were partially completed, improving services and transport.

## 2

water and sanitation systems in Nesti Kot and Sra Kala villages of Paktia Province gained 7.5-kilowatt solar systems.

## 4

in Paktia Province acquired essential medical and non-medical equipment.

## 11,400

households (1,162 women-headed, 10.2%) with 92,812 people (47,565 women and girls, 51.2%) received agriculture and livelihood support. Key achievements included:

- 500 households (3,577 people, including 1,992 women and girls, 55.7%) supported with micro poly/greenhouse packages for off-season vegetable cultivation
- 5,500 households (46,539 people, including 23,380 women and girls, 50.2%) reached with agro-forestry initiatives to improve soil health and biodiversity

- Cash-for-work assistance completed for 3,000 households (23,925 people, including 12,241 women, 51.2%)
- Unconditional cash transfers for 300 households (1,566 people, including 947 women and girls, 60.9%).

## 63

irrigation and community structures were constructed or rehabilitated in 23 locations through a community-led and demand-driven approach, based on a cash-for-work modality. The structures included approximately 70,458 trenches, 18 microcheck dams, 1 footpath, 3 canal linings, 9 kariz systems (repaired and cleaned), 1 water pond, 6 culverts, and 3 clothes-washing facilities accessible to women, designed in close consultation with women community representatives.

## 3,000

beneficiaries (102 women, 3.4%) participated in cash-for-work activities, with each unskilled labourer working 20 days and receiving a daily wage of $5. Construction materials (stone, cement, gabions), tools (spades, hoes, rakes, wheelbarrows) and personal protective equipment (gloves, boots, helmets) were provided on-site, in line with PUNO technical specifications, and supported by technical/engineering assistance from the PUNO and local implementing partners. Capacity-building training for local water user associations and committees supports long-term sustainability of the rehabilitated structures.

## 3

canal irrigation schemes were rehabilitated by private construction companies in the Charkh, Baraki Barak and Mohammad Agha districts of Logar Province, based on a community-led demand-driven approach. The works covered six sites, totalling approximately 14 kilometres. They restored irrigation for 2,280 hectares of farmland, benefiting 4,430 households.

## 1

centralized, digital consignment management platform (ASYREC) was established with functionalities for:

- Exempted inventory and shipment tracking
- Real-time documentation and clearance workflows
- Automated reporting and audit readiness

An extensive capacity-building initiative supported stakeholders in using the system. Comprehensive training sessions were conducted for key partner organizations[10], and 13 United Nations entities (11 being STFA PUNOs). Sessions covered the technical use of the platform, operational procedures for exemption consignment management, best practices for compliance and coordination, and system installation and configuration. A monitoring and feedback mechanism was established to improve system performance and enhance user satisfaction. It includes helpdesk support and user guidance materials, continuous stakeholder feedback incorporated into system enhancements, and a review framework to capture lessons learned and apply system enhancements.

*[10] include Médecins Sans Frontières; the embassies of Azerbaijan, China, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, 13 UN entities.*

# 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.**

## Output 2 benefitted

| Number of Beneficiaries | Number of Women |
|---|---|
| 3,984 | 1,373 |

## 98

MSMEs (92 individual enterprises and 6 community-owned consortiums) gained technical and vocational education and training and asset support that sustained or improved livelihoods. A total of 245 individual beneficiaries included 104 women and girls. Of the MSMEs, 66 (4 women-led, 6.1%) focused on agriculture-based income generation.

Tailored asset packages combined financial grants ($2,000 per individual MSME, $20,000 per consortium), productive equipment (industrial sewing machines, dairy processing machinery, solar power systems, food processing equipment, agricultural tools) and technical business development inputs. A physical verification confirmed 100 percent proper utilization of equipment, with post-distribution monitoring ensuring that assets remained operational and contributed to productivity gains.

## $400,000

in total investments combined $184,000 in programme grants with $277,975 in beneficiary contributions (a 93.57 percent co-investment rate). This high leverage ratio ensured that supported enterprises had substantial personal stakes in their success, reducing dependency on external assistance while building capital assets that retain value beyond the project period. In total, 554 jobs were created (direct and indirect). A projected $36,000 increase in annual income demonstrated the transition from vulnerability to viable livelihoods, with enterprises now capable of absorbing economic shocks, reinvesting profits (consortiums committed to a 20 percent profit reinvestment) and sustaining operations without further grant support.

The activity achieved 91 percent of the individual MSME target (92 of 101 planned enterprises) due to *de facto* authority restrictions in Logar Province that prohibited the selection of women-led enterprises, necessitating the reallocation of remaining targets to other provinces where gender participation was permitted. One enterprise in Paktia Province withdrew post-selection.

For consortiums, the activity achieved 60 percent of the target (6 of 10 planned groups) because the collective business model was new, requiring extensive technical orientation, trust-building among previously competing entrepreneurs, and formal registration processes with provincial authorities that extended beyond the 11-month implementation timeline.

# 237

MSME employees (62 women,26.2%) from 172 MSMEs (62 women-owned, 36.0%) in Paktia, Paktika, Logar and Ghazni provinces developed business capacities through a 17-session capacity development programme. The training evaluation showed that 65 percent of participants rated its usefulness as “excellent”. MSMEs gained relevant knowledge and capabilities to develop business plans, cash flow plans, market research and marketing plans, financial plans, and different marketing and labelling methods. They learned to calculate taxes and fill tax declarations, which will result in growth and income.

**Testimonials from MSME training participants in Paktia Province**

“This training was so practical and empowering. I gained valuable skills in marketing, money management, costing and pricing, and teamwork. I now feel better prepared to grow my business and provide the best quality product while managing staff and controlling extra expenses.”

—Bas Gul, owner of Rashid Dairy

“I thought that making a marketing plan was very difficult, but in this training, we received very useful and practical information and learned practically how to make a marketing plan. I believe the knowledge and skills I gained will improve my business and increase my sales in the future.”

—Mohammad Khaksar, owner of Khaksar Poultry

“I found this program hugely informative and useful since I gained knowledge and skills to fulfil all the tax-related issues by myself. Now I can calculate all my taxes and know the methods of payment. I also learned about tax exemptions and taxes on fixed and current assets.”

—Raz Mohmmad Hakimzai, President of Raz Mohammad Hakimzai Poultry Production Company

## 199

MSMEs across Ghazni, Khost, Logar, and Paktia provinces were supported with asset replacement. This enabled them to resume or expand operations, significantly improving household income security and local market functionality. It created or safeguarded 2,006 jobs (563 women, 28.1%) benefiting 1,414 host communities, 356 returnees and 236 IDPs.

## 29

agricultural MSMEs received targeted asset replacement support contributing to local food supply stability. Other key sectors included construction materials, metalwork and traditional crafts.

## 45

MSMEs received solar power solutions, enabling extended operating hours and reducing dependency on an unstable grid supply. This component reinforced inclusion and equitable access to economic opportunities, with dedicated support extended to women-owned businesses and two entrepreneurs with disabilities.

## 1,231

employees (422 women, 34.3%) comprising 627 returnees, 46 IDPs and 558 host community members of 165 MSMEs received up to six months of wage support. This helped enterprises stabilize operations and redirect financial resources towards expansion rather than downsizing. Two key results were:

- 426 existing jobs were retained, preventing income loss among vulnerable households.
- 805 new jobs were created, as businesses reinvested the savings gained from wage support into new hires, equipment and market expansion.

## 119

temporary jobs were created through cash-for-work, providing immediate income support to vulnerable households while contributing to local economies.

Women working at an STFA-supported dry fruits processing centre in Ghazni Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

**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.**

## Output 3 benefitted

| Number of Beneficiaries | Number of Women and Girls |
|---|---|
| **57,856** | **15,893** |

## 6,720

people took part in 224 awareness-raising sessions on intangible cultural heritage, the illicit trafficking of objects from monuments and archaeological sites, safeguarding cultural infrastructure and community assets for future generations, and the operation and maintenance of traditional *kariz* water management systems. Skills and knowledge related to *kariz* management were documented through questionnaires, individual interviews, focus group discussions and short stories by local communities.

## 37

*kariz* systems were surveyed and rehabilitated in Waghaz and Zana Khan districts in Ghazni Province, Khoshaman and Yousofkhil districts in Paktika Province, Matun and Sabari districts in Khots Province and Pul-e-Alam and Khoshi districts in Logar Province.

## 2,960

households benefited from short-term cash-for-work schemes that created 30,340 working days and benefited 20,720 people (10,360 women and girls, 50.0%).

## 4,340

(2,154 women and girls, 49.6%) gained resilience and protection from seasonal flash floods through the rehabilitation and construction of six gabion walls in Khost Province. Two gabion walls, totalling 596 metres, were repaired following damage from floods. Four gabion walls, totalling 1,070 metres, were constructed.

## 900

farmers in Khost Province gained irrigation capacity and improved agricultural productivity through the construction of two stone masonry irrigation canals. Totalling 1,545 metres, they discharge 300–350 cubic litres of water per second, covering over 1,000 jeribs of farmland.

## 70

farmers in Mohammad Agha District of Logar Province and Sayed Karam District of Paktia Province took part in agricultural training initiatives on climate-sensitive farming practices.

## 500

individuals including 200 women, (40.0%), in Gayan District of Paktika Province and Spera District of Khost Province acquired knowledge and skills on disaster risk reduction, improving preparedness, risk awareness and response capacities.

## 9

watershed management infrastructure projects in Gayan District of Paktika Province and Spera District of Khost Province developed small check dams, trenches and terraces, to improve water retention, reduce soil erosion and enhance climate resilience. They covered approximately 135 hectares of land and were implemented through a cash-for-work modality, simultaneously supporting livelihoods and environmental restoration.

A check dam under construction with the support from STFA in Logar Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

# 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.**

## Output 4 benefitted

| Number of Beneficiaries | Number of Women |
|---|---|
| 1,345 | 322 |

## 105

journalists including 34 women, (32.4%) in Khost, Logar, Ghazni, Paktia and Paktika provinces enhanced professional skills to deliver timely, reliable information in a challenging environment, ensuring better coverage of crucial social issues. The programme facilitated the production of 105 news reports addressing critical issues such as education, health, humanitarian crises and environmental protection.

## 710

local community leaders, including 92 women, in Khost, Logar, Ghazni, Paktia and Paktika provinces were trained on the importance of access to information, fostering a culture of awareness and engagement.

## 150

roundtable discussions cultivated public dialogue on topics such as health, education and climate change.

## 10

LICs in Khost and Paktia provinces continued to support project implementation, creating tailored, localized approaches to overcome restrictions, particularly on women's participation. They played a crucial role in integrating women's needs in project activities and maintaining critical engagement with women and girls.

## 27

villages and communities in Gardez District were organized in five LICs and conducted CAPs engaging host communities, returnees and IDPs. Each LIC gained skills through training on accountability to affected populations, social cohesion and conflict-sensitive engagement, community needs identification and prioritization, and project idea development and basic implementation modalities. Comprehensive CAP reports for each LIC are under final review and will be presented to the Durable Solutions Working Group in early 2026 to mobilize additional resources and sectoral support.

## 8

initiatives by LICs addressed immediate needs, improved social services and strengthened community cohesion. They included:

- Communal crockery and food preparation supplies for the Rabat and Teera clusters, enabling large-scale community gatherings, shared meals and social cohesion events benefiting thousands of families.
- School uniform production by local volunteers in the Rabat Mohajireen Boys and Girls Secondary School, supporting 300 vulnerable girls and reinforcing community solidarity.
- Installation of 5-kilowatt solar energy systems in four schools (Hazrat Abu Bakar Sediq, Hazrat Bilal, Dary High School and Zahoo Boys High School), improving learning conditions for over 1,500 students by ensuring reliable electricity.
- Support for community kitchens in Zahoo to facilitate inclusive gatherings and collective food preparation for 600 households.

With the provision of communal supplies, LICs successfully organized social cohesion events in Hazrat Bilal, Lewan, Habib Khail, and Bar Dara Mula Qudrat. These events brought together diverse segments of the population, including returnees and IDPs, to share meals, welcome newly arrived families and foster a sense of belonging.

## 30

community development plans in Logar, Paktia and Ghazni provinces addressed key community priorities related to vulnerability mapping, including the identification of disaster-prone areas affected by landslides, floods and droughts, and served as a foundation for locally driven resilience planning. To ensure alignment with subnational development priorities, 20 stakeholder validation meetings were conducted with relevant authorities and community representatives. In addition, 20 community awareness sessions strengthened local ownership, social cohesion and collective responsibility for resilience-building initiatives.

## 100

individuals (20 women) across Ghazni, Paktia, Logar, and Khost provinces benefited from legal aid services. A support package included legal counselling, assistance with legal documentation and legal representation, addressing issues related to land disputes, debt cases, inheritance claims and other civil matters.

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

Owner of STFA-supported Hameeda TVET Centre sewing a cloth in Khost Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

# Challenges

1

Restrictions imposed by the *de facto* authorities limited women's and girls' participation in training and community inclusion activities. Solutions included working with provincial women's associations to provide facilities for capacity development for women entrepreneurs; holding gatherings in private homes and online; and the accompaniment of female beneficiaries by mahrams.

2

Updated FHH designs issued by the *de facto* Ministry of Public Health introduced structural changes and added components, significantly increasing construction costs. This challenge was compounded by the depreciation of the US dollar, requiring revised targets and the management of community expectations.

3

Broader economic pressures, such as the lack of industrial infrastructure and a temporary border closure with Pakistan, disrupted supply chains and delayed the delivery of business assets. Mitigating these challenges required strengthened coordination with local authorities. Low levels of business literacy further slowed progress on livelihoods and economic development activities. This required expanded hands-on mentoring to compensate for literacy gaps.

4

The remoteness and limited accessibility of several project sites posed logistical challenges, particularly in the transportation of construction materials, equipment and technical teams. Seasonal weather conditions and the limited local market availability of specialized materials further affected implementation.

# Lessons Learned

1

Diversifying coordination mechanisms with *de facto* authorities helped to respond to contextual constraints. In providing training for women and girls, coordination with the *de facto* Ministry of Education was not feasible, given the continued ban on education for them. Integrating practical skills within the literacy programme, however, enabled engagement with alternative line ministries supportive of skills development. The experience underscored the value of flexibility, institutional agility and sustained engagement while upholding safety and do no harm principles.

2

Linking infrastructure development, skills training, livelihood support and community engagement strengthened effectiveness. Sequencing activities based on technical readiness and community priorities helped smooth implementation and sustain outcomes.

3

Adaptive targeting across provinces is essential when operating under variable regulatory environments. This is particularly relevant in introducing new models, such as the business consortia intended to stimulate economic activity. Future programmes should extend timelines or reduce initial targets to ensure quality over quantity

# Risk Analysis

In 2025, the Joint Programme for the South-Eastern Region of Afghanistan: Addressing Basic Human Needs continued under the risk management framework established during programme planning, which categorized risks into contextual (political, security), programmatic, operational/financial and organizational dimensions. No new risks were identified during the year; however, risks from 2024 persisted.

The primary ongoing risk remained the deterioration of the human rights situation, particularly affecting women. Additional restrictions imposed by the *de facto* authorities limited the physical presence of national female UN staff at UN compounds and NGO offices, constraining access and participation. PUNOs maintained a principled approach to programme delivery, sustaining “by women for women” modalities, adapting implementation strategies, and enabling women staff to work effectively through remote arrangements. These measures preserved access, inclusion and accountability across the STFA-supported portfolio and ensured the continuity of interventions despite persistent contextual and operational constraints, reinforcing adaptive approaches for inclusive and resilient programme delivery.

# Qualitative Assessment

In a highly constrained and evolving context, the joint programme applied adaptive coordination mechanisms and community-based approaches that supported continuity and relevance. Engagement with authorities backed integration into local systems, including service delivery in remote areas through area-based programming. Capacity-building and vocational training strengthened long-term human capital, while participatory planning fostered accountability and ownership. By integrating services, infrastructure, livelihoods, climate adaptation and governance strengthening, the joint programme delivered durable and scalable impacts that should extend beyond the current funding cycle.

Third-party monitoring confirmed a diversified portfolio that has strengthened basic service access and resilience. It found high compliance with service delivery standards and high levels of beneficiary satisfaction. It pointed to strong early economic results, including increases in employment and gains in revenues, while stressing that post-support mechanisms, comprising market linkages, advanced business skills and the gradual formalization of enterprises, are critical to transforming early gains into lasting growth, particularly for women-led enterprises facing mobility and training constraints.

Sectors demonstrating employment growth included tailoring, agro-processing and small-scale manufacturing. Tailoring continues to be the preferred livelihood option for female beneficiaries as it is culturally accepted and well-suited to home-based work, which aligns with the preferences of many families. While efforts are ongoing to diversify programming and expand women’s access to additional sectors, tailoring remains the primary and, in some provinces, the only viable option. In these contexts, support for garment production plays a critical role in strengthening women’s livelihoods and contributing to sustainable household income.

The joint programme achieved substantive qualitative impacts in establishing a proof-of-concept for market-systems development in high-constraint environments.

Rather than measuring success solely through beneficiary numbers, it generated three durable transformations: a paradigm shift from supply-driven aid to demand-responsive value chains; the institutionalization of collective business models where competitive isolation previously prevailed; and the creation of leveraged financing that fundamentally decouples enterprise sustainability from external subsidy cycles.

The consortium model represented a pioneering institutional development in a historically underserved business culture. Six operational collective enterprises demonstrate cooperative models that were previously absent in the South-Eastern Region. An extended formation timeline was required, but this reflected rigorous quality assurance and trust-building protocols. These were essential for establishing sustainable collective action and replicable foundations for scaling up collective business approaches in future programming cycles. Third-party monitoring noted strong early ownership and asset acquisition, but with varied operational maturity, including some inconsistencies in institutional systems such as recordkeeping.

A displacement-sensitive approach avoided silos by embedding IDPs and returnees within mixed consortiums alongside host community members, leveraging shared economic interests to transform potential social friction into collaborative production relationships. Environmental sustainability manifested through infrastructure investments (renewable energy systems, post-harvest processing capacity) that addressed systemic value-chain constraints while reducing carbon dependency, illustrating how climate resilience and economic competitiveness align when interventions target processing gaps rather than end-point consumption.

A further demonstration of the power of integrated programming emerged from restoring the kariz traditional water management systems. A holistic approach – linking physical restoration, knowledge preservation and community-led governance – enhanced resilience, built local capacity for self-sustenance and rehabilitated the systems to function today and potentially for generations to come. By involving both skilled and unskilled local labourers in rehabilitation, the project supported the transfer of traditional cleaning, maintenance and water management techniques to younger generations, while creating short-term employment opportunities. The systematic documentation of indigenous knowledge and practices shared by community elders supported the long-term preservation of technical expertise. Complementary community awareness initiatives strengthened collective responsibility for daily operation and maintenance, promoting fair water-sharing practices and encouraging environmental stewardship to safeguard groundwater recharge zones.

Combined awareness-raising, drug use prevention activities and community reintegration efforts helped strengthen the resilience of youth and communities and minimize stigma and discrimination against people who use drugs. Community-based services have been especially helpful in expanding access for men, women and families, including by providing earlier treatment delivered in ways that are culturally and individually acceptable. Outpatient treatment services are equipped to cater to individual needs and support family dynamics. These activities are less expensive than the inpatient-based model and have potential for national scale-up.

Food systems interventions in 2025 effectively combined short-term assistance with longer-term sustainability. By restoring irrigation systems, strengthening technical capacities, supporting livelihoods and promoting inclusive approaches, food security grew alongside community resilience.

The integration of safeguards, climate adaptation and gender-responsive programming responded to the needs of vulnerable populations.

Beneficiary-list sharing and intervention cross-checking across PUNOs reduced risks of duplication. Close collaboration also facilitated accurate data collection, thorough analysis and the identification of suitable intervention sites. Cross-cutting considerations, including gender inclusion, community acceptance and adherence to do no harm principles, were addressed through careful programme design and delivery arrangements.

Overall, third-party monitoring findings provided independent validation that the programme's integrated and market-oriented approach generated strong and multidimensional outcomes across livelihoods, essential services, resilience and social cohesion. Monitoring confirmed high beneficiary satisfaction, improved service access and measurable economic gains, particularly in MSME development, consortium-based enterprises, and skills training interventions. These results demonstrate that combining infrastructure support, capacity-building and market systems development within a unified programming framework can produce more durable and scalable impacts in high-constraint environments.

Monitoring further highlighted that programme effectiveness was strongest where interventions were sequenced and integrated across value chains, supported by community ownership and reinforced through adaptive delivery mechanisms. At the same time, it underscored the importance of strengthening post-support systems, institutionalizing enterprise governance structures, and expanding market linkages to ensure sustainability beyond initial assistance. Collectively, these findings reinforce the programme's role as a proof-of-concept for transitioning from traditional aid delivery towards more resilient, demand-driven and systems-oriented development approaches.

# Partnerships

1

**Strategic positioning and coordination:** STFA's strategic positioning within the UN coordination framework has been a cornerstone of its effectiveness in Afghanistan. STFA has ensured seamless engagement in key coordination bodies and clusters, enabling optimal programmatic impact through the identification of synergies and complementarities across funding streams and organizations. Under the strategic leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator, STFA is positioned to be responsive to the evolving context in Afghanistan. It is actively involved in the Humanitarian Country Team, the Risk Management Team, the National Durable Solutions Secretariat, the Programme Management Team and the Resident Coordinator's Office-led Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group. This collaboration allows STFA to align with broader UN strategies and foster coordinated actions with humanitarian and development partners to deliver durable solutions for vulnerable communities.

STFA's engagement with these coordination mechanisms ensures that its interventions are prompt, effective, and aligned with UN-wide risk management measures. They strengthened the ability to adapt to dynamic needs, supporting long-term stability and resilience through integrated, complementary programming.

2

**Collaborative initiatives:** Under the strategic leadership of the Resident Coordinator, STFA continued to apply the delivering as one modality as central to its operations, fostering synergies across organizations and enhancing programme quality, cost-effectiveness and socioeconomic impact. The four collaborative thematic initiatives approved by the STFA Steering Committee exemplify how the delivering as one approach uses the comparative advantages of each organization to maximize impact and deliver sustainable, coordinated solutions for vulnerable communities.

3

**Private sector engagement:** STFA has expanded MSME financing and market access by partnering with Ghazanfar Bank, Afghanistan International Bank, Kam Group, ASEEL, Hesab Pay and more. These collaborations led to new loan products for women-led MSMEs. They helped onboard more than 140 MSMEs onto ASEEL's e-commerce platform, enabling wider market reach. Private sector engagement was further strengthened through targeted outreach and high-level meetings in Dubai. These efforts secured commitments from financial institutions and business partners to enhance MSME access to finance, lower operational costs and open new international market channels.

Students in a new classroom funded by STFA to improve local education in Paktia Province. © STFA / Mohammad Omar Kamal

# Annexes

A farmer supported through alternative livelihood initiative harvests beans in Paktia Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

# Annex I. Indicator-based Performance Tracker

*(The figures in brackets are female figures.)*

| Annex I - Indicator-based Performance Review | Unit | Baseline | Target | Progress | Reasons for Variance with Planned Target | Source of Verification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Output 1. Essential services and community infrastructure - including for health, agriculture and energy supply - are functional, sustained and expanded to meet different needs of women and men.** | | | | | | |
| 1a. Number of people that have benefited from UN-supported essential services and/or new/rehabilitated infrastructure, disaggregated by type of service and sex. | *Facilities /Infrastructure* | 0 | 347 (0) | 700 (4,488) | | PUNO reports |
| | *Households* | 0 | 115 (20) | 8,481 (180) | | PUNO reports |
| | *Other* | 0 | 0 (0) | 15 (0) | | PUNO reports |
| | *People* | 0 | 0 (0) | 38,950 (17,832) | | PUNO reports |
| 1d. Number of functional, UN-supported, facilities providing basic health assistance (including basic health assistance services for women and girls) | *Facilities /Infrastructure* | 0 | 7 (0) | 10 (0) | | PUNO reports |
| 1g. Hectares of rehabilitated and/or newly irrigated land for agricultural activities | *Hectares* | 0 | 0 (0) | 1,013 | | PUNO reports |
| 1c. Number of people that have benefited from drug-treatment, drug rehabilitation services (health) | *People* | 0 | 11,080 (1,120) | 5,999 (24) | | 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 percent female) | *Facilities /Infrastructure* | 0 | 0 (0) | 1 | | PUNO reports |
| | *People* | 0 | 2,000 (1,000) | 5,192 (1,652) | | PUNO reports |
| 1b. Number of people that have benefited from UN-supported maternal/reproductive health care services (health) | *Facilities /Infrastructure* | 0 | 0 (0) | 39 | | PUNO reports |
| | *People* | 0 | 0 (0) | 206,293 (165,495) | | PUNO reports |
| 1k. # of irrigation systems rehabilitated and/or maintained | *Facilities /Infrastructure* | 0 | 9 | 14 (0) | | PUNO reports |
| | *Kms* | 0 | 30 (0) | 0 | | PUNO reports |
| | *Other* | 0 | 30 (0) | 30 | | PUNO reports |

| Annex I - Indicator-based Performance Review | Unit | Baseline | Target | 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 unconditional cash transfers (at least 80 percent women) | *Households* | 0 | 2,100 (1,680) | 300 (180) | | PUNO reports |
| 2b. Number of people who have benefited from newly-created income-generation opportunities, disaggregated by sex, age and province | *Households* | 0 | 0 (0) | 5,481 (78) | | PUNO reports |
| | *People* | 0 | 200 (60) | 860 (673) | | PUNO reports |
| 2b.1. Number of people who have benefited from productive employment through CfW schemes (at least 30 percent women; 50 percent youth) | *Households* | 0 | 21,000 (420) | 3,000 (102) | | PUNO reports |
| | *People* | 0 | 1,000 (300) | 3,124 (700) | | PUNO reports |
| 2c. No. of worker-days generated with UN-support | *Work days* | 0 | 25,600 (0) | 30,340 (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 | *MSMEs* | 0 | 200 (60) | 1,262 (540) | | 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** | | | | | | |
| 3a. Number of districts with functional early warning systems and other preparedness mechanisms for climate shocks and natural disasters | *Districts* | 0 | 0 (0) | 18 | | PUNO reports |
| 3b. Number of people who acquired knowledge and skills on disaster preparedness (including explosive hazard awareness) and climate-resilient livelihoods (at least 30 percent women) | *People* | 0 | 0 (0) | 15,683 | | PUNO reports |
| 3c. Number of farmers who benefited from training and assets for improved, climate-smart, agriculture (at least 30 percent women) | *People* | 0 | 4,200 (4,000) | 12,533 (1,093) | | PUNO reports |
| 3d. Number of people that benefit from rehabilitated and/or newly constructed disaster-resilient community infrastructure and nature-based solutions | *Hectares* | 0 | 100 | 135 | | PUNO reports |
| | *People* | 0 | 0 (0) | 29,640 (14,800) | | PUNO reports |

| Annex I - Indicator-based Performance Review | Unit | Baseline | Target | Progress | Reasons for Variance with Planned Target | Source of Verification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Output 4. Social cohesion, human rights, access to justice are strengthened at local level.** | | | | | | |
| 4a. Number of community-based/civil society organizations with improved capacity for participatory and inclusive community planning (at least 20 percent women-led) | *CSOs* | 0 | 12 (0) | 30 (0) | | PUNO reports |
| | *Other* | 0 | 3 (0) | 5 | There were constraints for female engagement in CAPs which later resolved. | PUNO reports |
| 4b. Number of people with better awareness about human rights , social cohesion and conflict prevention (at least 50 percent women) | *Consultation sessions* | 0 | 150 (15) | 6,062 (90) | | PUNO reports |
| | *People* | 0 | 300 (30) | 1,345 (322) | | PUNO reports |

# Annex II. Stories from the Field

## Livestock Protection Is Stabilizing Families

For Qadir Shah, keeping his animals alive is the only way to support his family of 10. Living in Landi Village in Khost Province, he owns four cattle and three sheep, and cultivates a small plot to grow wheat and vegetables for his parents, his wife, his five siblings and his daughter.

In recent years, prolonged dry spells and shifting weather patterns have reduced the availability of grazing land, making natural fodder harder to find. As a result, livestock productivity has declined, while the risk of losing animals to starvation or disease grows.

For vulnerable families, losing even a single animal can mean the difference between getting by and falling into deep debt. Qadir received support at a critical moment through the joint programme. He participated in training on improved animal husbandry, learning techniques for efficient feeding, maintaining hygiene and protecting livestock during harsh seasons.

“This support gave me hope and the confidence to keep going, even during the hardest times,” he said.

Qadir also received a comprehensive livestock protection package with 200 kilograms of animal feed, 10 kilograms of mineral blocks, essential deworming medicine and high-quality fodder seeds. These inputs were designed to stabilize his animals during a period when natural resources were scarce, and the livestock were most vulnerable.

The impact on Qadir’s farm has been significant. His cattle are healthier and more productive. Previously, the milk they produced was barely enough to meet household needs. Today, the cows produce enough to sell at the local market, increasing Qadir’s monthly income to around AFN 10,000 ($153).

Qadir Shah and his livestock given to him through STFA funds in Khost Province. © FAO

This additional income has allowed the family to diversify their diet and reduce their reliance on borrowing money during difficult months. With the immediate pressure of animal starvation lifted, Qadir is better able to plan for the planting season ahead.

Similar results echo across neighboring areas. “The support helped me keep my cows healthy and earn more income,” said Sayed Jan, a livestock keeper from Khija Khail Village in Paktia Province.

Evidence indicates that families receiving livestock protection support retained around 50 percent more animals than those without such assistance, equivalent to keeping roughly five additional goats or sheep alive. Furthermore, the share of households reporting acceptable food consumption jumped from around 6 percent before the assistance to over 50 percent afterward, largely driven by the increased availability of milk and meat.

# Healing a Father, Saving a Family

Ahmad during his treatment at the STFA-supported Drug Treatment Centre (DTC) in Paktia Province. © UNODC

At the Rabat Camp in Paktia Province, Ahmad, a 45-year-old father of 10, was the sole provider for his family. Yet the immense pressure of chronic unemployment and poverty led him down a dangerous path of drug use disorder. His physical and mental health deteriorated, and his family was pushed even deeper into vulnerability and hardship.

His life turned around when an outreach and screening team from the Paktia DTC, managed by the joint programme, met with him. They educated him about his disorder and the treatment services available. This helped Ahmad to choose a different future for himself.

In May 2025, Ahmad was officially admitted to the DTC. Over the course of a rigorous 45-day treatment and rehabilitation programme, he received comprehensive medical care, psychological counselling and social reintegration support. He successfully completed his treatment in July 2025.

Today, Ahmad has rebuilt trust with his wife and children. He has returned to active productivity, earning a steady income of approximately 8,000 AFN per month ($125) working in a local shop. He has also become an active voice in the community, encouraging others to seek treatment.

"I am grateful for the support I received," Ahmad said, reflecting on his journey. "I have been given a new chance at life."

# Bringing Healthcare Closer to Home


View of the Comprehensive Health Centre supported by STFA in the Rabat Refugee Camp in Paktia Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

Residents of the Rabat Resettlement Area in Paktia Province no longer have to travel long distances to receive medical treatment. That's because the joint programme constructed a new comprehensive health centre in the community.

Serving approximately 18,000 people, the facility provides primary care, maternal and child health support, vaccinations and preventive treatments. Previously, residents experiencing health issues had to make a long journey to the medical facility in Gardez City. Now, these critical services are available closer to home.

The construction of the clinic is part of a broader effort to support returnees, displaced populations and host communities. Strengthening local infrastructure improves access to basic services and supports long-term resilience in high-return areas.

# Keeping the Ovens On: How Solar Power Saved a Company

In August 2023, Kabir Ahmad Azizi, a local entrepreneur in Ghazni Province, established a biscuit production company to supply the local market and create jobs for both host community members and returning Afghans. Yet high electricity costs, frequent outages and rising expenses reduced profits, putting 11 jobs and the business at risk.

At a critical moment, the company was identified in 2025 as a beneficiary of the employment retention and asset support activity by the joint programme. It provided six months of salary support for nine employees, enabling the company to retain staff and hire five returnees. It also installed a solar power system to reduce reliance on costly, unreliable electricity, ensuring uninterrupted production.

The programme also supported the business in obtaining hazard analysis and critical control points certification, which standardized its production processes and ensured strict compliance with food safety requirements. This increased consumer trust and allowed the company to enter more competitive markets. The company was sponsored to participate in regional trade exhibitions, which enabled it to expand its sales beyond Ghazni and begin supplying products to several neighbouring provinces.

The business has now expanded and grown its workforce from 11 to 15 employees.

Kabir Ahmad Azizi inspecting the production process in his company supported by STFA in Ghazni Province. © IOM

# A Safe Space to Heal: Psychosocial Support for a Returning Mother

Zuhra during a counselling session in Khost Province. © UNFPA

Born and raised in Iran by Afghan parents, Zuhra (name changed) had never visited her family's home in Khost Province. Her life shifted abruptly when her father agreed to an arranged marriage with her cousin. Shortly after the engagement, her fiancé was deported from Iran, forcing Zuhra to relocate to Afghanistan to join him.

The transition was difficult. Adjusting to a new country and a new marriage, Zuhra faced strict restrictions from her parents-in-law. She was prohibited from continuing her education or seeking outside employment, with her role confined entirely to household duties.

Over time, the isolation and the demands of raising six children took a severe toll on her mental health. The 35-year-old began suffering from chronic headaches, anxiety and depression. This emotional strain eventually fractured her relationship with her husband, leaving her feeling trapped.

A turning point came when Zuhra learned about a nearby mother and child care centre. Staffed entirely by female healthcare workers, the it provides a dedicated, culturally acceptable space for women and children. Hoping to find treatment for her physical and mental symptoms, her father-in-law allowed her to visit the clinic, which is supported by the joint programme. Zuhra was introduced to psychosocial support services. She began attending individual counselling sessions to address her depression. Encouraged by her counsellor, she eventually joined group therapy, participating in role-playing exercises and connecting with other local women facing similar domestic challenges.

Zuhra developed practical coping mechanisms to manage her stress. She learned how to communicate more effectively and navigate her household dynamics. Today, she is better equipped to care for her children and has rebuilt a healthier relationship with her husband.

Zuhra commended the centre staff for giving her a renewed sense of purpose and stability.

Her experience illustrates the critical role of psychosocial support in returnee settings. By providing a safe, female-led environment, facilities like the mother and child care centre help women manage trauma, rebuild their confidence and strengthen their families from within.

# Habib’s Path from Labourer to Running a Successful Salt Production Company


Habib in his Salt Production Company supported by STFA in Paktia Province. © UNIDO

Habib began his career as a daily labourer in a local salt factory in Paktia Province. Every day involved physically demanding work under difficult conditions. Yet rather than just earning a daily wage and moving on, Habib used the opportunity to observe and learn. Over eight years on the factory floor, he gained experience across all stages of the salt production process. He quietly built the technical skills he needed to eventually strike out on his own.

When the time was right, Habib took a significant risk and launched the Qadir Gardiz Salt Production Company, starting with only basic tools and limited, ageing machinery. Within two years, his small enterprise employed 11 workers and produced approximately 80 metric tons of salt per month.

Yet Habib struggled with some structural hurdles. He relied on external suppliers for processed salt, which continually drove up his production costs and limited his ability to control the quality of his final product. He also lacked the specialized equipment needed to iodize salt. In Afghanistan, where iodine deficiency remains a significant public health concern, the demand for higher-quality, healthier iodized salt products has been rising. Without the ability to iodize his product, Habib faced a critical competitive disadvantage.

To help break through these limitations, the joint programme provided targeted industrial support. In 2025, Habib received a $2,000 grant, which he supplemented with $840 from his own savings. He used the funds to purchase a modern salt-flouring mill, a power supply system, an iodine-testing machine and other equipment.

For the first time, Habib could process, flour and iodize his salt entirely in-house. This helped him to reduce his operating costs while simultaneously improving the quality and health standards of his product. “Processing and iodizing our salt in-house has strengthened our position in the market and improved our product quality,” Habib noted.

Habib’s monthly production has more than doubled, from 80 to 180 metric tons. His net monthly income increased from 100,000 to 200,000 AFN (approximately $1,600 to $3,200). He also created three new jobs, bringing his total staff to 14.

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