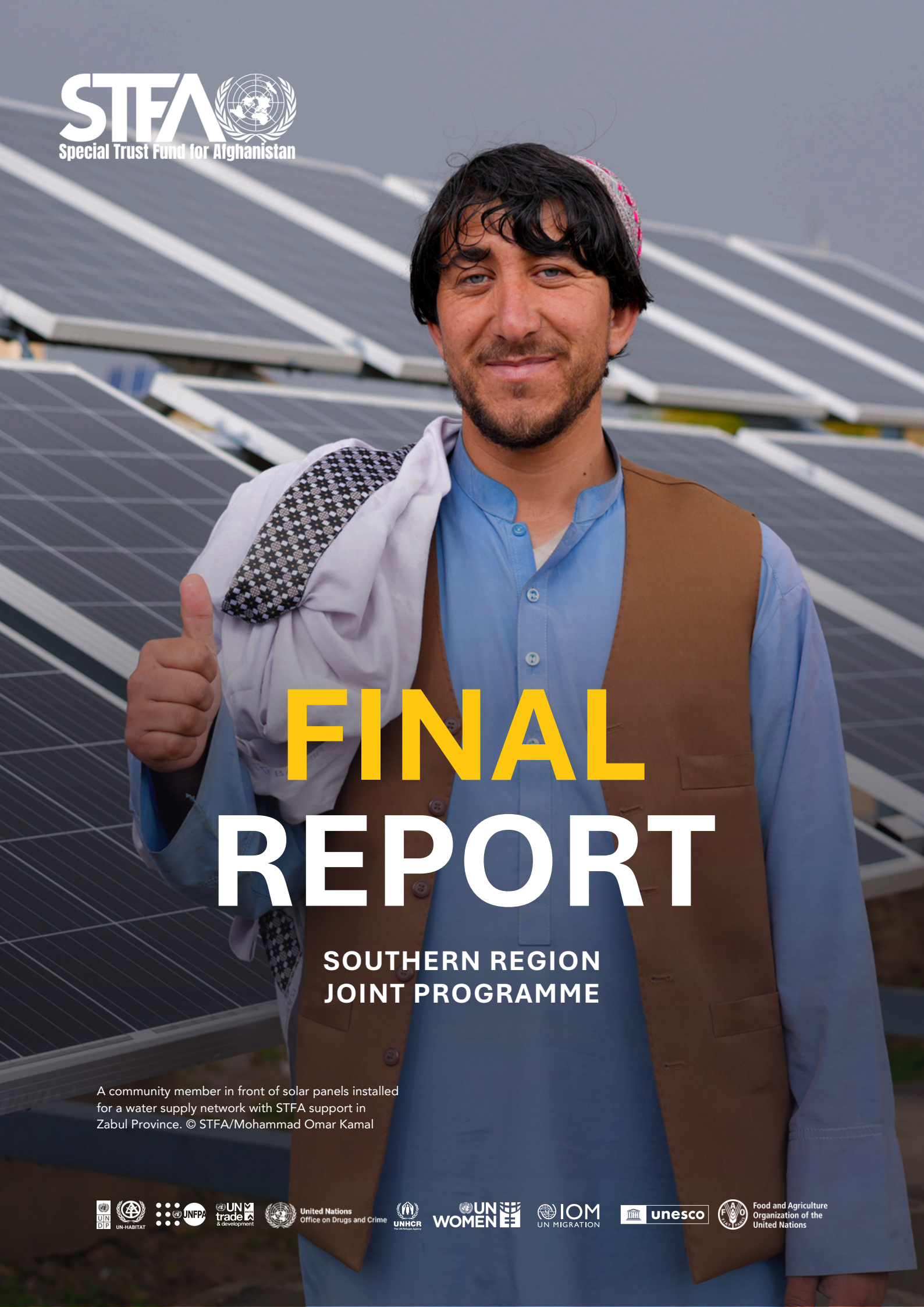
STFA
Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan



FINAL REPORT

SOUTHERN REGION JOINT PROGRAMME

A community member in front of solar panels installed for a water supply network with STFA support in Zabul Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

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Programme[1] Title & Project Number	Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s)/ Strategic Results[2]
Programme Title: STFA Joint Programme for the Southern Region of Afghanistan: Addressing Basic Human Needs through UNSFA ('JP-Southern') MPTF Office Project Reference Number[3]: • 129789 • 129790 • 129791 • 129792	Country: Afghanistan Region: Southern Priority areas/Strategic Results: UNSFA Priorities 1, 2, 3 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
Participating Organization(s)	**Implementing Partners**
Organizations that have received direct funding from the MPTF Office under this programme: 10 PUNOs 1. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 2. International Organization for Migration (IOM) 3. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) 4. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 5. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 6. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 7. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 8. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) 9. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 10. United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)	Please refer to PUNO-specific reports

Programme/Project Cost (US$)		Programme Duration	
Total approved budget as per project document:	150,906,481	Overall Duration	48 months
MPTF /JP Contribution[4]:	49,763,763		
Agency Contribution	N/A	Start Date[5]	1 Jan 2022
Government Contribution)	N/A	Original End Date[6]	31 Dec 2023
Other Contributions (donors):	N/A	Current End Date[7]	31 Dec 2025
Total Contributions:	49,763,763		

Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.	Report Submitted By
Assessment/Review - if applicable please attach Yes ☑ No Mid-Term Evaluation Report – if applicable please attach Yes No ☑	• Name: Peter Nordstrom • Title: Senior Trust Fund Manager • Participating Organization (Lead): N/A • 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.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABADEI	Area-Based Approach for Development Emergency Initiatives
ASYREC	Automated System for Relief Emergency Consignments
CB-DEWS	Community-Based Drought Early Warning System
CfW	Cash-for-Work
DaO	Delivering as One
FHH	Family Health House
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
LIC	Local Implementation Committee
MIS	Management Information System
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PUNO(s)	Participating United Nations Organization(s)
RMNCAH	Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health
STFA	Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNSFA	United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan
UCT	Unconditional Cash Transfer
YALBE	Youth and Adult Literacy Basic Education

Executive Summary



A worker at Moqadas Online Cloths Store supported by STFA in Kandahar Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

The Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA) Joint Programme in the Southern Region supported integrated recovery, resilience, and essential service interventions across Kandahar, Helmand, Nimroz, Uruzgan, and Zabul provinces. Implemented through the Delivering as One (DaO) framework by 10 Participating UN Organizations (PUNOs), the programme addressed the interconnected effects of poverty, displacement, climate vulnerability, declining livelihoods, water scarcity, reduced service access, and restrictions affecting women and girls in one of Afghanistan's most operationally challenging and drought-affected regions.

Through integrated interventions across four outputs, the programme combined support for essential services, livelihoods recovery, climate resilience, and social cohesion while prioritizing vulnerable populations, including returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), women-headed households, former poppy-growing households, and remote rural communities. Across the implementation period, the Joint Programme achieved the following cumulative results:



2,563,291

people, including 1,135,020 women and girls, 44%

reached through essential services, infrastructure, livelihoods, climate resilience, and social cohesion interventions.



1,869,619

people, including 977,250 women and girls, 52%

benefited from improved access to essential services and community infrastructure, including health services, renewable energy systems, water systems, roads, irrigation structures, flood protection infrastructure, and sanitation facilities.



894,016 +

women, children, and vulnerable individuals, including 523,058 women and girls, 59%

accessed reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH), nutrition, psychosocial support, referral, and community health services through Family Health Houses (FHHs), the Mother and Child Health Centre and related outreach interventions.



209,793

people, including 42,332 women and girls, 20%

received livelihoods and economic recovery support through Cash-for-Work (CfW), Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCTs), agricultural support, livestock interventions, vocational training, and micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) development activities.



4,851 +

MSMEs and entrepreneurs, including 1,162 women-led, 24%

received support through business development services, grants, market access initiatives, trade facilitation, employment-retention schemes, and technical training.



14,852

farmers and rural households, including 4,624 women, 31%

benefited from agricultural resilience, irrigation rehabilitation, climate-smart agriculture, and alternative livelihoods interventions designed to strengthen food security and reduce vulnerability to drought, economic shocks, and declining agricultural opportunities.



100,281

people, including 29,896 women and girls, 30%

benefited from disaster risk reduction, drought preparedness, flood mitigation, and community resilience interventions, including rehabilitation of traditional karez systems, construction of flood protection infrastructure, and establishment of community-based preparedness mechanisms.



85,542

women and girls

participated in livelihoods, literacy, psychosocial support, community consultation, and civil society engagement activities despite severe restrictions affecting women's mobility, employment, and public participation.

The programme significantly expanded access to essential services and strengthened resilience through investments in healthcare, water systems, renewable energy, livelihoods recovery, climate adaptation, and community infrastructure. Family Health Houses (FHHs) emerged as a particularly important integrated service-delivery model, while investments in roads, flood-protection structures, irrigation systems, and water infrastructure improved access to services, strengthened climate resilience, and supported recovery in drought-affected communities.

Livelihoods interventions supported household recovery through cash assistance, agricultural support, enterprise development, vocational training, and women-led economic activities. Business support and trade facilitation initiatives strengthened market access and employment retention, while alternative livelihoods programming helped former poppy-growing households transition to licit economic opportunities.

Social cohesion, community participation, and women's engagement were supported through participatory planning processes, psychosocial support, media initiatives, community consultations, and civil society activities. Despite a highly constrained operating environment, adaptive implementation approaches helped preserve access to services and opportunities for women and vulnerable groups while strengthening local ownership and community resilience.

An independent final evaluation (February 2026) found that the programme remained highly relevant and responsive in one of Afghanistan's most restrictive and operationally complex environments. The evaluation concluded that the programme functioned as an important resilience mechanism during a period marked by severe economic contraction, climate shocks, and the collapse of the opium economy. Beneficiary households reported stronger resilience, improved access to services, and reduced economic losses compared with comparison communities.

The evaluation highlighted particularly strong performance in climate resilience, livelihoods recovery, and infrastructure delivery, while identifying continuing challenges relating to infrastructure maintenance capacity, women's participation, and ongoing climate and economic fragility.

Implementation took place in a highly constrained environment characterized by restrictions affecting women's participation, economic volatility, displacement, climate-related shocks, and operational access challenges. In response, the programme adopted flexible and locally adapted delivery approaches, including community-based systems, home-based modalities, and strengthened engagement with local communities and authorities.

Together, these results demonstrate the value of integrated, area-based, and community-driven approaches that link immediate assistance to longer-term resilience and recovery. Through coordinated implementation under the DaO framework, the Joint Programme contributed to strengthened household and community resilience, improved access to services, expanded livelihood opportunities, and more localized and sustainable recovery pathways across the Southern Region of Afghanistan.



Tanasa Check Dam in Qalat City, Zabul Province, constructed with STFA support. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal



Purpose

A worker showing cookies in a confectionery supported by STFA in Helmand Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

The STFA Joint Programme for the Southern Region was established in response to the humanitarian, economic, and social challenges that followed the August 2021 political transition. Implemented through the Area-Based Approach for Development Emergency Initiatives (ABADEI) and subsequently aligned with the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan (UNSFA), the programme aimed to sustain essential services, strengthen resilient livelihoods, protect vulnerable populations, and support community resilience through integrated, area-based and community-driven interventions.

Covering Kandahar, Helmand, Nimroz, Uruzgan, and Zabul provinces, the programme sought to address the interconnected effects of poverty, displacement, economic contraction, climate vulnerability, water scarcity, and restrictions affecting women and vulnerable populations. Emphasis was placed on women, returnees, IDPs, women-headed households, former poppy-growing households, rural communities, and other groups facing heightened vulnerability.

The programme contributed to three UNSFA priorities:

STFA Output Areas	Are Fully Aligned With	UNSFA Priority Areas
Output 1: Essential Services	→	**Priority 1:** Sustained Essential Services
Output 2: Improved livelihood **Output 3:** Disaster Risk Reduction	→	**Priority 2:** Economic Opportunities and Resilient Livelihoods
Output 4: Social Cohesion	→	**Priority 3:** Social Cohesion, Inclusion, Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Rule of Law

Through integrated interventions across healthcare, education, livelihoods, enterprise development, climate resilience, disaster preparedness, community participation, and social cohesion, the programme aimed to strengthen household resilience, support local recovery, and preserve critical community systems and social investments.

Programme implementation was guided by principles of inclusion, participation, gender equality, accountability, and “do no harm”. Community-based approaches, vulnerability-based targeting, and adaptive implementation modalities were used to maintain access and sustain delivery in a highly constrained operating environment. Particular attention was given to sustaining women’s participation and access to services despite increasing restrictions on mobility, employment, and public engagement.

Through coordinated implementation under the Delivering as One (DaO) framework, the programme sought to support both immediate recovery needs and longer-term, locally led and resilient development pathways across the Southern Region of Afghanistan.



Results

Patients at a Drug Treatment Centre (DTC) supported by STFA in Kandahar Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

Assessment of Programme Results

Outcome

The Southern Region Joint Programme contributed to all three relevant priorities of the UNSFA through integrated interventions in essential services, livelihoods recovery, climate resilience, and social cohesion. The final independent evaluation found that the programme remained highly relevant and responsive in one of Afghanistan's most restrictive and operationally complex environments. The evaluation found that 70.3 percent of beneficiaries considered programme support to be aligned with their needs, while comparison-group analysis indicated that beneficiary households demonstrated stronger resilience, improved access to services, and reduced economic losses compared with non-beneficiary communities. The evaluation further concluded that integrated investments across infrastructure, livelihoods, climate resilience, and essential services helped vulnerable households and communities withstand the effects of economic contraction, climate shocks, and the collapse of the opium economy.

UNSFA Priority 1: Sustained Essential Services

The programme contributed to improved access to essential services through investments in healthcare, water systems, renewable energy, sanitation, and community infrastructure. Family Health Houses (FHHs), the Mother and Child Health Centre, mobile outreach services, and community-based health systems expanded access to healthcare and reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH) services in remote and underserved communities.

The evaluation identified health interventions among the strongest-performing components of the programme. Health-related targets reached 107 percent of planned results, while female-focused health targets achieved 130 percent of planned coverage. Community-based service-delivery models strengthened access to healthcare, improved continuity of services, and supported women's access to care under restrictive operating conditions. The evaluation also identified the integrated FHH model as a particularly effective mechanism for extending access to essential services in remote and underserved communities. Investments in water systems, renewable energy, and local infrastructure further improved service accessibility and strengthened resilience of essential community services.

UNSFA Priority 2: Economic Opportunities and Resilient Livelihoods

The programme contributed to improved livelihoods, economic resilience, and protection of farm-based livelihoods through integrated support to agriculture, livestock production, enterprise development, vocational skills, cash assistance, climate adaptation, and disaster preparedness. Emphasis was placed on strengthening resilience among vulnerable rural households affected by drought, economic instability, and the collapse of the opium economy. Evaluation findings indicated that beneficiary households were better able to withstand economic shocks than comparison households. Only 14.4 percent of beneficiary households reported that their income situation had become "much worse", compared with 40.1 percent among comparison households.

Livelihoods interventions, alternative income-generation activities, and enterprise support helped diversify income sources and strengthen household coping capacity. Women's economic participation was sustained through home-based livelihood activities and women-led enterprises, while climate-resilience interventions generated measurable benefits. The evaluation found that 75 percent of farmers reported reduced drought- and flood-related losses, while beneficiary households reported a 46 percent reduction in average crop and livestock losses. Climate-smart agriculture, irrigation rehabilitation, water-management systems, and disaster-preparedness activities strengthened local adaptive capacity and reduced vulnerability to environmental shocks.

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

The programme contributed to stronger social cohesion, participation, and community resilience through community-based planning, psychosocial support, women's engagement initiatives, civil society engagement, media support, and community dialogue. Community consultation mechanisms and locally led implementation approaches strengthened community ownership and supported continued engagement of women and vulnerable groups despite restrictive operating conditions.

The evaluation found positive changes in community resilience and local problem-solving capacities. A total of 77.9 percent of beneficiaries reported an increased ability to resolve conflicts within their communities, reflecting strengthened community dialogue and dispute-resolution capacities. Community institutions and locally led mechanisms played an important role in sustaining programme delivery, strengthening accountability, and supporting access for vulnerable populations. Adaptive approaches, including home-based and community-level modalities, helped preserve opportunities for women's participation and engagement despite continuing restrictions.

Overall outcome-level contribution

The evaluation concluded that the programme achieved strong results in livelihoods recovery, climate resilience, infrastructure delivery, and access to essential services. Infrastructure performance was generally strong, with 78.5 percent of assessed assets rated as good or very high quality. The programme's integrated approach strengthened linkages between service delivery, economic recovery, climate adaptation, and community resilience, contributing to more sustainable and locally grounded recovery outcomes. Across multiple dimensions of resilience, service access, and livelihoods recovery, beneficiary households consistently reported stronger outcomes than comparison communities.

At the same time, the evaluation identified ongoing sustainability challenges, including limited community capacity to finance and maintain infrastructure, operational constraints that affect women's participation, and ongoing climate and economic fragility. Although sustainability indicators were stronger than those observed in some other regions, only 28.2 percent of surveyed households considered their communities to possess the technical and financial capacity required to maintain assets without continued external support. Nevertheless, the evaluation confirmed that coordinated, area-based, and locally led approaches can deliver meaningful gains in resilience and recovery, even in highly constrained operating environments.

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

1,869,619

Women and Girls

977,250 (52%)

The STFA Joint Programme in the Southern Region improved access to essential services and resilient community infrastructure across Kandahar, Helmand, Nimroz, Uruzgan, and Zabul provinces. The beneficiaries benefited from improved access to essential services and community infrastructure focused on healthcare, reproductive and maternal health, water supply, renewable energy, literacy and education, psychosocial support, and institutional strengthening, with particular emphasis on women, vulnerable populations, and underserved communities. Together, these interventions strengthened service delivery, community-level systems, and resilience in remote and climate-affected areas. The evaluation identified health, infrastructure and community-service interventions among the strongest-performing components of the programme, highlighting their contribution to improved access and community wellbeing.

Health services and community health infrastructure

A major component of Output 1 focused on strengthening access to primary healthcare and reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH) services in remote and underserved communities. A total of 61 Family Health Houses (FHHs), including 29 facilities in Helmand province and 32 sustained facilities in Kandahar province, provided integrated health services through skilled midwives and trained health workers. Twenty-two newly established FHHs were operationalized in permanent facilities constructed during the programme period, expanding access to community-based healthcare in previously underserved areas.

Over the implementation period, FHHs and associated community health interventions reached 453,231 beneficiaries, including 346,943 women and girls. Of these, 262,170 individuals received facility-based health services. Maternal and reproductive health services included 10,398 first antenatal care visits, 4,854 first postnatal care consultations, and 4,767 deliveries attended by skilled birth attendants. Family-planning counselling reached 28,080 beneficiaries, resulting in 9,896 users adopting modern family-planning methods. Child health and nutrition services included 48,867 outpatient consultations for children under five years of age, while 14,082 women and children received maternal, infant and young child nutrition support. A further 1,674 malnourished children were identified and referred to Therapeutic Feeding Units.

Referral systems and integrated service delivery were strengthened through coordinated healthcare, nutrition and immunization services. A total of 266 complicated maternal cases were referred to Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care facilities, while 234 maternal and child health cases were referred through ambulance services. Twenty-three obstetric fistula cases were identified and referred for specialized treatment. Integration of immunization and nutrition services into selected FHHs contributed to substantial increases in service utilization, including a 501 percent increase in immunization coverage, a 344 percent increase in skilled birth attendance, and more than a 1,600 percent increase in malnutrition referrals. The integrated FHH model also demonstrated strong cost-efficiency, operating at approximately US$2,700 per month while serving an average of 3,500 people per facility.

Health infrastructure and service continuity were further strengthened through the installation of solar-energy systems in 29 FHHs and 10 additional primary health facilities and maternity clinics. These investments benefited more than 286,000 people, improved continuity of maternal and newborn care, and reduced service disruptions associated with unreliable electricity supplies. Complementary investments in water systems and related facility improvements further strengthened functionality and accessibility.

Women's access to health and protection services was supported through targeted outreach and community-based approaches. Female volunteers assisted approximately 300 women returnees at the Takhta Pul reception centre in Kandahar to access registration and referral services, while 100 female health workers received training and delivery kits to strengthen community-level support for maternal and reproductive health, nutrition, childcare, and family planning.



Naseran, an STFA-supported Family Health House in Helmand Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

Taken together, these interventions significantly expanded access to integrated healthcare services, particularly for women and children in remote communities. The evaluation identified health interventions among the strongest-performing components of the programme, with health-related targets reaching 107 percent of planned results and female-focused health targets achieving 130 percent of planned coverage. Community-based healthcare delivery, strengthened referral systems, and integrated service models contributed to improved service accessibility, continuity of care, and resilience of local health systems.



Drug use prevention, treatment and psychosocial support

Integrated drug-use prevention, treatment, harm-reduction, and psychosocial-support services strengthened access to healthcare, recovery services, and community reintegration for people affected by drug use in Kandahar and Zabul provinces. Through Drug Treatment Centres and Drop-In Centres, the programme reached 25,155 drug-affected people, including 11,275 women, through evidence-based prevention, treatment, and harm-reduction interventions. This included 16,446 prevention service episodes, 20,315 psychosocial counselling sessions and 20,172 primary healthcare service episodes.

Community-based prevention activities targeted at-risk groups, including youth, returnees, IDPs, and prison populations, through awareness-raising campaigns and dissemination of information, education, and communication materials. Sports-based sensitization activities engaged 1,100 young people and promoted awareness of drug-use risks and prevention approaches.

Treatment and reintegration services enabled 430 individuals with substance-use disorders to complete residential treatment and reintegrate into their communities, supported by one year of aftercare services. Harm-reduction and healthcare interventions included testing for HIV, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and syphilis, referrals to specialized treatment, and broader primary healthcare support. Testing identified two HIV-positive cases, 48 Hepatitis B-positive cases, 67 Hepatitis C-positive cases, and one syphilis-positive case, all of whom were referred for follow-up treatment and care.

Institutional capacity was strengthened through training of 100 healthcare professionals on harm reduction, HIV and sexually transmitted infection prevention, Hepatitis management, gender-based violence (GBV), reproductive health and evidence-based service standards. Average assessment scores increased from 53 percent to 95 percent following training. Youth engagement activities involving 160 participants from civil society organizations, educational institutions, media organizations and community groups further strengthened awareness of drug dependency, prevention and coping mechanisms.

Psychosocial-support services were also provided to returnee, IDP and host communities through mobile teams and trained counsellors. A total of 386 counselling sessions benefited 5,794 individuals, including 1,557 women.

Taken together, these interventions strengthened access to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and psychosocial-support services while contributing to improved health outcomes, social reintegration and community wellbeing among vulnerable populations affected by drug use and displacement.

Water, irrigation and resilient infrastructure

Investments in water supply, irrigation rehabilitation and resilient infrastructure improved agricultural productivity, strengthened access to water and enhanced resilience to climate-related shocks across the Southern Region.

A total of 583,026 people, including 294,065 women and girls, benefited from rehabilitation and construction of critical infrastructure across Kandahar, Helmand, Nimroz, Uruzgan and Zabul provinces. Works included 13 roads covering 16.9 km, 67 canals covering 43.55 km, nine karezes[8], three water-supply systems, 12 check dams, 10 protection walls, one bridge and 160 culverts. Together, these investments improved access to water, enhanced mobility and reduced vulnerability to environmental hazards.

Agricultural productivity and water management were strengthened through rehabilitation of 100 irrigation structures serving approximately 2,774 hectares of agricultural land. A total of 4,500 households, including 320 women-headed households, representing 39,068 people, received agricultural and livestock support, while approximately 25,000 community members gained improved access to rehabilitated irrigation infrastructure.



A 1,158-meter retaining wall constructed with STFA support in Kandahar Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

[8] A karez is a traditional underground water-conveyance system that transports groundwater to agricultural land and settlements through gravity-fed tunnels and shafts.

Water-supply interventions improved access to safe drinking water for vulnerable communities. Three solar-powered water systems connected 1,308 households and benefited 9,810 people through deep wells, elevated water tanks and more than 16 km of distribution piping. A further 10 borewells improved access to safe drinking water for approximately 21,000 people across Uruzgan, Zabul and Helmand provinces. Water-user committees received training in operation and maintenance to support sustainability.

Transport and community infrastructure investments further strengthened connectivity, safety and access to services. Construction of 160 culverts across five provinces improved mobility and flood resilience, benefiting more than 32,000 people, while completion of 8.74 km of asphalt road in Qalat City, Zabul province, improved access to markets and services for approximately 10,000 people. Additional investments included solar-powered sanitation facilities and installation of 96 solar streetlights and 48 lighting poles in Spin Boldak commercial area, supporting public safety and local economic activity.

Taken together, these interventions strengthened access to water, irrigation, transport and community infrastructure while improving agricultural productivity, local connectivity and resilience to climate- and environment-related stresses. The evaluation identified infrastructure and climate-resilience investments among the strongest-performing components of the programme, highlighting their contribution to improved community resilience, service access and local recovery.

Literacy, education and vocational infrastructure

Literacy, education and vocational-skills interventions expanded learning opportunities, strengthened educational infrastructure and supported evidence-informed education planning across the Southern Region.

A total of 3,275 learners, including 1,785 women and girls, completed nine-month Youth and Adult Literacy Basic Education (YALBE) courses through 219 literacy classes. Learners received learning and hygiene materials, while facilitators benefited from pre-service and in-service training. To strengthen community ownership and local oversight, 204 Village Literacy Committees comprising 1,020 members were established to support monitoring and community engagement. Public literacy-promotion campaigns were also conducted through billboards, television broadcasts and radio messaging across 57 national and local radio stations.

Implementation was significantly affected by restrictions on literacy activities in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, resulting in 2,100 enrolled learners, nearly half women and girls, being unable to complete their courses. Nevertheless, literacy interventions continued to provide important educational opportunities for women, girls and vulnerable populations with limited access to formal learning.

The programme also supported evidence-based education planning through research on higher education institutions and gender equity, informing subsequent assessments of teacher capacity, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), Management Information Systems (MIS) and the impacts of restrictions affecting women’s access to higher education.

Educational and vocational infrastructure was strengthened through construction of a six-classroom school block with staff offices in Kandahar, benefiting approximately 480 learners, including 192 girls, and a vehicle-repair workshop at Kandahar Mechanical School supporting practical vocational training for more than 563 students.

Vocational-skills development further supported women's economic participation through tailoring and stone-crafting training programmes. Tailoring training reached 91 women and enabled 43 participants to establish home-based businesses through provision of stipends and start-up kits, while a further 17 women participated in a six-month stone-crafting mentorship programme. Delivery modalities were adapted through localized and home-based approaches and segregated workspaces.

Taken together, these interventions expanded access to literacy, education and vocational skills while strengthening educational infrastructure and supporting future workforce development. The programme also contributed to improved understanding of education-sector challenges and priorities, informing future planning and policy dialogue.



Institutional strengthening and digital systems

Institutional modernization and customs governance were strengthened through deployment of the Automated System for Relief Emergency Consignments (ASYREC) at Kandahar Inland Customs, Wesh Border Customs and Nimroz Customs. The system established standardized digital workflows for exemption-certificate processing, approvals and customs-clearance integration, supported by training for customs officials and technical personnel.

During implementation, ASYREC digitally processed and approved 17 exemption certificates linked to humanitarian and basic human needs consignments in Kandahar and Nimroz. The system improved transparency, traceability, reporting accuracy and processing efficiency while reducing delays associated with manual procedures. Institutional practices increasingly shifted from paper-based processing towards digital verification, monitoring and reporting systems.

Across Output 1, interventions expanded access to healthcare, water, education, psychosocial support and community infrastructure while strengthening the resilience and functionality of local service-delivery systems. Investments in Family Health Houses (FHHs), water and transport infrastructure, renewable energy, literacy programmes and institutional modernization helped reduce barriers to essential services and improve outcomes for women, vulnerable populations and underserved communities.

The evaluation identified health, infrastructure and community-service interventions among the strongest-performing components of the programme, highlighting their contribution to improved access, resilience and community wellbeing.

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 Households	Women-led Households	Number of MSMEs	Women-led MSMEs
14,852	4,624 (31%)	4,851	1,162 (24%)

The STFA Joint Programme supported livelihoods recovery, employment generation, micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) development, women's economic empowerment, agricultural production, vocational-skills development and local economic resilience across the Southern Region.

Activities combined cash assistance, business development, agricultural support, market access and entrepreneurship promotion, with particular attention to women, returnees, IDPs, vulnerable households and communities affected by economic instability, displacement and the collapse of the opium economy. Together, these interventions strengthened household resilience, income generation and local economic recovery during a period of severe economic contraction.

The evaluation found that beneficiary households were better able to withstand economic shocks than comparison households, with only 14.4 percent reporting their income situation as "much worse", compared with 40.1 percent among comparison households.



Cash assistance and employment generation

Cash assistance and Cash-for-Work (CfW) interventions provided immediate income support to vulnerable households while contributing to local economic recovery, rehabilitation of community assets and strengthened household resilience.

A total of 1,000 households, including 777 women-headed households, representing 6,232 individuals, received Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCT). Additional cash-assistance interventions reached 67,657 vulnerable individuals through direct financial support designed to help households meet essential needs and reduce the impacts of economic instability. Post-distribution monitoring indicated that some beneficiaries were able to invest part of the assistance in livestock production, agriculture and small businesses.

Cash-for-Work activities formed a major component of livelihoods recovery efforts. Support reached 10,000 households, representing 76,784 individuals, including 39,855 women, through labour-intensive activities linked to rehabilitation of irrigation systems, canals, roads, public spaces and community infrastructure. Additional interventions generated more than 43,720 temporary jobs and 143,916 workdays, significantly exceeding original targets. Activities included canal rehabilitation, environmental management, road improvement, tree planting and maintenance of public infrastructure, strengthening both household incomes and community assets.

Community-based infrastructure and environmental-management activities further generated employment for 850 households, including IDPs, youth, persons with disabilities and members of women-headed households. Canal-cleaning and rehabilitation activities improved approximately 48 km of irrigation infrastructure while supporting income generation for vulnerable workers.

Cash-based support also strengthened protection and reintegration outcomes for returnees, IDPs and other vulnerable households. Reintegration grants reached 3,800 households, representing approximately 26,600 individuals, while additional assistance for households with persons with specific needs, multi-purpose cash assistance and winterization support collectively reached more than 56,000 individuals across the Southern Region.

Taken together, these interventions provided an important buffer against economic shocks during a period of severe economic contraction. The evaluation found that beneficiary households were substantially more resilient than comparison households, with only 14.4 percent reporting that their income situation had become “much worse”, compared with 40.1 percent among non-beneficiaries.

Agricultural livelihoods and income-generating activities

Agricultural livelihoods and small-scale income-generating activities strengthened food security, household incomes and sustainable licit livelihoods across the Southern Region, with particular emphasis on women-headed households and communities affected by economic instability and the opium-economy transition.

A total of 5,775 households, including 5,677 women-headed households, representing 40,251 people, of whom 23,467 were women, benefited from agriculture-based income-generating activities. Support included home gardening, poultry production, beekeeping, greenhouse cultivation, mushroom production and micro solar-dryer technologies, strengthening household food production, diversifying income sources and expanding opportunities for women's economic participation.

Women's participation in local food systems was further strengthened through establishment of 147 women producer groups and training for 800 women on soyabean nutrition, preparation and storage practices, contributing to improved household nutrition and stronger local food value chains.

Alternative livelihoods support reached 19,822 former poppy-growing farmers, including 5,007 women-headed households, through provision of improved seeds, fertilizers and technical assistance for vegetable cultivation. Participating farmers reported average earnings of approximately AFN 45,000 ($650) from vegetable sales while also improving household food consumption.



A farmer poses beside a peach tree on his agricultural land in Zabul Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

Agricultural value addition and market access were strengthened through establishment of four vegetable-processing centres where women collectively produced and marketed products such as ketchup and pickles. Each centre processed approximately 2,500 kilogrammes of products during the project period, demonstrating the viability of small-scale agro-processing enterprises.

Livestock productivity and resilience were strengthened through establishment of seven milk-collection centres linked to private-sector buyers, 12 veterinary field units and five community-based seed and feed banks. Veterinary services supported vaccination and treatment of 69,975 animals, contributing to improved livestock health and productivity.

Taken together, these interventions strengthened agricultural production, promoted alternative and licit livelihoods, expanded opportunities for women's economic participation and improved resilience among rural households affected by economic instability, drought and changing agricultural conditions.

MSME development and local economic recovery

Support to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), entrepreneurs and market systems contributed to business recovery, employment retention, job creation and local economic resilience across the Southern Region.

A total of 766 MSMEs, including 590 women-led enterprises, received technical and financial assistance through grants, business-development services and enterprise-support packages. Supported businesses operated across sectors including agro-processing, food preservation, tailoring, handicrafts, retail trade, repair services, restaurants, bakeries and home-based production activities. Enterprise grants, typically valued between $800 and $1,000, helped strengthen business continuity, generate employment and support household resilience.

Additional support reached 512 MSMEs, including 367 unique enterprises and 71 women-owned businesses, through provision of equipment, machinery and business-recovery assistance. Green-energy solutions, including solar technologies, were provided to 92 enterprises, reducing operating costs and improving productivity. These interventions contributed to safeguarding 606 jobs and creating 585 new jobs, many of which benefited returnees and IDPs.

Employment retention and business continuity were further supported through six-month salary-subsidy schemes benefiting 3,291 employees across 236 MSMEs. The intervention retained 2,436 jobs and generated a further 855 employment opportunities during a period of economic volatility.

Market access and trade promotion initiatives strengthened enterprise competitiveness and commercial opportunities. Product-standardization support was provided to 19 MSMEs, while 152 enterprises participated in national and international trade exhibitions in Afghanistan, China and Sri Lanka. These activities generated an estimated $985,078 in contracts and sales and facilitated 1,679 business-to-business engagements.



Women in an STFA-supported women-led bakery in Kandahar Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

Women's economic empowerment was strengthened through support to women-led enterprises, entrepreneurship training and digital-market access initiatives. Collaboration with the Afghan Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI) enabled 25 women-led businesses to access e-commerce platforms, while additional support to women-owned enterprises contributed to creation of 75 new jobs for women. Participating businesses reported average sales increases of 15 percent following business-development training, mentoring and customized support packages. Entrepreneurship and business-literacy training also reached women entrepreneurs and female youth returnees.

Urban livelihoods and business formalization were supported through installation of roadside cabin shops benefiting 280 street vendors in Kandahar and establishment of a dedicated facility for the MSME committee of the Kandahar Chamber of Mines and Industries, strengthening business coordination and trading opportunities for more than 250 MSMEs, including 30 women-led enterprises.

Taken together, these interventions strengthened enterprise resilience, protected jobs, expanded market opportunities and supported local economic recovery. The evaluation identified enterprise support and locally led livelihoods initiatives as important contributors to household resilience and economic stabilization, particularly in communities affected by economic contraction and the transition away from opium-dependent livelihoods.

Business capacity development and trade facilitation

Business-capacity development and trade-facilitation interventions strengthened enterprise competitiveness, export readiness and market participation across the Southern Region.

A total of 1,128 MSME employees, including 419 women, representing 945 MSMEs, received training in entrepreneurship, business management, export promotion, trade and transit management, Incoterms and women's entrepreneurship development.[9] Training covered business planning, marketing, packaging, labelling, taxation, financial management and export readiness.

Pre- and post-training assessments demonstrated substantial improvements in participant knowledge and skills, with average scores increasing from 6.14 to 17.63 out of 20. Beneficiary feedback indicated high levels of satisfaction with training quality and practical relevance, with participants reporting application of acquired skills to improve business operations, marketing and financial management.

Several beneficiaries reported business expansion, entry into export markets and access to additional development financing following completion of the training programmes. These interventions strengthened enterprise capacity and expanded opportunities for business growth and trade integration.

Taken together, business-capacity development and trade-facilitation activities strengthened the ability of local enterprises to participate more effectively in domestic and international markets, supporting longer-term economic resilience and private-sector development in the Southern Region.



Workers at the Kandahar Basic Food Centre supported by STFA through employment retention and solarisation in Kandahar Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

[9] Incoterms are a standardized set of rules published by the International Chamber of Commerce that define the responsibilities of buyers and sellers in international trade transactions.

Vocational skills development and women's livelihoods

Vocational-skills development interventions strengthened employability, women's economic participation and livelihood opportunities among vulnerable populations across the Southern Region.

A total of 240 vulnerable men and women, including IDPs and persons with disabilities, received vocational training in embroidery, tailoring, carpentry, motorcycle repair and mobile-phone repair. Many participants subsequently established small businesses and income-generating activities, contributing to greater self-reliance.

Women's economic participation was further strengthened through tailoring and home-based livelihood programmes adapted to restrictive operating conditions. Tailoring-skills training enabled 43 women in Kandahar to establish home-based businesses generating average monthly incomes of approximately $100. Localized and home-based training modalities helped sustain women's participation despite restrictions affecting access to formal employment and training opportunities.

Vocational training was also integrated into psychosocial-support and resilience-building initiatives. Through three-month tailoring courses delivered at the Milak Zero Point Mother and Child Health Centre in Nimroz province, 460 women and girls received vocational-skills training linked to psychosocial-support services. Participation contributed to income-generation opportunities as well as improved wellbeing and social-support networks.

Across Output 2, interventions strengthened household resilience, supported local economic recovery and expanded livelihood opportunities through integrated support to agriculture, enterprise development, vocational skills and market access. The programme helped vulnerable households diversify income sources, strengthen self-reliance and improve their capacity to withstand economic shocks during a period of severe economic contraction and transition away from opium-dependent livelihoods.



A carpenter and his kids posing for a photo in his carpentry shop in Helmand 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

100,281

Women and Girls

29,896 (30%)

The STFA Joint Programme in the Southern Region strengthened climate resilience, disaster preparedness, water management and protection of farm-based livelihoods across Kandahar, Helmand, Nimroz, Uruzgan and Zabul provinces. Under Output 3, approximately 100,281 people, including 29,896 women and girls (30 percent), benefited from disaster risk reduction, drought preparedness, flood mitigation and community-resilience interventions. Activities focused on drought preparedness, flood mitigation, irrigation rehabilitation, climate-smart agriculture, water harvesting, resilient infrastructure and community-based preparedness mechanisms in drought-affected and environmentally vulnerable communities. Together, these interventions strengthened access to water, improved agricultural productivity and enhanced resilience to climate-related shocks. The evaluation identified climate-resilience, water-management and livelihood-protection interventions among the strongest-performing components of the Joint Programme, with beneficiary households reporting lower climate-related losses and stronger adaptive capacity than comparison communities.

Drought preparedness and community-based disaster risk reduction

Integrated drought-preparedness and disaster risk reduction interventions strengthened community resilience, anticipatory action and local preparedness for climate-related shocks across the Southern Region.

A total of 21 Community-Based Drought Early Warning Systems (CB-DEWS) were established across 14 districts in Helmand, Kandahar, Nimroz, Uruzgan and Zabul provinces, improving community access to drought information and strengthening local preparedness and response capacities.

Large-scale training programmes further strengthened community adaptive capacity. A total of 23,405 smallholder farmers and herders received training on early warning systems, anticipatory mitigation measures and preparedness mechanisms. In addition, 13,000 farmers and livestock keepers, including 5,947 women, were trained in climate-smart agriculture and livestock-management practices, while a further 2,556 farmers, including 1,977 women, received training and productive assets to strengthen climate-smart agricultural production and food security.

Community-level disaster preparedness was further strengthened through awareness-raising and capacity-building activities reaching 2,991 individuals, including 333 women. Participants received training on disaster preparedness, resilient livelihoods and adaptation to floods, droughts and storms.

Flood-prone communities in Zabul and Helmand provinces benefited from Community-based Capacity Building activities involving 183 community members, including 91 women. Training covered disaster-risk analysis, contingency planning, first aid, search and rescue and early-warning procedures. Three community disaster committees were established and equipped to coordinate alerts and local response activities, supported by simulation exercises and equipment handovers.

Despite restrictions on mobility, limited educational opportunities and a shrinking operational space for women-led organizations, thousands of women participated in climate-resilience and climate-smart agriculture activities across the Southern Region.

Taken together, these interventions strengthened local capacities to anticipate, prepare for and respond to droughts, floods and other climate-related hazards, supporting a gradual shift towards more preventive and preparedness-oriented approaches to disaster-risk management.



Flood protection and resilient community infrastructure

Flood-mitigation and protective infrastructure investments reduced flood risks and protected critical assets, livelihoods and access routes in vulnerable communities.

Protective infrastructure included construction of one check dam and five culverts in Zabul province, benefiting an estimated 9,975 people through improved flood management and protection of local transport links and access to services. The works were implemented through Cash-for-Work modalities, generating temporary employment and supporting household incomes.

Additional flood-protection interventions in Kandahar province included construction of seven retaining walls totalling 7,093 metres and five flood-control canals totalling 1,519 metres. These interventions benefited 81,144 people, including 39,340 women, and substantially exceeded original targets through strong community participation and localized implementation approaches. Participatory planning processes enabled communities to identify and prioritize critical infrastructure needs, strengthening local ownership. The projects also generated temporary employment for 148 community members while contributing to improved flood protection and reduced environmental risks.

Taken together, these interventions strengthened protection of infrastructure, livelihoods and essential services while increasing resilience to flooding and other climate-related hazards in vulnerable communities across the Southern Region.



A flood diversion wall aimed at protecting IDP communities from floods in Kandahar Province. © UNDP

Water management, irrigation and climate-smart agriculture

Integrated water-management, irrigation and climate-smart agriculture interventions strengthened agricultural resilience, improved water security and supported sustainable licit livelihoods across drought-affected communities in the Southern Region.

A total of 23 traditional karez systems were rehabilitated in Kandahar and Zabul provinces, benefiting approximately 16,000 people, including 8,000 women. The interventions generated 22,777 labour days through Cash-for-Work modalities while restoring critical water infrastructure supporting agriculture and rural livelihoods. Traditional knowledge relating to karez rehabilitation, water management and community water-distribution systems was also documented to help preserve indigenous technical knowledge.

Climate-resilient agriculture and water-management interventions reached 30,759 former poppy-growing farmers, including 8,551 women, in Helmand and Kandahar provinces. Seven rainwater-harvesting structures were constructed to improve irrigation-water availability, reduce drought impacts and mitigate flash-flood risks.

Farmers received improved cereal and saffron seeds, fertilizers and technical assistance to support transition towards higher-value and less water-intensive licit crops. Training focused on efficient irrigation, soil-moisture conservation, crop rotation and sustainable resource management.

These interventions contributed to approximately 52 percent increase in licit agricultural yields while improving water-use efficiency and household incomes.

Agricultural diversification was further supported through rehabilitation and trellising of 65 grape vineyards and establishment of 10 pistachio nurseries capable of producing up to 2,500 saplings per cycle. Germination rates exceeded 75 percent, supporting development of high-value and climate-resilient livelihood opportunities.

Extension services provided continuous technical support on irrigation management, integrated pest management and improved agricultural practices to help sustain productivity gains and adaptation to changing climatic conditions.

Taken together, these interventions strengthened water security, improved agricultural productivity and supported the transition towards more sustainable livelihoods. The evaluation identified water management, climate-smart agriculture and livelihood-protection measures as important contributors to reducing climate-related losses and strengthening resilience among vulnerable rural households.

Environmental management and resilience-building approaches

Environmental-management interventions promoted sustainable stewardship of natural resources and strengthened resilience to climate-related stresses in vulnerable rural communities. Innovative community-based approaches to management of common-property natural resources were introduced to strengthen local participation and sustainable resource governance. In addition, approximately 22,823 hectares of land were regenerated, contributing to improved environmental resilience and the capacity of landscapes to absorb climate-related stresses.

Across Output 3, interventions strengthened climate resilience through integrated investments in disaster preparedness, water management, climate-smart agriculture, environmental restoration and resilient infrastructure. Rehabilitation of karezes, rainwater-harvesting systems, irrigation infrastructure and flood-protection works helped protect farm-based livelihoods, improve water security and reduce vulnerability to environmental shocks. Participatory implementation approaches, traditional knowledge and community-based preparedness mechanisms further strengthened local ownership and adaptive capacity in drought- and flood-prone communities across the Southern Region.

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

383,598

Women and Girls

85,542 (22%)

The STFA Joint Programme supported social cohesion, community participation, women's voice, human rights awareness, access to information and local accountability across the Southern Region. Under Output 4, approximately 383,598 people, including 85,542 women and girls (22 percent), were reached through social cohesion, human rights awareness, access to information and community-engagement activities despite severe restrictions affecting women's mobility, employment and public participation. Interventions included community consultation and planning processes, women-led engagement, media outreach, digital-security training, awareness-raising activities and community-based initiatives designed to strengthen participation, trust and resilience in a highly restrictive operating environment. Together, these interventions strengthened social cohesion, community participation and inclusion while helping preserve opportunities for engagement by women and vulnerable groups. The evaluation found that community-based implementation approaches strengthened local ownership, participation and trust, particularly where interventions were delivered through established community structures and participatory planning mechanisms.

Community planning, participation and social cohesion

Community participation, social cohesion and inclusive planning processes strengthened local ownership and collaborative decision-making across the Southern Region. Community Action Planning processes were conducted in Kandahar, Nimroz and Zabul provinces between 2022 and 2024, engaging 402 participants, including 203 women.

The processes supported identification of shared community priorities and informed subsequent investments in livelihoods, infrastructure and resilience-building activities. Community consultations and feedback mechanisms further strengthened accountability and responsiveness to local needs.

Community-level participation was strengthened through establishment and training of Local Implementation Committees (LICs). Sixty LIC members, equally divided between women and men, received training on accountability to affected populations, inclusive decision-making, conflict-sensitive planning and community-led implementation. In Kandahar, 19 LICs were established following mapping of 85 active Gozar Assemblies, enabling communities to identify hazards, prioritize needs and develop action plans that informed 25 community-led projects.

Social cohesion initiatives promoted tolerance, peaceful coexistence and community dialogue. Connection, Acceptance and Respect (CAR) sessions reached 240 participants, equally divided between women and men, while community events involving sports, cultural and social activities engaged approximately 120 participants. Dispute-resolution training reached 70 participants, including 35 women, strengthening local capacity to manage disputes and support peaceful conflict resolution.

Community awareness-raising and capacity-building activities reached 324,372 individuals, including 43,863 women, through initiatives focused on human rights, social cohesion and conflict prevention. Additional training for 334 women covered Psychological First Aid, self-care, legal awareness, women's rights, business rights, family conflict resolution and inheritance rights.

Taken together, these interventions strengthened local participation, accountability and social cohesion while helping communities identify shared priorities, resolve disputes and engage more effectively in local development processes. Despite continuing constraints on women's participation, community-based approaches helped preserve opportunities for engagement and ensure that women's perspectives informed local planning and decision-making.

Access to information, media and accountability

Media, information and community-outreach initiatives strengthened access to information, public awareness and accountability across the Southern Region.

A total of 559 media products, including interviews, feature reports and other content, were produced and broadcast on education, health, environmental and social issues affecting communities in Southern Afghanistan. Support was also provided to 19 journalists, including five women, through capacity-building and employment opportunities, contributing to continued local media engagement and information dissemination in a constrained civic environment.

Community-outreach and accountability mechanisms strengthened public understanding of assistance programmes, beneficiary-selection criteria, entitlements and reporting procedures. Through billboards, leaflets and toll-free hotlines, approximately 10,513 individuals were reached with information on programme activities and prevention of fraud and corruption. Taken together, these interventions strengthened access to information, promoted transparency and accountability, and supported more informed community participation in programme activities and local development processes.

Livelihoods-linked social cohesion and inclusion

Livelihoods interventions also contributed to social inclusion, economic resilience and participation among vulnerable groups, particularly women, women-headed households, widows and persons with disabilities.

A total of 31,838 individuals, including 15,786 women, received support through poultry production, dairy processing, livestock management and small-scale agricultural activities. These interventions strengthened household incomes and expanded livelihood opportunities for vulnerable households.

Poultry-production activities provided beneficiaries with pullets, feed, coop materials and technical training. Six semi-commercial poultry farms were established, generating average monthly incomes of approximately AFN 15,500 ($220). Additional support for women-headed households, widows and persons with disabilities included provision of goats, fodder seeds and livestock-management toolkits, accompanied by training in animal husbandry and disease prevention. Some beneficiary households reported generating approximately AFN 100 ($1.40) per day through milk sales.

Dairy-processing support included provision of milking equipment and linkages to Milk Collection Centres, enabling beneficiaries to earn average net monthly incomes of approximately AFN 9,000 ($130) from dairy sales. Complementary livestock interventions included stable improvements, hygiene training, livestock-management support and access to artificial insemination services. Animal-health services reached 69,975 animals belonging to 2,149 households, contributing to improved livestock productivity.

Although primarily livelihoods-oriented, these interventions also strengthened economic inclusion by enabling vulnerable households to diversify income sources and participate more actively in local economic life.

Women's voice, participation and institutional support

Women's participation, voice and representation were strengthened through consultations, capacity development and support to women-led civil society organizations operating in a highly restrictive environment.

Digital-security training reached 60 activists and civil society leaders, including 42 women, and provided technical support to 21 women-led and gender-focused community-based civil society organizations. Training significantly strengthened participants' digital-security knowledge, with average assessment scores increasing from 42 percent before training to 92 percent afterwards.

Consultations conducted jointly with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reached 1,173 Afghans across the Southern Region, including 817 women. The consultations generated evidence on women's lived experiences under restrictive conditions and informed advocacy, programming and policy dialogue. Findings indicated that 90 percent of women in the South reported being denied access to public spaces, while 21 percent reported reduced influence over marriage-related decisions.

The proportion of male family members reported to be enforcing restrictions increased from 25 percent to 55 percent.

To strengthen outreach in hard-to-reach areas, 18 women community volunteers from Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, Uruzgan and Nimroz provinces received training to support consultations and data collection where staff access was constrained, helping ensure that women's perspectives from remote communities informed advocacy and decision-making processes.

Awareness-raising activities further strengthened women's access to information and community engagement. Through the Milak Zero Point Mother and Child Health Centre in Nimroz province, 27,234 women and girls participated in awareness sessions delivered by social mobilizers, complementing broader health, psychosocial-support and protection interventions.

Taken together, these interventions strengthened women's participation, access to information and representation while supporting evidence-based advocacy and continued engagement of women-led organizations under increasingly restrictive conditions.

Across Output 4, interventions strengthened social cohesion, participation and inclusion through community consultation and planning processes, women's engagement, access to information, media outreach and support to local institutions and civil society organizations. Community-based implementation approaches helped sustain civic participation, strengthen trust and accountability and preserve opportunities for women's voice and engagement despite increasingly restrictive operating conditions. The programme demonstrated that localized engagement mechanisms, adapted delivery approaches and evidence-based advocacy can contribute to more inclusive and resilient communities even in highly constrained environments.



Community elders talking about their needs and the support they received from STFA in Helmand Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

Qualitative Assessment



A student drinks clean water from an STFA-supported water supply network in Helmand Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

The STFA Joint Programme in the Southern Region contributed to resilience, livelihoods recovery, access to essential services and community stability in one of Afghanistan's most constrained operating environments. Through integrated interventions implemented under the DaO framework, the programme addressed interconnected challenges relating to poverty, displacement, declining livelihoods, climate vulnerability, limited service access and restrictions affecting women and vulnerable populations. Despite persistent constraints, the programme demonstrated the value of adaptive, locally led and integrated approaches in supporting recovery and resilience.

Coherence under the DaO framework was a significant enabling factor throughout implementation. Complementary technical expertise, operational reach and sectoral mandates were combined to deliver integrated interventions across healthcare, infrastructure, livelihoods, climate resilience and women's economic participation, strengthening programme coherence and reducing duplication. Coordinated implementation reinforced linkages between service delivery, local economic recovery and community resilience, contributing to more sustainable and locally grounded outcomes. The evaluation identified this integrated and multi-sectoral design as a key factor underpinning programme relevance and effectiveness across the Southern Region.

Community participation and locally led implementation were important strengths across all outputs. Community structures, local NGOs, implementing partners, chambers of commerce, health shuras and community leaders contributed to beneficiary targeting, planning, implementation and monitoring, strengthening local ownership, accountability and social acceptance.[10] These mechanisms also helped preserve access for women and vulnerable populations under restrictive conditions.

The programme maintained strong alignment with the United Nations' principled approach, including commitments to neutrality, impartiality, inclusion, accountability and "do no harm". Vulnerability-based targeting and inclusive implementation approaches helped ensure that support reached women, returnees, IDPs, women-headed households, persons with disabilities and underserved rural communities. Community feedback and accountability mechanisms were incorporated across multiple sectors to strengthen responsiveness, transparency and programme quality.

Livelihoods interventions contributed to household resilience and local economic recovery through cash assistance, agricultural support, MSME development, vocational training and alternative livelihoods programming. Integrated approaches linking livelihoods support with market access, enterprise development and climate-smart agriculture strengthened sustainability and supported transition towards licit and more resilient economic activities in communities affected by the collapse of the opium economy.

The programme also strengthened climate resilience through climate-smart agriculture, rehabilitation of irrigation and traditional water-management systems, renewable-energy solutions and community-based disaster risk reduction. Several interventions demonstrated the value of combining indigenous knowledge, climate-responsive design and community-managed systems within resilience programming.

[10] Health shuras are community-based health committees that support local health service delivery through community mobilization, health promotion, oversight, problem-solving and liaison between communities and health providers.

Health, psychosocial support and protection interventions improved access to integrated and culturally appropriate services in underserved communities. The evaluation identified community-based health-service delivery, including the Family Health House model, as a particularly effective approach for extending access to essential services in remote areas while supporting continuity of care for women and children.

Support to women's participation and economic empowerment represented an important achievement in a highly restrictive environment. Adaptive modalities, including women-only spaces, home-based activities, female volunteers and localized implementation arrangements, enabled continued participation in livelihoods, health, psychosocial-support and community-engagement initiatives. While broader transformative gender outcomes remained constrained by the operating environment, the programme achieved meaningful gains in women's economic participation and access to services.

Adaptive programming and operational flexibility were critical to sustaining implementation. Localized delivery approaches, flexible technical solutions, and sustained engagement with communities and relevant authorities enabled continued implementation despite restrictions affecting women's participation, climate-related shocks and operational constraints. Partnerships with local NGOs, women-led organizations, chambers of commerce, and community structures further strengthened outreach, contextual adaptation, and operational acceptance.

Overall, the STFA Joint Programme contributed to important gains in resilience, inclusion, livelihoods recovery, and access to essential services across the Southern Region. Through coordinated implementation under the DaO framework, it strengthened local capacities, supported vulnerable households, and demonstrated the continued relevance of integrated, community-based, and principled approaches in Afghanistan's evolving operational context. Continued investment in adaptive programming, women's participation, climate resilience, alternative livelihoods, and area-based recovery approaches will be important to sustaining and expanding these gains.



Patients in a Drug Treatment Centre (DTC) supported by STFA in Zabul Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

Evaluation, Best Practices and Lessons Learned



A midwife in a Family Health House supported by STFA in Helmand Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

Evaluation

The independent evaluation (February 2026) validated the relevance, effectiveness and adaptive nature of programme implementation in the Southern Region. The evaluation found that interventions were strongly aligned with community priorities and local needs and that the programme functioned as an important resilience mechanism during a period marked by severe economic contraction, climate shocks and the collapse of the opium economy. The evaluation also highlighted the value of the programme's area-based and community-driven approach, which integrated infrastructure, livelihoods, climate resilience and essential services around locally identified priorities. These features were identified as important contributors to programme relevance, effectiveness and local ownership.

The evaluation identified particularly strong performance in climate resilience, livelihoods recovery and infrastructure delivery. Climate-smart agriculture, water-management systems, irrigation rehabilitation and flood-protection infrastructure contributed to strengthened local adaptive capacity and protection of livelihoods. The evaluation also identified important sustainability enablers, including strong community ownership, participatory implementation approaches and broad acceptance of community-based service-delivery models. At the same time, it highlighted continuing challenges, including limited community capacity to finance and maintain infrastructure, ongoing climate vulnerability and difficulties fully replacing income losses associated with the collapse of the opium economy. Nevertheless, the evaluation concluded that integrated, adaptive and community-based approaches remained highly relevant and effective in supporting resilience and recovery under restrictive operating conditions.

Challenges

1 Implementation of the STFA Joint Programme in the Southern Region took place in a highly constrained operating environment characterized by restrictions imposed by relevant authorities, economic instability, climate-related shocks, administrative delays, infrastructure limitations, and reduced institutional capacity. Despite these challenges, implementation modalities and partnerships were continuously adapted to sustain programme delivery and maintain access to vulnerable communities.

2 Restrictions affecting women's mobility, employment, education and participation remained among the most significant challenges throughout implementation. Requirements relating to permissions, mahram accompaniment, and limitations on women's participation in public activities affected literacy, livelihoods, vocational training, community engagement, and social cohesion interventions.[11] In response, many activities were redesigned or delivered through home-based, women-led and other locally acceptable modalities, although participation remained below targets in some sectors and locations.

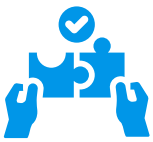
[11] A mahram is a close male relative whom a woman is not permitted to marry under Islamic law and who may be required to accompany her for certain forms of travel or public participation.

3 Administrative and coordination challenges also affected implementation. Delays in approvals, Memoranda of Understanding, beneficiary profiling, site selection, and technical validation slowed initiation of some activities, while coordination requirements and interdependencies between interventions occasionally affected implementation timelines. Sustained engagement with relevant authorities, community leaders and local structures proved essential in maintaining operational continuity and preserving access for women and vulnerable groups.

4 Infrastructure implementation was further affected by difficult terrain, remote locations, adverse weather, flooding, earthquake impacts and shortages of skilled labour. Inflation, exchange-rate fluctuations and rising transport and construction costs increased pressure on project budgets and procurement processes. Technology and communications constraints, including internet disruptions and restrictions on GPS usage, also complicated coordination, monitoring and reporting.

5 Economic volatility and the enforcement of the narcotics ban created additional pressures on rural livelihoods. Reduced income from poppy cultivation increased vulnerability among farming households and heightened demand for support promoting licit agricultural production, climate-resilient livelihoods and local economic recovery.

Lessons Learned



1 Adaptive programming and operational flexibility emerged as central lessons across the programme. Home-based training, women-led outreach, flexible participation arrangements, localized implementation approaches and community-based delivery mechanisms enabled continued implementation despite a shrinking operational space. In several cases, activities were redesigned to align more closely with local socio-cultural realities and implementation constraints, strengthening acceptance and sustainability.



2 The programme demonstrated the importance of strong community engagement and locally led implementation. Coordination with community leaders, local authorities, community structures and women-led organizations helped maintain access, resolve implementation challenges and strengthen accountability. Participatory planning and community consultation approaches enhanced local ownership, resilience and sustainability across multiple sectors.



3 Implementation experience also highlighted the value of integrated programming and climate-responsive approaches. Combining infrastructure investments with preparedness activities, livelihoods support with complementary services, and vocational training with income-generation opportunities strengthened programme relevance and resilience outcomes. Locally adapted approaches, including community-based natural-resource management, traditional water-management systems and climate-smart agricultural practices, often proved more sustainable and effective than conventional models.



4 The programme further demonstrated that women's participation can be sustained, although often in constrained forms, through adaptive and locally appropriate approaches including women-led outreach, home-based activities, female volunteers and flexible delivery modalities. However, maintaining meaningful participation required continuous negotiation, adaptive management and sustained community engagement.



5 Overall, implementation experience in the Southern Region underscored the importance of adaptive management, integrated programming, strong coordination and locally led approaches in fragile and restrictive contexts. Lessons learned highlighted the value of early stakeholder engagement, flexible planning and resilience-based programming that combines immediate support with longer-term recovery and sustainability objectives.

Annexes



A worker at Taj Watan Company supported by STFA in Kandahar Province. © STFA/Mohammad Omar Kamal

Annex I. Indicator-based Performance Review

(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. (MPTFO Project id# 129789)						
1a. Number of people that have benefited from UN-supported essential services and/or new/rehabilitated infrastructure, disaggregated by type of service and sex.	Households	0	25,000	25,000		PUNO report
	People	0	1,469,263 (800,096)	1,840,718 (962,530)		PUNO report
1c. Number of people that have benefited from drug-treatment, drug rehabilitation services (health)	People	0	8,000 (2,400)	25,626 (12,935)		PUNO report
1d. Number of functional, UN-supported, facilities providing basic health assistance (including basic health assistance services for women and girls)	Facilities/Infrastructure	0	88	218		PUNO report
1f. Number of children, adolescents and adults (including adolescent girls and women) who benefit from primary and secondary education, basic general literacy and vocational education programmes (at least 50% female)	People	0	6,550 (3,275)	3,275 (1,785)	Literacy-course ban in Kandahar/Helmand	PUNO report
1g. Hectares of rehabilitated and/or newly irrigated land for agricultural activities	Facilities/Infrastructure	0	100	100		PUNO report
1j. Kms of road rehabilitated and/or maintained	Facilities/Infrastructure	0	155	155		PUNO report
	Kms	0	8.74	8.74		PUNO report
Output 2. Livelihoods, businesses and local economy are able to recover and are more resilient to instability (MPTFO Project id# 129790)						
2a. Number of people who have benefited from UCT (at least 80% women)	Households	0	1,000 (1,000)	1,000 (777)		PUNO report
	People	0	123,648 (26,825)	137,657 (35,583)		PUNO report

Annex I - Indicator-based Performance Review	Unit	Baseline	Target	Progress	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target	Source of Verification
2b. Number of people who have benefited from newly-created income-generation opportunities, disaggregated by sex, age and province	Activities	0	7,430 (1,415)	5,448 (5,254)		PUNO report
	Households	0	3,750 (3,750)	3,852 (3,780)		PUNO report
	Producer groups	0	400 (400)	312 (312)		PUNO report
	People	2863	18,898 (5,840)	24,486 (6,468)		PUNO report
	Trainings	0	375 (75)	375 (374)		PUNO report
2b.1. Number of people who have benefited from productive employment through CfW schemes (at least 30% women; 50% youth)	Households	0	10,000 (0)	10,000 (67)		PUNO report
	People	0	37,374 (3,985)	47,650 (281)		PUNO report
2c. Number of worker-days generated with UN-support	Work days	0	23,534	167,450	Target not fully established during the planning stage.	PUNO report
2f. Number of MSMEs that benefit through financial capital support, training and/or other forms of asset support, disaggregated by women-led and men-led MSMEs	MSMEs	0	3,553 (467)	4,851 (1,162)		PUNO report
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 (MPTFO Project id# 129791)						
3a. Number of districts with functional early warning systems and other preparedness mechanisms for climate shocks and natural disasters	Districts	0	9	44		PUNO report
3b. Number of people who acquired knowledge and skills on disaster preparedness (including explosive hazard awareness) and climate-resilient livelihoods (at least 30% women)	Approaches	0	2	2		PUNO report
	People	0	2,336 (126)	2,991 (333)		PUNO report
3c. Number of farmers who benefited from training and assets for improved, climate-smart, agriculture (at least 30% women)	People	20790	69,042 (14,796)	71,315 (16,475)		PUNO report

Annex I - Indicator-based Performance Review	Unit	Baseline	Target	Progress	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target	Source of Verification
3d. Number of people who benefit from rehabilitated and/or newly constructed disaster-resilient community infrastructure and nature-based solutions	People	0	17,200 (8,360)	25,975 (13,088)		PUNO report
	Hectares	0	22,823	22,823		PUNO report
Output 4. Social cohesion, human rights, access to justice are strengthened at local level. (MPTFO Project id# 129792)						
4a. Number of CBOs/CSOs with improved capacity for participatory and inclusive community planning (at least 20% women-led)	CSOs	0	89 (0)	60 (33)	Relevant authorities dismantling of CDCs; budget constraints	PUNO report
4b. Number of people with better awareness about human rights, social cohesion and conflict prevention (at least 50% women)	News stories	0	500 (190)	559 (171)		PUNO report
	People	11935	214,548 (41,373)	383,598 (85,542)		PUNO report

Annex II. Stories from the Field

Backyard poultry supports women's income and nutrition in Zabul

For four years, Bibi Noora carried the weight of her family alone. The 47-year-old widow from a remote village in Atghar district of Zabul province became the sole provider for her four children, two boys and two girls aged between six and sixteen, after her husband was killed by a roadside bomb.


Bibi Noora's STFA-supported poultry farm in Zabul Province. © FAO

His death left the family with no land, no reliable source of income, and an uncertain future. With limited livelihood opportunities available, Bibi Noora often relied on relatives and neighbours for food and clothing.

Meeting daily household needs and keeping her children in school was a daily struggle.

That began to change when she received support funded by the STFA. As part of the initiative, Bibi Noora received a backyard poultry package that included 30 young hens, poultry feed, vaccines, materials to build a poultry coop, and training in poultry management and disease prevention. For women-headed households with limited resources, poultry farming offers a practical way to generate income and improve food security from home.

Today, the hens provide a regular supply of eggs for her family, improving nutrition and helping ensure her children have access to a healthy source of protein. The surplus eggs are sold within the community, providing income to cover daily household expenses.

"I never thought I could have my own poultry farm," says Bibi Noora. "This support gave me a chance to stand on my own feet." Encouraged by the results, she now plans to hatch additional chicks and expand her flock. For families facing economic hardship, such support can make a meaningful difference in household well-being and resilience.

Bibi Noora's story reflects a broader effort to strengthen livelihoods across Afghanistan. Since 2022, approximately 76,000 farming households across Afghanistan have been supported through STFA-funded interventions, including poultry production, livestock support, soybean cultivation, home gardening, mushroom production, beekeeping, greenhouse production, solar dryers and water infrastructure support. More than one-third of supported households were headed by women, including more than 5,300 households that received poultry packages.

Restoring livelihoods and stability in Helmand

For several years, Mrs. Nazia, a 30-year-old internally displaced woman in Helmand province, worked at Banowan Khalaq Garments Company, where she developed embroidery and tailoring skills that helped support her family.

That changed in August 2021 when conflict and economic disruption forced the company to close. Suddenly unemployed, Mrs. Nazia found herself struggling to provide for her family. With the husband unable to secure regular work, she turned to occasional domestic labour whenever opportunities arose. The income was insufficient to meet even the family's most basic needs.

Hope returned when Banowan Khalaq Garments Company received support through the STFA-supported Employment Retention Scheme.

The initiative was designed to help businesses resume operations and retain skilled workers during a period of severe economic hardship. In April 2022, the company reopened its doors and rehired former employees, including Mrs. Nazia.

With a reliable income once again, Mrs. Nazia was able to improve her family's living conditions and meet essential household expenses. Most importantly, she was able to enrol her two children in school and consistently cover their education costs.

"Returning to work gave me hope again," she says. "Now I can support my children and help build a better future for them."



Nazia working in Banowan Khalaq Garments Company in Helmand Province. © IOM

From learning to enterprise growth in Nimroz

When Ms. Sohaila Alizai established the Zaranj Women's Sewing and Training Workshop in Nimroz province, her vision extended beyond producing handicrafts and clothing. She wanted to create opportunities for women and girls to learn skills, earn an income and build a better future.

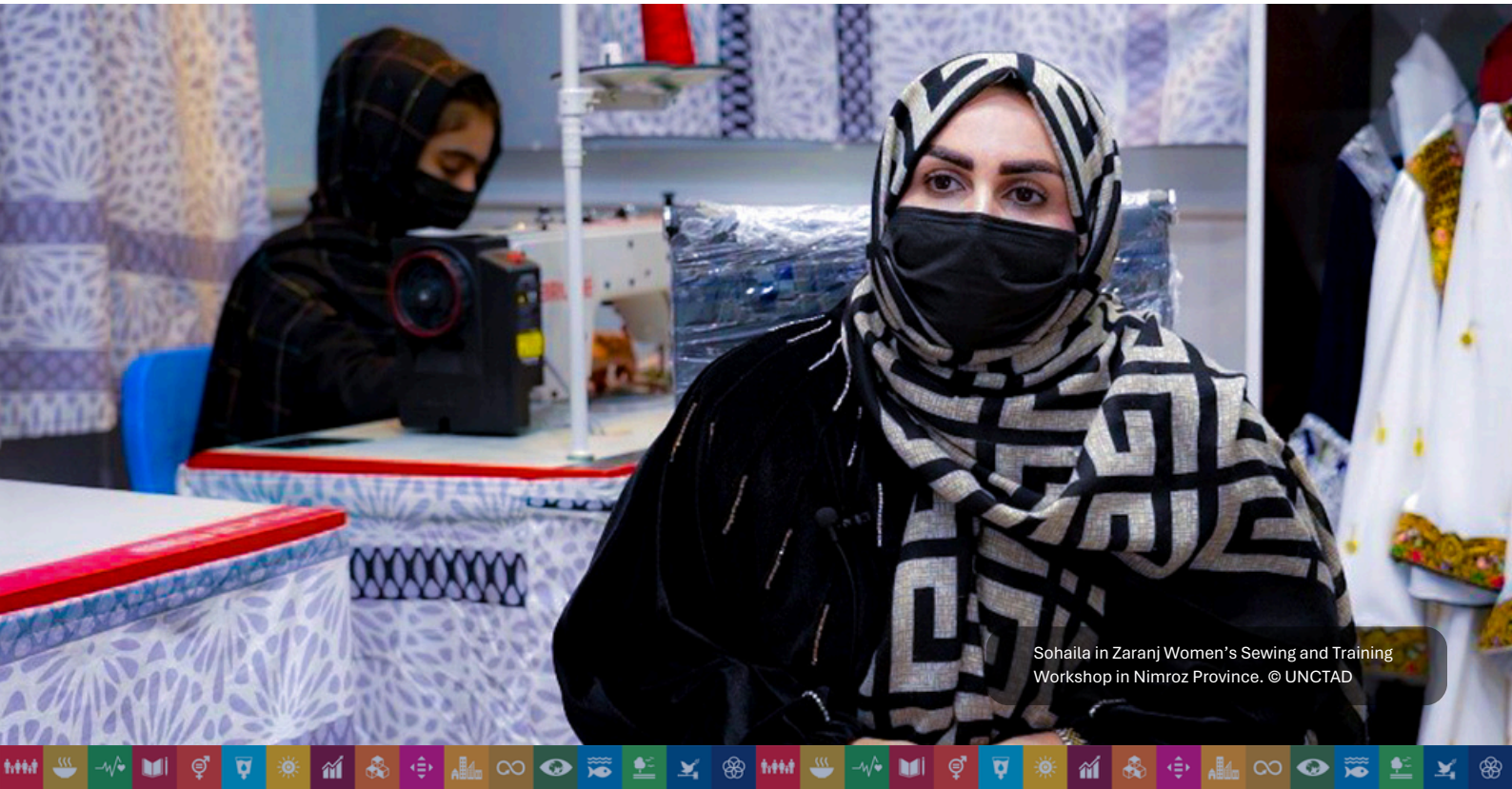
By early 2024, the workshop had grown, employing approximately 40 women in its production section and providing internship and vocational training opportunities to another 70 women and girls. However, despite the quality of its products and the growing demand for economic opportunities, limited marketing knowledge and low market visibility constrained its sales growth and business expansion. Determined to strengthen the business, Ms. Alizai sought support through the Nimroz Women Chamber of Commerce and Investment, which referred her to the Improve Your Business (IYB) marketing training funded by STFA.

The training introduced practical business and marketing concepts, including the "7Ps" of marketing: product, price, promotion, place, people, process and physical evidence.

"The training changed the way I think about business," said Ms. Alizai. "It helped me understand how to reach more customers, promote our products and grow the workshop."

She expanded marketing activities, including social media promotion and direct engagement with local institutions. The business subsequently secured new orders, including contracts from four schools to produce student uniforms, leading to increased sales and revenue.

The growth enabled the business to open a second branch in another part of Zaranj city, creating additional opportunities for women. By June 2024, 115 women had graduated from the workshop's training programmes, with five graduates subsequently joining the company's production team.



Sohaila in Zaranj Women's Sewing and Training Workshop in Nimroz Province. © UNCTAD

Improving customer experience and business growth in Kandahar

Mohammad Reza Azizi, owner of New Khurasan Restaurant in Kandahar City, always believed that serving good food was key to running a successful business. However, with only three employees and increasing competition, he had to find new ways to attract customers.

Mr. Azizi approached the Kandahar Chamber of Commerce and Investment, which referred him to an STFA-supported Start Your Business (SYB) training course. The training introduced practical approaches to customer service, business management, and business improvement planning.

Mr. Azizi began regularly asking customers about the quality of the food, the level of service and their overall dining experience. The feedback helped him identify several areas for improvement.

He hired a more experienced cook, introduced uniforms for staff and improved the restaurant's appearance and organization.

"The training helped me see my business differently," he said. "By listening to customers and making small improvements, I have been able to attract more people and strengthen the restaurant."



Mohammad Reza in his restaurant in Kandahar Province. © UNCTAD

Strengthening community disaster preparedness in Kandahar

In remote areas of Kandahar Province, where natural disasters are frequent and emergency services are miles away, help must come from within.

Through STFA support, Sanzari village in Zhari district established a Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction committee. Members received training on disaster preparedness, hazard mapping and emergency response planning as well as Community Emergency Response Tool (CERT) kits, to support local response efforts during emergencies.

“We did not have the tools or the skills to respond to emergencies before,” says Haji Muhammad, the committee head.

“Now community members know how to work together and respond more quickly during difficult situations.”

The training helped save a life. When a local woman fell critically ill, the committee mobilized its emergency transit protocols, evacuating her to the hospital in time for life-saving treatment.

Sanzari is one of 90 communities across Afghanistan that established similar disaster-management committees under the programme. By placing preparedness in local hands, this initiative proves that the fastest way to save lives in hazard-prone areas is from the ground up.



Haji Muhammad, a member of the disaster risk reduction committee in Kandahar Province. © UNDP

Supporting home-based livelihoods for women in Nimroz

Alia, a 19-year-old resident of Ghorghori village in Khash Rod district of Nimroz province, learned tailoring from her sister at the age of 11 years and gradually began earning income by sewing clothes for women and children in her community. However, her work was constrained by an old, unreliable sewing machine that frequently broke down, limiting production and eroding customer confidence.

Producing just one outfit a day, she earned only AFN 100 ($1.50), far too little to cover basic expenses and medical care for her sick mother. Subsequently, through STFA support, Alia received sewing machines, a solar panel, battery equipment and other tailoring tools designed to support home-based women-led micro-enterprises.

The new equipment allowed her to work into the evening, tripling her daily production to three outfits and boosting her daily income to AFN 300 ($4.30).

This extra income has secured basic needs and vital healthcare for her mother. Alia is now teaching tailoring to three neighbourhood girls, opening doors for other young women in her community.

“The new equipment restored my customers’ confidence,” Alia says, “and gave me hope to expand my business in the future.”



Alia in her home-based women-led micro-enterprise in Nimroz Province. © UNDP

Restoring traditional water systems and livelihoods in Kandahar

In Kandahar's Daman district, relentless drought and water scarcity have devastated local agriculture, leaving returnees, IDPs, and host communities struggling with unemployment and dry wells.

To restore hope, STFA funded the rehabilitation of the traditional karez, an ancient underground irrigation canal system. In Humai village, Daman district, members of 90 households earned immediate income through Cash-for-Work activities to help rebuild the canal. The project successfully restored running water for agricultural irrigation, livestock and household use, directly benefiting around 630 people, including Kuchi nomadic communities. With water flowing again, local farmers have expanded their cultivated land, boosted food production and secured their livelihoods.

For many residents, this was the first time their village had ever benefited from a development project. Crucially, the initiative also paired physical rehabilitation with community training to preserve the traditional engineering knowledge required to maintain the karez for future generations.



Workers rehabilitate the *kariz* irrigation system in Kandahar Province. © UNESCO

From crisis to stability: A family's recovery in Kandahar

25-year-old Fatima was struggling to keep her family afloat in Kandahar.* Her husband, Ahmad, battled a severe drug addiction and was unemployed, leaving their two children, including a critically ill infant daughter, entirely dependent on the charity of relatives.

A lifeline arrived when an STFA-supported outreach team identified the family. They immediately provided medical treatment for the baby and psychosocial counseling for Fatima. With the team's encouragement, Fatima took a courageous step and brought her husband to the YHDO Drop-In Centre in Kandahar. At the centre, Ahmad received comprehensive rehabilitation and harm-reduction services, including medical care, testing and intensive therapy.

Over three months of dedicated support, Ahmad overcame his dependence, restored his health and began rebuilding his family's trust.

Today, Ahmad is employed at a local business and provides for his household. With a stable income and a healthy home, the children are growing up in a safe, secure environment.

Ahmad's success illustrates how integrated, community-based support, combining healthcare, harm reduction and family counselling, can lift vulnerable households out of crisis and help them rebuild their lives with dignity.

**Names changed for privacy.*



Fatima is receiving psychosocial counseling in Kandahar Province. © UNODC

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