MAIL Minister Visits FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy

The MAIL Minister H.E. Assadullah Zamir visited Rome on 27 July 2015. During his visit the Minister had the opportunity to meet the FAO Deputy Director General (DDG) Dr Daniel Gustafson. The DDG expressed FAO’s commitment to further increase its programme of activities and technical assistance to Afghanistan. During his visit to FAO headquarters, the following technical sessions, which chaired by Mr. Dominique Burgeon, Director of Emergency and Rehabilitation Division, were provided for the Minister based on MAIL’s priority areas: 1) International Year of Soil (2015) and Afghanistan soil mapping presented by Land and Water Division (NRL); 2) Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) presented by IPC-Global Support Unit (GSU); and 3) Global information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) presented by Trade and Markets Division (EST) of Economic and Social Development Department.

Japanese Ambassador, MAIL, MRRD Ministers and FAO Representative visited Nangarhar Gamberi Desert

Based on best practice irrigation model in FAO, MAIL and MRRD as well as the Government of Japan are currently working on possible programme to apply the PMS-modeled Irrigation System in order to stabilize and rebirth the rural agriculture and to improve their livelihood and public security, consequently to foster reshaping and maintaining rural communities.

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Mrs. Qudsia produces approximately 300 liters of milk per day from 30 cows. She processes the milk into yoghurt, dry drip, drip butter and other dairy products which she sells to many consumers in village and in provincial market; many consumers pay for their products in advance.

In Afghanistan, livestock represents the main source of income-generation for thousands of families whose cattle are their main source of livelihoods. The main challenges for domestic dairy producers in Afghanistan have been lack of access to markets for their products and animal health services. Animal husbandry is mainly traditional with many livestock disease outbreaks and high animal mortality rates.

The Dairy Industry Development project supports women smallholder dairy farmers in Kabul, Parwan and Logar provinces. Mrs. Qudsia (57), is one of the project beneficiaries from Dehsabz village in Dehsabz district of Kabul province. She has a family of 13 (7 daughters and 6 sons). She started milk production with one cow. Her farm has grown into a big operation with 30 cows creating job opportunities for many other villagers.

Mrs. Qudsia added “The Dairy project enabled me to build my own house and support my children to get better education” she went on to say “Before the support of the dairy project it was very hard and expensive for me to access health care for my cows when they got sick, but now the dairy project has made it easier not only for me but for many farmers in our community to access animal health services”. The project facilitates Veterinary Field Units to provide services to dairy farmers at a reasonable cost although on a cost recovery basis. Farmers, including Mrs. Qudsia, are provided with certified fodder seed leading to increased livestock feed availability and higher milk yields. Together with many other farmers, Mrs. Qudsia received training in hygienic milking, basic veterinary skills, improved fodder production, livestock feeding and animal housing practices helping to increase her cows’ milk production.
Ms. Nahid Abuakar head of the (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) UNAMA Mazar was welcomed with a bag of fresh produced mushrooms in one of the five mushroom cultivation centres while visiting mushroom cultivation practical training in Dehdadi district of Balkh Province. She was accompanied by Mr. Ahmad Zia Aria, Regional Coordinator for FAO Mazar on Thursday 13 Aug-2015. This activity is carried out under the “Support to extension system household food and livelihoods security” project of FAO with financial support of the Government of Luxembourg. The objective is to enable women headed families to produce mushroom as source of income for their livelihoods as well as a source of nutritious food to feed their children. This training was focused on capacity building of the DAIL laboratory, training of 20 females trainers and five Common Interest Group (CIG) All inputs including equipments were supported by FAO project and all the trained females soon will produce mushroom individually in their homes and the product will be marketed in supermarkets in the Mazar city. For the marketing improvement, project also keen to supply packaging materials to the beneficiaries in coming weeks. There is a need to purchase spawn from India or Pakistan. trainees can produce spawn themselves therefore, the challenge of sustainability has already been taken care in advance

The 2015 Seasonal Food Security Assessment (SFSA) monitors changes in livelihoods and food security in the country, through a national survey conducted by the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC) members in May-June 2015, at the peak of the lean season. The assessment found that severe food insecurity was on the rise in Afghanistan, as a result of lower wages and asset depletion. Taking into account coping capacity, 1.57 million people were in need of emergency relief when stocks were exhausted (5 months after the harvest on average), particularly in Ghor (299,000 people). This is an increase by 1.2% (317,000 people) compared to last year (using the Food Security Index). Another 27.5% (7.3 million) were moderately insecure, in a situation where they could not sustainably cope with shocks and were resorting to asset depleting strategies in order to cater to their needs. Punctual emergency relief can help to cope with shocks and avoid depleting their assets. One of the causes of rising insecurity is a consistent deterioration of terms of trades of wages to staple food, as labour migration and conflict-induced displacement are swelling the ranks of the urban poor, increasing pressure on a labour market that is already saturated. In order to prevent a further increase in the severity and breadth of food insecurity, rural livelihoods need to be urgently supported in order to slow the rural exodus, and avoid further asset depletion. In urban areas, alternative livelihoods – independent of access to land – should be promoted equally urgently.

Micro Hydro Power Brings New Hopes for a Brighter Future in Bamyan

FAO's Project "Improvement of Irrigation Systems and Construction of Micro Hydro Facilities" funded by the Government of Japan, has established 18 Micro Hydro Power Plants with the total amount of 1,595,820 USD and handed over to communities in the Kabul and Bamyan provinces of Afghanistan with the total power of 454 KW that, provides electricity to 4,053 households with 28,371 beneficiaries in 18 villages. The programme objective was to enhance rural livelihoods and preserve the natural environment through sustainable rural energy system development especially the micro hydro power.

The Electricity, generated by the Micro Hydro Power Plants, has improved the livelihood of households and enabled people especially young generation to study at night and use computers, charging phones, watching TV and also enabled local clinic to provide services at nights to the community.

Ali Baig village, Bamyan province: This village is located in a mountainous area near to the Shah Foladi Mountain (Mostly known as Kohe Baba), which is 40 minutes distant from the Bamyan Province. In this area, the Micro Hydro Power plant generates 42 KW electricity, which provides power to 344 households and enables people especially women in the villages and enabled them to study easily their lessons at nights with stable electricity, which is enabling them to go to their relative’s house at nights too, which was earlier not possible.

"Electricity is a vital entity in our community. Before the establishment of Micro Hydro Power (MHP) plant in our village, our people did not have access to several facilities and our children were not able to study at night and most of the villagers were using fuel lamps. Construction of Hydropower electric power by FAO in our village has effected in all aspects of our life especially in economic, social and cultural aspects. The electricity has connected us to the world. Now we can easily use cell phones, computers, fans, laptops and other electronic devices. Even some people cook their foods by using electricity and boil water by electronic kettles," Said member of Ali Baig Community Development Council (CDC) Mr. Amir Hussain.

The Micro Hydro Power (MHP) has also increased the level of public awareness of women in the villages and enabled them to learn new things through watching TV channels and talking with their relatives by phones in other provinces.

The Micro Hydro Power (MHP) has also served as a community mobilization and empowerment tool. The CDC of Ali Baig village has implemented a system in order to manage the electricity and control the powerhouse. Each household pays 30 Afs for 1 lamp and 60 Afs for 1 TV. The service charge will be used for the operation and maintenance of the powerhouse, which also includes the monthly stipend of the electrician of the powerhouse. The electricity however is free of charges for Mosque, clinic, school, poor people and orphans of village. The members of Ali Baig CDC emphasized that after handing over of the project by FAO to the CDC and people of the village, villagers felt more responsible to take care of the MHP. Now the MHP has two electricians, who have received training on MHP operation and on its electrical part.

Fatima, a nurse working with her husband in Ali Baig village’s clinic, says that previously they sterilized their medical tools by boiling water on Gas but now FAO’s MHP Project has enabled them to sterilize their tools through electronic medical devices. She also said, “One of the most important advantages of electricity in our village is that at nights, women can wash their clothes and dishes near to the river with the light of electricity”

Abbas, a student of Grade 8 in Ali Baig village school, says that now they have stable electricity, which is enabling them to study easily their lessons at nights with their friends and watching TV.

He also added that his sisters could now go to their relative’s house at nights too, which was earlier not possible.

To conclude, The Project of the “Improvement of Irrigation Systems and Construction of Micro Hydro Facilities” of FAO was aimed to increase access to electricity by establishment of Micro Hydro Power plants in Kabul and Bamyan. Until now, 91% of project has been completed out of selected target and all the households in the villages are set to benefit as an average 120 Watts of electricity to each householders (from 5.5 to 191 W/HH). In an average, all the completed MHP projects are operating (10-12) hours during the nighttime (from 6:00 PM up to 6:00 AM).

Now people in the villages are very happy and looking forward for a brighter future of their children in the society.