FAO, with the financial support of the Central Emergency Response Fund of the United Nations (CERF), has assisted 2,500 earthquake-hit households—1,300 in Nangarhar province and 1,200 in Kunar provinces—with agriculture and livestock protection inputs. The five districts of Nangarhar were Chaparhar, Behsud, Kama, Khewa and Rodat, and the four districts in Kunar province were Shegal, Asmar Naria and Sawkai.

The project sought to sustain the livelihoods of 2,500 vulnerable subsistence farming households affected by the earthquake by increasing their resilience through a higher protection of assets and maintenance of milk and meat production. Protecting and restoring a minimum nutrition sensitive food production for household consumption and the avoidance of malnutrition and other negative effects (health, asset selling, and displacement) is vital for the future.

The assistance consisted of eight varieties of vegetable seeds (5 gr tomatoes, 25 eggplant, 10 gr capsicum, 200 gr onion, 200 gr okra, 250 gr green bean, 250 gr cucumber and 80 gr squash); five hand tools (ashovel, sickle, rake, hoe, and hand trowel); one tent (3x4) for livestock protection; 120 kg of concentrate animal feed including 2.5kg mineral blocks; and vaccination serums (PPR and FMD) including livestock De-wormer.

Each beneficiary cultivated vegetables in 950 m2 which totaled 123 ha in Nangarhar and 114 ha in Kunar. Okra, squash, green bean and cucumbers are at the harvesting stage and the capsicum, eggplant and tomatoes are at the flowering stage.

The mineral blocks and balanced animal feed is vital to full fill mineral deficiencies in livestock which improves production, the health condition and natural resistance against some animal diseases. All the affected households were selected according to an agreed selection criteria in close coordination with the Kunar and Nangarhar DAILs.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) provides financial and technical assistance to the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) to establish Afghanistan’s Soil Information System (AFSIS).

The new project; “Afghanistan Soil Information System” was officially launched on 26 April 2016 at MAIL. The total budget of US$497,000 is funded by FAO’s Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) and its duration will be for two years. The project is a priority areas for the Government of Afghanistan and MAIL.

One of the main project components will be strengthening the technical soil survey capacities of Afghanistan’s soil science community for systematic and standardised field and laboratory soil properties analyses. The project will also enable the set-up of two new soil laboratories, while upgrading the existing one. In addition, the project will establish the required procedures and methods for a systematic and standardised soil survey.

Development of a soil information system is helping the sustainable management of soil as a vulnerable natural resource and the evaluation of land for different kinds of cultivation and agricultural production.

The Afghanistan soil information system will be developed in line with the current efforts towards sustainable management of soil as proposed and implemented by FAO and MAIL in the framework of the FAO global soil partnership.

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The FAO and MAIL Community Livestock and Agriculture Project (CLAP) dairy project facilitated a general assembly meeting on the formation of the proposed Afghanistan Dairy Producers Association (ADPA) in Kabul on March 6-7 2016. The meeting was attended by 28 dairy sector participants including five dairy unions, seven milk producer cooperatives, six dairy farmers and ten private sector milk processors.

The draft ADPA bylaws were reviewed and approved by the general assembly. Based on the bylaws, the meeting elected members of the executive and monitoring committees and Qeyamudin Qeyam, from Balkh Dairy Union was elected by the members of the executive committee as the first chairman of ADPA.

An action plan for ADPA in 2016 was developed and approved by the general assembly and a presentation was made to the MAIL deputy minister (Technical) during a session which was also attended by the FAO Representative. The FAO Representative, Tomio Shichiri, emphasized the importance of dairy sector institutions in supporting smallholder dairy development in Afghanistan. During the meeting, Abdul Latif Zahed, CLAP Programme Director made a presentation on the recent Asia Dairy launch workshop held in Bangkok. Afghanistan is a member of the Asia Dairy steering committee and the country’s dairy sector hopes to benefit from linkages created through the Asia Dairy Network.

**An interview of a land owner after the rehabilitation of the Intifat Irrigation Scheme Development Project (IRDP)**

The Intifat scheme is located in Kabul province district of Shakardara. This area has very fertile and productive land for cultivation of various types of crops. This area is famous for its horticultural quality especially in growing numerous varieties of grapes that have value in both the domestic and international markets. Haji Abdul Rahman, a land owner, expressed his views about the benefits of canal rehabilitation: “before the rehabilitation of the canal, the intake and canal diversion wall were earthen, due to which canal could not get enough water during low water flow and we were not able to cultivate most part of our lands. Furthermore he stated that “every year we were facing trouble during the cleaning of canal, we could not afford to spend a lot of our time and resources on the cleaning. It would take approximately 40 persons for 10 days to clean the canal. On the other hand, during the agriculture seasons, we did not have enough water for irrigation, our crops were damaging every year, and we could not get enough yields from our land. Despite of all the challenges, there were water disputes among the communities too. I have witnessed many water disputes in our village. The flooding was another challenge to the villagers, every year especially in the spring season the lands and houses were destroying. Fortunately! After the rehabilitation of these structures, we now have concrete and permanent structure intake with controlling system and there is enough water to fulfill our crop water requirements, and eliminate the water disputes among the communities. As we harvested our yields this season, we realized that our production has improved about 30 to 35 percent”. He added “I have 60 Jirib (12 hectare) of irrigable land that before the project interventions, I had to cultivate 20 Jirib (4 hectare) of it due to lack of water, now I cultivate all the 60 Jirib (12 hectare) which has a positive impact on my agriculture income. He said, “I established a garden of grapes after the rehabilitation of the scheme on 5 Jirib (1 hectare) of land and the total benefit that I received from selling the yield of grapes was 800 000Afs (US$12 308)”. In closing he said, “I am happy that the construction activities have been done honestly and properly during project implementation and MEW/PCU/FAO engineers have honestly monitored the project.

**FAO & MAIL launches Afghanistan agriculture information portal and land cover atlas**

“FAO helps develop tools to monitor agriculture for food security”

MAIL in close collaboration with the FAO has launched the Afghanistan agriculture information portal and land cover atlas as the components of the Afghanistan agriculture information system on 17 April 2016.

The two products have been prepared in line with the framework of the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) “Harmonization and Finalization of Land Cover Mapping and Approaches’ to Agricultural Monitoring”, which aims to reinforce sustainable food security in the country by strengthening the human, physical and institutional capacity for analyzing, designing, monitoring and evaluating food security policies and programmes.

The Afghanistan agriculture information portal is a powerful, web-knowledge base and data dissemination platform for compiling agriculture production statistics and crop conditions in the form of dynamic maps, charts and tables.

The Afghanistan land cover Atlas is undoubtedly an essential prerequisite in the planning and implementation of strategies related to sustainable development and management of land and water resources. It provides aggregated land cover information as maps or statistics and is the result of a major effort to deliver to managers and decision makers an easy to use and effective source of baseline information on agriculture in the country.

The products have been jointly designed and developed by MAIL’s GIS unit, the FAO deputy director-general’s office, geospatial branch and FAO Afghanistan.
Car & foot bridges, intake structures and protection walls along Yakawlang River inaugurated in Bamyan Province

Car and foot bridges, intake structures and protection walls along Yakawlang River which connected 35 villages was officially inaugurated by H.E. Tahir Zohair, Governor of Bamyan, and Tomio Shichiri, FAO Representative in Afghanistan, on 23 May 2016. The inauguration ceremony was widely attended by government officials, community representatives and stakeholders, including the district governors of Yakawlang and Shibar. In his speech, H.E. Mohammad Tahir Zohair thanked the people and the Government of Japan for their continued support, while expressing appreciation for the benefits the successful completion of the project brings to Bamyan. In closing, he asked locals to endeavor hard to maintain and upkeep area roads and bridges.

Afterwards, Tomio Shichiri, FAO Representative in Afghanistan, thanked the community for their hospitality and marking the occasion as another significant step towards development that works to serve the people of Yakawlang district. He further noted that “I am sure that great efforts have been imparted by all partners to bring about these achievements today. And, I expect the same in future as well.”

The construction cost of US$1 832 500 was funded by Government of Japan. The bridge reduces the travel distance for an estimated 20 villages by almost 30 km. It is expected to be used to transport agriculture inputs and outputs to and from farms and markets. Over 23 450 people in 35 villages will enjoy enormous benefit from the project, which will result in improving economic and social living standards. The protection wall will safeguard the lives of people, while providing flood protection for 700 businesses in the Yakawlang Bazaar, the local high school, numerous mosques, and 147 ha of irrigated land. In additional, the construction of four intakes along the canals will bring considerable benefits to 10 480 farmers by gradually increasing cultivated land by 93 ha.

By formally handing over the project to the government and community elders, FAO is promoting the sustainability of the project by emphasizing the importance of maintenance and operation for future benefits.

Pre- harvest Seasonal Food Security (SFSA) 2016 Assessment for May to mid-June 2016. The objective of the assessment is to understand the food security situation during the pre-harvest season and to provide data for updating the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) and FSAC Strategic Response Plan (SRP) 2016 mid-year review. The assessment is being conducted in 34 provinces throughout the country.

As in previous Seasonal Food Security Assessments, SFSA 2016 primarily aims: (i) to assess the food security situation in 34 provinces throughout Afghanistan (ii) identify the nature of food insecurity (acute vs. chronic), including its causes and the shocks and consequences in terms of coping mechanisms; and (iii) provide data and information for updating the IPC and FSAC SRP 2016 mid-year review, while supporting emergency response programming for the July-December 2016 period.

This year, the FSAC targeted 336 districts in 34 provinces. Development partners provided support to facilitate data collection in 152 districts while MAIL covered 184 districts. The report will be released in July 2016.

Enhancing agriculture production through irrigation system improvement and strengthening institutional capacity project inception workshop

On 4 May 2016, FAO in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation & Livestock conducted a project inception workshop for the enhancing agriculture production through irrigation system improvement and strengthening institutional capacity project.

The overall objective of the project is to increase agriculture production and productivity and improve irrigation services while developing a functional tissue culture laboratory for virus free potato seed production.

This US$ 12.3 million project, is funded by the Japanese government and JICA, will contribute to addressing different constraints. It will also directly benefit nine thousand farming families through increased rice production in targeted areas in Kunduz, Takhar and Baghlan provinces. In its third year, the project will ensure the production of 13 tons of virus-free breeder and foundation seeds of potato. The project also has components to train 120 government officials in the Peace Medical Services (PMS) methodology in order to expand its application to the community overall. The project will be jointly implemented by FAO in cooperation with other stakeholders.

The main objective of the inception workshop was to disseminate information about the project and collect feedback to further refine institutional arrangements and implementation modalities. The participants were introduced to the three outputs of the project during the second session, while fruitful discussions were held during the third session to collect valuable feedback for further fine-tuning of project activities.
The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation & Livestock (MAIL) and Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), in collaboration with FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO), jointly organized a national consultation workshop on the recommendations of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) on 2 February 2016. The Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) was a high-level intergovernmental meeting focusing global attention on addressing malnutrition in all its forms. The conference was conducted on 19-21 November 2014, at FAO headquarters in Rome. Over 170 states acknowledged that malnutrition in all its forms, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight, and obesity, negatively affects people’s health and wellbeing and poses high economic and social costs for individuals, communities, and nations. The objective of the workshop was to review the ICN2 recommendations and identify feasible ones in the context of Afghanistan. It also aimed to promote connectivity between food systems and health. The outcomes of the workshop are related to the post-2015 development agenda and, clearly, feed into the Sustainable Development Goal of ending hunger, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture. It also builds on commitments and the global targets for improving maternal, infant and young child nutrition by 2025.

The National Consultation Workshop on ICN2 was conducted with the technical support of FAO’s Strengthening Policy Development and Coordination for Food Security and Nutrition Project, which is funded by the Federal Republic of Germany. The project has been working with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock since 2013 in order to enhance its capacity on food security and nutrition policies and strategies.

World Milk Day Commemoration Event in Afghanistan - 1st June 2016

FAO joined forces with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) in co-organizing World Milk Day (WMD) in Afghanistan. The event included a visit to Rabia-e-Balkhi high school in Kabul. This was the first time the event was celebrated in Afghanistan to promote public awareness and the importance and value of milk and milk products, and Afghanistan’s dairy industry.

Apart from the Kabul, World Milk Day was also celebrated in Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif and Jalalabad. These provincial governments, in coordination with the MoE, focused on girls’ schools to gain greater awareness of the importance of milk consumption and nutrition.

The 24th celebration of World Water Day 2016 theme of "water and job"

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The International World Water Day was celebrated by Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW) and Kabul Polytechnic University (KPU) with the support of FAO and other key stakeholders on 22nd March 2016. This year, the theme for World Water Day was “Water and Job”. The speakers stressed the theme and it was noted by H.E Ali Ahmad Osmani, Minister of Energy and Water that the day harmonizes the liaising among water managers, academic institutions and senior decision makers and leads to better communication. On behalf of the United Nations Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Mr Tomio Shichiri, FAO Representative in Afghanistan congratulated the water day celebration and the organizers for their excellent efforts to held this important event where all partners deposit expectations, challenges and opportunities by means of focusing attention on the importance of water and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources (surface water and ground water). H.E Ali Ahmad Osmani, MEW’s Minister, H.E. Assadullah Zamir, MAIL’s Minister, Eztulah Amad, president of Kabul Polytechnic University, H.E. Nasir Durani, Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), H.E. Farida Momand, Minister of Higher Education (MoHE), H.E. Nasrin Oraykhi, Minister of Social Work, Martyrs and Disabled (MSWMD) and Mr Tomio Shichiri, FAO Representative in Afghanistan, along with other representatives and guests attended this event. World Water Day is an international observance and an opportunity to learn more about water related issues, be inspired to tell others and take action to make a difference. The United Nations General Assembly designated 22 March 1993 as the first World Water Day. It has been held annually since then.