



FAO'S ROLE IN THE AFGHANISTAN 2009 HUMANITARIAN ACTION PLAN

January 2009

Background

Despite the considerable progress made since 2001, Afghanistan remains an extremely poor country, with living standards that are among the lowest in the world. Some 42 percent of its population lives on less than USD 1 per day.

In 2008, the conflict in Afghanistan intensified, rendering about 40 percent of the country, including much of the south, inaccessible to most humanitarian organizations. In particular, the significant rise in the number of attacks on aid agency staff and assets has impacted on their capacity to provide urgently needed support to civilians.

Armed conflict and ethnic tensions, combined with a perilous food security situation that has affected about one-sixth of the population, has led to the displacement of thousands and slowed efforts to reintegrate and resettle existing internally displaced persons and refugees.

Afghanistan is prone to natural disasters, such as floods, droughts, earthquakes and avalanches. Communities have a very low capacity to cope with these events, which increase their vulnerability to food insecurity. In 2008, more than half of the country received less than 25 percent of normal rainfall, which resulted in the lowest harvest since 2002.

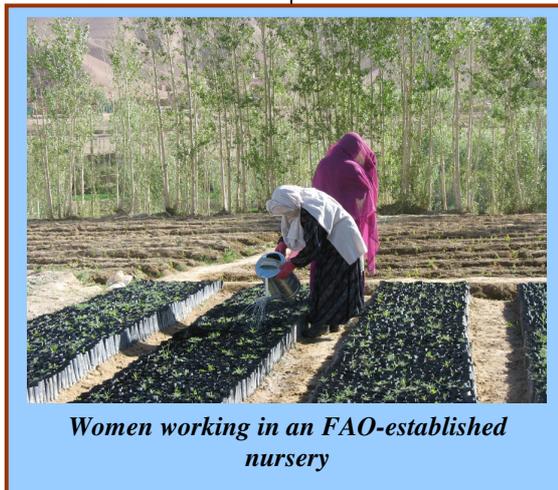
Current humanitarian needs in Afghanistan are extremely high owing to conflict, extreme poverty and underdevelopment, global high food prices, drought and continued displacement. In response, the United Nations and its partners launched the 2009 Afghanistan Humanitarian Action Plan (HAP) on 14 January 2009, seeking over USD 603 million to meet the immediate needs and build the resilience of the most vulnerable people.

Challenges facing food security and livelihoods

Spiraling global prices for food and fuel had a serious impact on the livelihoods of Afghan families, with the average household spending up to 77 percent of their income on food in 2008, compared with 56 percent in 2005. This pushed millions of vulnerable people into a situation of food insecurity.

In September 2008, the price of wheat in the country's main cities averaged 150 percent higher than in September 2007. At the same time, agricultural production has been hit by a countrywide drought, with farmers able to produce enough to meet only 67 percent of the country's food needs.

Those in need of relief and recovery assistance are spread across all 34 provinces. In 2009, the security situation is likely to further deteriorate, while the effects of drought and the food price crisis will continue to affect the food security of the Afghan population. Melting winter snows are the main source of water for farming and, with snows at below-normal levels, there is serious concern that this could result in another year of poor agricultural production.



Women working in an FAO-established nursery



FAO response

In 2001, FAO established an Emergency and Rehabilitation Unit (ERU) in Afghanistan. Through the ERU, FAO has implemented a range of activities to enable conflict-affected and vulnerable households to restart agricultural production.

Under the 2009 HAP, FAO is seeking over **USD 14 million** to implement essential activities to rebuild the productive capacities of poor households in Afghanistan.

As the co-lead, with the World Food Programme, of the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC), FAO will continue to work closely with the Government and other partners to develop more permanent solutions to overcome vulnerability and food insecurity by increasing domestic food production and enhancing local incomes.

The key objectives of the FSAC sector in 2009 include:

- increasing the productivity of smallholder farmers;
- assisting vulnerable households to enhance and protect their livestock assets;
- strengthening links between agricultural activities and food aid; and
- protecting livelihoods and supporting and strengthening the resilience of communities through safety net and asset creation.





Project title: Alleviation of malnutrition through the promotion of local food products

Objectives: To maximize the use of local foods to minimize the nutritional impact of the drought and soaring food prices

Beneficiaries: 1 200 000 individuals in 30 districts, 22 provinces

Implementing Partners: N/A

Funds Requested: USD 162 720

Under the proposed project, FAO plans to train nutritional focal points, Government staff, implementing partners and community health workers on food-based approaches to alleviate and prevent malnutrition. Technical support and inputs will be provided to establish gardens attached to hospitals, feeding centres and households. The knowledge and skills of implementing partners and families will be improved and household food production will increase, reducing malnutrition.

Project title: Emergency support to vulnerable food insecure farming families through provision of animal feed for 2009 feeding seasons

Objectives: To improve the food security of vulnerable livestock owners in drought-affected areas of Afghanistan through the provision of animal feed

Beneficiaries: 10 000 families (70 000 people)

Implementing Partners: Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MAIL), national and international NGOs

Funds Requested: USD 2 233 000

Livestock production is a key source of income, food, nutrition and draught power for Afghan farmers. The prolonged drought in 2008 caused pasture areas to dry out, leaving no fodder for livestock and resulting in the deaths of 90 000 animals.

Through the proposed project, 2 000 tonnes of animal feed will be distributed to 10 000 farming families at a rate of 200 kg of feed per household. This will ensure the survival of their livestock and improve their food security, as well as enabling them to generate income through the sale of surplus in local markets.

Project title: Support to vulnerable populations in drought-affected areas of Afghanistan through the provision of quality wheat seeds and fertilizer for spring and autumn 2009 and spring 2010 seasons

Objectives: To boost the food security of drought-affected communities for the spring and autumn 2009 and spring 2010 planting seasons through the provision of improved wheat seeds and fertilizers

Beneficiaries: 40 000 families (280 000 people)

Implementing Partners: MAIL, national and international NGOs

Funds Requested: USD 9 896 000

Afghan families are facing a high risk of hunger in winter 2008/09 as a result of the shortfalls in wheat production in 2008 and rising food prices. In order to enable them to restart wheat cultivation, the project plans to distribute 2 000 tonnes of wheat seed, 2 000 tonnes of DAP fertilizer and 2 000 tonnes of urea fertilizer to 40 000 farming families.

This will increase their food security and secondary beneficiaries (including other households in their communities) will have access to improved varieties through farmer-to-farmer exchange and sale.

Project title: Emergency control measures against outbreaks of insect pests in northern and western Afghanistan

Objectives: To improve food security in western, northern and northeastern parts of Afghanistan by implementing control measures against infestations of Moroccan locust, Colorado potato beetle and Balochistan melon fly

Beneficiaries: Farming communities living in pest-infested areas in western, northern and northeastern Afghanistan

Implementing Partners: MAIL, international and national NGOs

Funds Requested: USD 1 177 000

Locust outbreaks pose an ongoing threat to agriculture in northern Afghanistan. Smallholders have been made increasingly vulnerable as the Colorado potato beetle and Balochistan melon fly are now annual pests. Given the current high levels of food insecurity, crop damage caused by pest outbreaks could worsen the situation.

Under the proposed project, control measures will be implemented against these pest infestations and control equipment will be maintained, refurbished and repaired. The project will be undertaken with community support and involvement and MAIL staff will receive training on the ecology and control of the pests.

Project title: Jawzjan food aid and drought mitigation

Objectives: In support of Millennium Development Goal 1, "Tackling poverty and hunger": to promote food security and increase local capacity to withstand droughts

Beneficiaries: 19 600 people

Implementing Partners: Department of Agriculture

Funds Requested: USD 535 000

Intense drought, combined with the impact of rising food prices, has led to a sharp decline in food security in Jawzjan province. The project plans to distribute improved varieties of wheat and sesame seeds to 2 800 farmers. Livestock will be provided to 100 villages in dry land areas. In addition, community banks will be established, to which all beneficiary farmers should make returns (e.g. 125 percent of wheat seed received, equal numbers of young sheep/goats), ensuring the availability of inputs for the coming seasons.

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