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INTEGRATED EMERGENCY LIVESTOCK PROTECTION IN SUPPORT TO DROUGHT-AFFECTED PASTORALISTS IN BALKH AND SAMANGAN PROVINCES

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SDGs:

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Project Code: TCP/AFG/3702

FAO Contribution: USD 500 000

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Implementing Partners

Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL),
Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
(ACTED).

Beneficiaries

Livestock subsistence farming households (composed
of men/women and children) most severely affected by
the 2017/18 El Niño-induced drought in Samangan and
Balkh provinces.

Country Programming Framework (CPF) Outputs

Priority Area 4: Supporting Vulnerable Farmers for
Improved Food and Nutrition Security, Resilience and
Emergency Response to Natural and Man-made Disasters
and Climate Change.



BACKGROUND

In Afghanistan, the 2017/2018 winter planting season was
severely impacted by the El Niño-induced drought, leaving
most parts of the country with 70 percent below average
precipitation. As a result, fields were left unplanted,
crops withered, pastures suffered severe degradation,
and livestock had insufficient feed and fodder. The
drought particularly affected the northern region of the
country, which had been facing successive years of
dryness during the wet seasons. According to the 2017
Seasonal Food Security Assessment (SFSA) carried out by
the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC), around
320 907 people in Samangan Province and 414 646 people
in Balkh Province had reported poorer access to water
compared with 2016. Water availability in 2018 further
declined in both provinces, because of the drought. The
lack of water forced sedentary livestock farmers to seek
costly and less accessible alternative water sources for
their livestock, negatively affecting household economy,
livelihoods and food security.

Against this background, the project aimed to enhance
food security and protect the livelihoods of the most
vulnerable drought-affected households in Balkh and
Samangan provinces. Given the associated implications of
insufficient feed and water for livestock, such as increased
vulnerability to contagious diseases and parasites, which
could further aggravate the vulnerable situation of
smallholders, the project interventions included animal
health support through the provision of de-worming
treatment.

IMPACT

The support provided by the project, in the form of animal
feed and de-worming services, combined with sustainable
water management for livestock and capacity building
in livestock and water management, protected the
livelihoods of the most vulnerable drought-affected
households, improved their food and financial security,
and preserved breeding stocks.

By enhancing animal feed availability, the project
increased milk production and the amount of protein
available, enhancing beneficiaries' dietary intake and
improving their nutritional status, as well as generating
more income. The feed also enabled households to
continue to maintain their existing livestock herds, and
eliminated the need to sell them for profit.

In addition, through the enhancement of water-sourcing
systems for livestock, vulnerable livestock-keeping
communities increased their resilience to natural
disasters, such as drought and flooding.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

The project provided support for the most vulnerable
households in the two target provinces, for which livestock
represented the main source of livelihood. Overall,
5 200 households (36 660 beneficiaries) in the two target
provinces received livestock assistance in the form of
animal feed and de-worming services, combined with
sustainable water management for livestock and capacity
building in livestock and water management.

Each household received 100 kg of concentrated animal
feed. The ensuing data collection and analysis revealed
that all beneficiary households had experienced improved
health and weight gain in their livestock, as well as an
increase in dairy products, as a result of the livestock
packages that were provided.

De-worming campaigns were carried out to reduce the mortality rates of animals. In order to conduct these campaigns, 20 Basic Veterinary Workers (BVWs) were hired, who had previously been trained by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL). FAO and its implementing partner, the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), conducted a one-day refresher training course. The BVWs administered 968 litres of deworming medicine, applying different dosages according to animal size and type. A total of 54 807 large and small ruminants (cattle, goats and sheep) belonging to 5 585 households in the targeted districts of Balkh and Samangan provinces were de-wormed. An additional 385 non-beneficiary herder households living in the same communities also received the de-worming services.

FAO and ACTED engaged in consultations with beneficiary communities to identify the needs, sites and designs for water infrastructures, targeted to support agricultural irrigation. In order to address intracommunity conflicts that arose in Samangan Province, the implementing partner contacted *Shuras* (village elders), religious parties and community development councils (CDCs). Following the community consultations, it was agreed to strategically select the sites for the infrastructures, so that neighbouring villages would also benefit from their use. Two separate sites were selected in the targeted districts for the construction of two *kandas* (a *kanda* is a water reservoir, constructed or excavated underground in mountain rock, which is fed by precipitation). These two infrastructures were completed during the project and served 750 households, exceeding the initial target of 225 households. A total of 21 infrastructures were constructed across 20 villages. Overall, 6 831 households across 69 villages benefited from the infrastructures.

Twenty Water User Groups (WUGs) were established, one per targeted village, where the infrastructures were constructed. The WUGs comprised three to six members selected through community consultations, and were constituted as subcommittees within local farmers or water users' associations. The WUGs were trained in operational and maintenance management in the respective villages. The training they received in institutional capacity building enabled them to develop a system of fee collection, to ensure that a minimum amount of money was saved for maintenance, and to encourage the ownership of the infrastructures by each community.

The distribution of livestock feed and the construction of water structures were complemented by the organization of training sessions on best livestock management, and water management practices and resilience building for 5 194 beneficiaries.

The training covered topics such as animal husbandry and livestock management, essential feeding regimes, drought mitigation techniques, and animal health and sanitation. The results of the post-distribution and impact monitoring survey showed that the beneficiaries' knowledge had increased as a result of the training provided, and most of the participants had the opportunity to apply their newly acquired skills.

IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK PLAN

The project was implemented in accordance with the agreed work plan and allocated budget. FAO successfully reached 5 200 households (36 660 people – 51 percent male and 49 percent female), exceeding the envisaged target of 4 000 households by 30 percent, through the selection of an additional 1 200 eligible households in Balkh Province (Kaldar district). It was possible to exceed this target because of a cost-effective procurement process and savings made.

A no-cost extension was requested and approved, and the project closure date was moved from 16 July 2019 to 31 January 2020, based on the following points:

- the water infrastructures were planned to be constructed/reinforced within one month. However, additional time was needed to complete the infrastructures (up to September 2019), owing to site conditions, which required unforeseen labour-intensive excavation and the collection of rocks to build the structures properly. The water infrastructures were completed in time for the rainy season, which starts around October in the region, enabling the pastoralist communities to store water for the dry months in 2020; and
- cutworm had severely damaged the pastures in Balkh Province, as vegetation had started to grow during the spring. This was verified by both FAO and the MAIL's Directorate of Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQD). Given that the foreseen spring grazing could not take place, owing to the unavailability of vegetation in pastures in the targeted districts, continuous livestock protection support was provided in the form of concentrated feed, deworming and training, leading up to the harsh winter months, in order to avoid distress sales of core breeding stocks and to ensure that the animals' health was restored. With savings under the expendable budget line of the Technical Cooperation Programme project TCP/AFG/3202, "TCP Facility (Formulation of proposal on food quality control and animal and plant health controls in Afghanistan)", FAO Afghanistan was able to assist with the provision of an additional 1 200 head of livestock, supporting vulnerable households with a livestock protection package.



Impediments/constraints

In some cases, beneficiaries had to travel long distances to receive their commodities, or spend money to reach the distribution points, as the project sites were selected in the centre of the districts. Thus, the beneficiaries requested that additional distribution centres be established in the more distant villages.

The implementing partner had to address challenges involving tribal tensions and administrative pressures during the selection of the beneficiaries and distribution of inputs.

FOLLOW-UP FOR GOVERNMENT ATTENTION

FAO will continue to monitor the food security and livelihood situation in targeted provinces through the SFSA and Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.

Climate-related shocks have serious implications for food security, and severely impact agricultural/livestock activities. These have a profound impact on livelihoods, market access, trade, food supply and prices, income and employment. The poorest people in communities are affected by food insecurity and disasters, thus, there is a need to be prepared, as well as be in a position to manage such events.

SUSTAINABILITY

1. Capacity development

FAO trained 15 members of staff of the implementing partner (ACTED) and 15 extension workers from the Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) on good practices in animal husbandry and livestock management. This comprised essential feeding regimes, incorporating the provided fodder and application of additional feed; sustainable grazing management, including drought-mitigation techniques (destocking, supplementary feeding, fodder conservation); animal health measures and basic veterinary practices (such as information on vaccination campaigns, individual vaccines/diseases, and vaccination timelines), common health problems of animals (cough, fever, symptoms), endo and ectoparasites, de-worming, spraying of livestock barns; water management and water harvesting practices; and resilience building for 5 194 people (99.9 percent).

The water infrastructures that were constructed during the project will be refilled by rain and snow fall during winter and spring. The amount of water collected during these seasons will be sufficient for farmers to access water during the summer. Given that they will not need to buy water for their livestock during the summer season, the farmers will have money available to spend on other essential livelihood activities. With regard to the sustainability of the water infrastructures, the maintenance of these infrastructures will be managed by the WUGs established and trained by the project. The WUGs fit into a larger structure of CDCs, and perform a vital role in communities, especially for water management, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) structures and maintenance purposes. Having acquired the right skills and knowledge during the project, and supported by the well-established CDC structure, the established WUGs are likely to remain in place to respond to the water situation of the community and to coordinate future water management interventions. These community-based organizations and associations contribute to the empowerment of communities, and reinforce the sense that the community is the entity that has the prime responsibility for its own development, and therefore should remain constantly involved, to ensure that all interventions remain sustainable in the future.

2. Gender equality

Special consideration was given to the promotion of gender equality in all activities. FAO acknowledged women's and men's involvement as equally important for successful project completion; and through different participatory methods and tools the active participation of both groups in all phases of the project was encouraged (selection of beneficiaries, distribution and training).

Based on past and recent experiences in Afghanistan, the project set specific targets and indicators for the enhancement of women's participation in (and benefits from) project activities. Women trainers were engaged to ensure that interventions reached women in villages. The project was designed to cover households whose main livelihoods involved the livestock sector.



3. Environmental sustainability

The project proposal was assessed against FAO environmental screening and monitoring criteria and was categorized as low risk, in line with many other emergency response projects.

The provision of animal feed has been proven to reduce overgrazing and pasture degradation. The beneficiaries were trained on pasture management and pasture rotation, which can avoid pasture degradation in the long term.

The water infrastructures rehabilitation/construction activity has improved local water availability for livestock in the short to medium term. As mentioned above, the water infrastructures are mainly fed by precipitation during winter and spring, and therefore can potentially reduce runoff and soil erosion and recharge ground water.

4. Human Rights-based Approach (HRBA) – in particular Right to Food and Decent Work

In line with Do No Harm and conflict-sensitivity approaches, FAO and its implementing partners engaged all relevant stakeholders with due care and attention. Safe access to inputs and distribution sites were ensured to minimize potential risks to beneficiaries, and risk-mitigating measures were identified. Some 95 percent of surveyed beneficiaries reported not facing any issues during distribution, while five percent reported waiting more than two hours for inputs. Distribution sites, timing and procedures were also informed by safety considerations for vulnerable groups, including nursing and pregnant mothers, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, to ensure that input distributions were inclusive and unbiased.

FAO and partners were trained on humanitarian principles, beneficiaries targeting, complaint and feedback mechanism, and input distribution, to ensure that project staff were aware of the “Do No Harm” approach in the field. They demonstrated accountability to beneficiaries by mainstreaming protection principles in the implementation of project activities, particularly taking into consideration the specific constraints and risks faced by female beneficiaries.

Beneficiaries were encouraged to submit any complaints, comments or suggestions to FAO. This mechanism enabled FAO to identify and address any issues that came up, and allowed for the improvement of the design of future interventions, as needed, and the sharing of lessons learned.

Drought conditions aggravated the drinking water availability situation for livestock in targeted districts, where water stress already existed. In general, herders’ family members (children and women) had to carry water for their livestock from long distances, which could strongly impact the well-being of the vulnerable groups, and in some circumstances, children had to leave school in order to fulfil water requirements for the livestock. In this context, the project helped the communities to have sustainable water sources for their livestock, by building small reservoir storage constructions fed by spring water, rainfall or snowmelt in the villages. This activity has reduced the time spent by beneficiary families on fetching water to fulfil the water demand of their livestock.

5. Technological sustainability

The water infrastructures were constructed from locally available materials, and beneficiaries were organized in WUGs and received appropriate training on maintenance. The capacities of service providers, local communities and extension workers were enhanced as a result of the training provided on project implementation, livestock management, water management, etc.

6. Economic sustainability

The water infrastructures and its maintenances are affordable to the target beneficiaries as it requires limited financial resources for maintenance purposes. Construction or rehabilitation of new water infrastructures will require external assistances.



DOCUMENTS AND OUTREACH PRODUCTS

During the project, the implementing partner prepared a beneficiary profile survey report, a postdistribution report and a project terminal report, as part of the Letter of Agreement (LoA) signed between the two parties. FAO produced a set of information, education and communication (IEC) materials, as follows:

- Livestock internal and external parasites.
- Guidelines about animal feed.
- Guidelines about livestock diseases.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS - LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Expected Impact	Enhanced food security and livelihoods assets protected of the most vulnerable drought-affected people in Balkh and Samangan provinces	
Outcome	Food security and livelihoods assets protected/maintained	
	Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Number of drought-affected households received concentrated feed and de-worming services. – Number of water reservoirs/ponds, including spring catchments, improved and/or constructed. – Number of beneficiaries benefiting from training on improved livestock and water management, animal husbandry and resilience-building.
	Baseline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 43 123 households ([HHs] 332 054 individuals) in need and negatively impacted by drought in 2018. – 0 – Smallholder farmers lack knowledge/skills in modern technologies/practices for livestock management and climate adaptation.
	End Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 4 000 most severely drought affected small farming HHs (28 000 individuals)]. – 50% of the targeted households (2 000 HHs) benefiting from improved or newly established water (livestock) infrastructure. – 70% of the targeted HHs (2 800) adopt improved livestock management techniques through training(s).
	Comments and follow-up action to be taken	The project provided immediate and medium-term support for smallholder livestock families in rural, underserved areas of Balkh and Samangan provinces, in the form of animal feed and de-worming services, combined with sustainable water management for livestock and capacity building in livestock and water management. Overall, 5 200 HHs (36 660 people) in the two target provinces received assistance, exceeding the envisaged target of 4 000 HHs by 30 percent.

Output 1	Livestock of smallholder protected through provision of concentrated animal feed and de-worming		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of drought affected households received concentrated feed and de-worming services.	4 000 HH (28 000 people).	Yes
Baseline	0		
Comments	Overall, 5 200 HH (36 660 people – 51 percent male and 49 percent female) in the two provinces received livestock assistance in the form of animal feed and de-worming medicine (syrup).		
Activity 1.1	Identification of implementing partners and signing Letter(s) of Agreement and Procurement and delivery of livestock concentrated feed by FAO		
	Achieved	Yes.	
	Comments	One implementing partner was hired, with which one LoA was signed.	
Activity 1.2	Beneficiary selection and inputs distribution		
	Achieved	Yes.	
	Comments	A beneficiary selection survey was conducted. It emerged from the survey that the majority (68 percent) of the targeted households had experienced the death of livestock in the last six months (at the time that the survey was carried out), owing to drought. In addition, 82 percent of respondents stated that they had had to sell their livestock below market prices in the last six months; and 88 percent reported currently facing difficulties in accessing roughage/ fodder. The majority (79 percent) of these households were purchasing fodder, eight percent were borrowing, 10 percent were selling their livestock more than usual, and three percent were relocating their livestock in order to address the lack of roughage/fodder. A total of 5 200 households (36 660 people – 51 percent male and 49 percent female) in the two target provinces received inputs in the form of animal feed and de-worming medicine.	
Activity 1.3	Distribution of input(s)		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Each household received 100 kg of concentrated animal feed; and different doses of de-worming medicine were administered, according to the size and type of the animals. The animal feed was enough to sustain at least seven heads of livestock for two months.	
Activity 1.4	Conduct post-distribution and impact monitoring survey by partners and FAO		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	A post-distribution and impact monitoring survey was carried out. Some 89.2 percent of the surveyed beneficiaries did not have access to concentrated animal feed before the project was implemented, primarily because of inadequate financial resources, unavailability in the area, and lack of experience. In addition, 99 percent of the beneficiaries used all or part of the distributed animal feed for their livestock, while only one percent reported that they had stored and preserved it for the coming months. Following the distribution of the animal feed, the majority of respondents reported livestock weight gain, followed by improved livestock health, and an increase in dairy products. The project inputs protected both core breeding animals and offspring.	
Activity 1.5	Procurement and delivery of livestock de-worming medication by FAO		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	968 litres of de-worming medication were procured and delivered.	
Activity 1.6	Provide de-worming medicines to 28 000 small and large ruminants		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	20 Basic Veterinary Workers (BVWs) were hired, who had previously been trained by the MAIL, to carry out the de-worming campaigns, following consultation with Provincial Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (PAIL) directorates. In total, FAO de-wormed 54 807 small and large ruminants (cattle, goats and sheep) belonging to 5 585 households in the targeted districts of Balkh and Samangan provinces. The BVWs administered 968 litres of deworming medicine, applying different dosages, according to animal size and type. An additional 385 non-beneficiary herder HHS living in the same communities also received the deworming services, with the remaining de-worming medicine.	

Output 2	Community based micro-water harvesting techniques introduced and water availability improved		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of water reservoirs/ponds, including spring catchments, improved and/or constructed.	20	Yes
Baseline	0		
Comments	a total of 21 infrastructures were constructed across 20 villages in Balkh and Samangan provinces; and 20 WUGs were established and trained in operational and maintenance management in the respective villages.		
Activity 2.1	Participatory consultations with local Community Development Councils/Shuras to reconfirm the validity of the identified sites for livestock's water infrastructure		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	FAO and ACTED engaged in consultations with the beneficiary communities to identify the needs, sites and designs for water infrastructures, targeted to support agricultural irrigation. After some intracommunity conflicts arose in Samangan province, ACTED contacted <i>Shuras</i> , religious parties and CDCs to address the problem. As a result, two separate sites were selected in the targeted districts for the construction of two <i>kandas</i> .	
Activity 2.2	Water harvesting techniques and infrastructure constructed/improved and operational in 20 villages		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	The two above-mentioned infrastructures were completed during the project, and served 750 HHs, exceeding the initially envisaged target of 225 HHs. A total of 21 infrastructures were constructed, across 20 villages in Balkh and Samangan provinces. Overall, 6 831 HHs across 69 villages are benefiting from these infrastructures. This is because, following the community consultation, it was agreed to strategically select the sites for the infrastructures, so that neighbouring villages would also benefit from their use.	
Activity 2.3	Identified springs fitted with piping to deliver water from source to consumption point		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	This was an optional activity, which was not carried out, as in the targeted area the livestock herders fully relied on water reservoirs, and there were no springs available.	
Activity 2.4	Training of local communities in maintenance and operation(s) of water harvesting structures		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Twenty WUGs were established, one per targeted village, where the infrastructures were constructed. The WUGs comprised three to six members selected through community consultations, and were constituted as subcommittees within local farmers or water users' associations. The WUGs were trained in operational and maintenance management in the respective villages. The training they received in institutional capacity building enabled them to developed a system of fee collection, to ensure that a minimum amount of money was saved for maintenance, and to encourage the ownership of the infrastructures by each community.	
Activity 2.5	Establishment of water management committees		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	21 water management committees were established.	

Output 3	Technical capacity and knowledge of communities through provision of trainings on water resources and livestock management integrated with resilience messages upgraded		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of beneficiaries benefiting from training on improved livestock and water management, animal husbandry and resilience-building.	4 000	Yes
Baseline	0		
Comments	The livestock feed distribution and construction of water structures were complemented by training sessions on best livestock management, and water management practices and resilience building for 5 194 beneficiaries. The training covered topics such as animal husbandry and livestock management, essential feeding regimes, drought mitigation techniques, and animal health and sanitation.		
Activity 3.1	Training of trainers and facilitators		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	With regard to this activity, FAO provided for training of trainers to 30 staff members from both ACTED and PAIL, ahead of the implementation of the project.	
Activity 3.2	Implementation of training of direct beneficiaries		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Training sessions were organized on best livestock management, water management practices, and resilience building for 5 194 beneficiaries (99.9 percent). The training covered topics such as animal husbandry and livestock management, essential feeding regimes, drought mitigation techniques, and animal health and sanitation. – All WUGs were provided with institutional capacity building, which will enable them to develop a system of fee collection, to ensure that a minimum amount of money is saved for maintenance and encourage the ownership of the infrastructures by each community. <p>In addition, a one-day refresher training course was conducted for the BVWs, to introduce them to ACTED's team, work, area of intervention, targets and methodologies. The results of the post-distribution and impact monitoring survey showed that beneficiaries' knowledge had increased as a result of the training provided, and most of the participants had the opportunity to apply their newly acquired skills.</p>	

Partnerships and Outreach

For more information, please contact: Reporting@fao.org

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