



Photo: Green Saighan project is supporting farmers to increase their potato production through improved „seed potatoes“.

GREEN SAIGHAN PROJECT “SAIGHAN-E SARSABZ”

Increasing food security through improved management of natural resources in Saighan district, Bamyan province, Afghanistan

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and its partners are supporting a community based project integrating improved options for agriculture, livestock and watershed management to increase food security and reduce flash flood risks in Saighan.

“Through the improvement of agriculture and livestock our living conditions will be changed to the better and we will become wealthier. When we are wealthier we will spend the money for high quality houses, better infrastructure, send our children to schools and universities, have vehicles, and we will be self sufficient (money and food-wise) and finally have better and healthier lives”

Development vision of Saighan community members

THE CONTEXT

The majority (86%) of the population in Afghanistan lives in rural areas and relies on agriculture and livestock for making a living. It is estimated that agriculture in Afghanistan needs to grow at a minimum of 5 per cent annually over this decade for the country to make a significant progress towards food security and poverty alleviation. Natural disasters, especially flash floods and droughts increasingly threaten rural livelihoods and jeopardize development efforts. The situation is further getting worsened due to severe weather conditions.

RATIONALE

The mountainous district of Saighan has a predominantly rural population, which sustains on limited irrigated land in the valley, the use of rangelands for livestock grazing, firewood collection and wheat cultivation. The uplands have been overused leading to increased occurrence of floods in the valleys.

Food insecurity and lack of income generating activities are some of the major concerns of families in Saighan. About 70-90% of the families are food secure for 6-7 months only, forcing the men to seek temporary employment elsewhere.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The project intends to make a significant contribution to improve the living conditions (livelihoods) of men and women of poor rural households in Saighan district through increased food security. To achieve this, the project is implementing three complementary pillars

1. Control of flash floods through sustainable use of uplands (watershed management).
2. Increase of agricultural production and income through farm and non-farm activities.
3. Strengthening of organizational capacities of Community Development Councils (CDCs) and District Development Assembly (DDA) and knowledge/skills of farming families and economic interest groups.



Photo: Contour trench and soil bunds applied in Dara-e Kalan watersheds.

APPROACH

- The project applies elements of the Sustainable Livelihood Approach and reaches the involved households via the communities and respective Community Development Councils (CDC).
- The project emphasises on sustainable management of productive natural resources.
- Principles of Good Governance, Conflict Sensitive Project Management, and Gender and Cultural Sensitivity and Client Satisfaction are at the basis of all actions.
- Capacities of the Community Development Councils (CDC), the District Development Assemblies (DDA) and men and women farmers are enhanced to strengthen human assets.
- Knowledge sharing with other development actors is considered crucial for success and effectiveness of the project.

INTERVENTION AREA

The project is being implemented in 12 CDCs of Saighan district, namely, Khudakhel, Deh Aman, Deh Nola, Sayed Baba, Qwarana Sofla, Qwarana No.1, Qwarana No. 2, Khwaja Ganj, Pushta Waz, Irgana Chah, Begal and Qarakhwal, covering about 2360 families.

MAIN PARTNERS

The project focuses on involving local communities in the planning, implementation and management of the activities.

The Community Development Councils (CDC) are the main implementing partners. Other important partners are the District and Provincial governments, Line Departments, District Development Assemblies (DDA) and the Sustainable Land Management Institute Organization (SLMIO).

ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR (2010-2011)

- Watershed management measures applied in 4 watersheds – covering about 50 km². 4 watershed management committees established and their roles elaborated.
- About 30,000 person person days of work generated through watershed and community bakery activities benefiting about 700 families.
- 4 community bakeries completed; about 85% reduction in shrub consumption reported. 5 bakeries are under construction.
- 120 farmers tested improved seed of wheat (Solh-2002). Grain yield increased by 1.4 t/ha.
- 420 farmers tested improved seeds of potato obtaining up to 47 t/ha crop yield.
- Food gap reduced by 3-4 months due to increase in potato and wheat production.
- 7 projects on improved irrigation systems completed benefiting about 800 families.
- Vegetable garden and poultry projects launched with 140 women.
- Social audits conducted for completed infrastructure projects.
- Organizational and technical capacities of CDCs, DDA, watershed committees and participating farmers (men and women) increased.



Photo: A home-based vegetable garden



Photo: Technical guidance by GS project manager



“Potato project has brought good benefits for Saighan people”! Abdul Hamod of Qarakhawal CDC

“I have long-term experience in agriculture, especially in wheat and potato cultivation. In March 2011,

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation distributed improved “seed potato” with fertilizers to 412 farmers. That was a very big project with good benefits for Saighan people. I also received 60 ser (420 kg) seed, 50 kg DAP, and 75 kg urea which I applied in 1 *jerib* land. The crop growth was very good. I provided proper irrigation (about once a week) and harvested the crop in September. We got very good production. From 1 *jerib* (0.2 Ha) we could get approx. 1250 sers (=8,750 kg). I sold 1000 ser at a price of 60 AFN/per ser and earned 60,000 AFN which is enough to cover my family expenses for one year. I have kept 250 sers (=1750 kg) for my family consumption.”



Photo: Training for women by GS project facilitator

QUICK FACTS

Project start: February, 2010
Current phase: 2010-2012
Major Donor: Liechtenstein Development Service (LED)
Contact: afghanistan@helvetas.org

THE PERSPECTIVES

Lessons learned in Green Saighan project will be fed into the policy dialogues through contacts with district and provincial authorities and with the concerned line-ministries on national level, through the participation in national NGO networks and through constant interaction with other donors like Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) which participates in donor round tables and is in regular interaction with the Afghan government.



Photo: Increasing and diversifying agriculture and livestock production systems combined with activities for improving physical assets, e.g. irrigation systems and watersheds, contribute to increased food security.