



Photo: HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation supports protective infrastructure projects with a “cash-for-work” approach.

## SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT

Improved Livelihood of Rural Communities (ILRC)-Sustainable Land Management (SLM) project

**HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation is implementing this project on sustainable land management to mitigate flash flood and drought risks in Tala-wa-Barfak, Ruy-i-Doab, Dara-i-Suf Balla, Dara-i-Suf Payeen and Saighan districts of Afghanistan. The worsening situation due to natural and man-made disasters calls for long-term sustainable development solutions together with quick relief and reconstruction measures.**

“Due to improved irrigation canal in our village with HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation support, we got good wheat and vegetable harvest and better production from our fruit trees, particularly apricot”

*Niaz Mohammad, Sar-e Tang village, Saighan district*

## THE CONTEXT

Afghanistan has always been prone to natural calamities. Its people regularly face floods, droughts and earthquakes and have astonishing resilience to these calamities. There is now a feeling that natural disasters, in particular flash floods and droughts, are more frequent and intense than in the past and that the level of destruction has increased. Rural population's capacity to resist shocks and stresses from recurring natural disasters is also weakening and they have to rely more and more on external relief. Climate change is predicted to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities to land degradation, floods and drought in Afghanistan and will challenge farmers and communities to make changes to production systems and protect natural assets.

## THE RATIONALE

In Saighan, Tala-wa-Barfak; Dara-i-Suf Balla, Dara-i-Suf Payeen and Ruy-i-Doab which are mountainous districts, the predominantly rural population sustains on very limited fertile irrigated land and have limited livelihood options. The fragile uplands are used extensively for livestock grazing, shrub collection for firewood and rain fed wheat/barley/oil crop cultivation. A few spice crops like Black cumin (*Bunium persicum*) and Hing (*Ferula assafoetida*) are collected from most of these mountain areas for sale.

The livelihoods of the rural population in all project districts are threatened due to bad management of catchment areas where the government and community efforts are limited. Plowing of the pastures and uncontrolled grazing have depleted vegetation in the watersheds to an alarming extent. Due to lack of alternative energy options, woody biomass is used for fuel wood but this is becoming very scarce with the consequence that people resort to burning manure and cutting out ephemerals in the mountain pastures in a destructive way. Sustainable management of private land resources, particularly dryland, also needs improvements.

## GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

**Goal:** The livelihood security of selected communities of Tala-wa-Barfak, Ruy-i-Doab, Upper and Lower Dara-i-Suf and Saighan districts has been increased through flash flood and drought risk mitigation.

**Objective:** The capacity of selected vulnerable communities to mitigate flash flood and drought risks is increased through sustainable land management, alternative livelihood options and capacity building.

**Outputs:** Together with the people, the project supports the the expected outputs through Livestock management; Soil and Water Conservation; Rural Energy Management; Protective and Relief Measures; Home-based cash crop cultivation; Mountain niche crops; Plant nurseries; Organizational structure strengthening and human Resource Development, and Knowledge sharing and networking.



**Photos:** Training on bio-briquette technology (left) and animal husbandry (right). Bio-briquettes decrease smoke pollution and, together with community bakeries, help in reducing shrub consumption. Animal husbandry has a vital role in food security, family income and sustainable land management.

## APPROACH

The project

- targets those vulnerable Community Development Councils which are covered by ILRC program since 2006 and Green Saighan project since 2010 and which suffer from major risks along the year,;
- builds on learning from HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation projects including SDC funded Improved Livelihood of Rural Communities (ILRC); Swiss Re Award (2009) funded Community-based watershed management in Kahmard; EC funded Linking Relief to Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) and LED funded Green Saighan;
- adheres to the principles of good governance and conflict sensitive project management (CSPM);
- links upstream to downstream interventions;
- generates employment opportunities for villagers through "cash for work" approach.

## INTERVENTION AREA

The project is being implemented in about 60 Community Development Councils (CDCs) in Saighan district (Bamyan province), Tala-wa-Barfak district (Baghlan Province) and Dara-i-Suf Balla, Dara-i-Suf Payeen and Ruy-i Doab districts (Samagan Province) covering 12,000 families.

## MAIN PARTNERS

The project works through existing organizational structures thereby strengthening them. The Community Development Councils are the main implementing partner for the project. They have direct interaction with the District Governor and are also represented by the District Development Assembly (DDA).

## ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

- Watershed management projects in Ruy-i Doab (7 sites) and in Saighan (3 sites) initiated for reducing flash flood and drought risks and improving livelihoods.
- 1 watershed management site developed as demonstration site near Saighan district office.
- 10 watershed management committees formed and their capacities enhanced.
- 35 community bakeries constructed for reducing shrub consumption and watershed degradation.
- Cuttings of Poplar, Salix and Silver nut planted to increase fuel wood production and stabilize river banks.
- 4 passive solar houses constructed to reduce fuel wood consumption.
- 112 women take up improved vegetable cultivation practices with project support.
- Fruit (apple, apricot and almond) non fruit (Russian willow and Acacia) nurseries established with private farmers, and 20,000 saplings are growing.
- 37 Community Based Disaster Risk Management Committees were established. More than 1300 people got knowledge about Disaster Risk Reduction and how to deal with disasters.
- 4 new farmers trained on nursery establishment.
- More than 100 women trained on bio-briquette technology.
- 32 members of watershed management committees from Ruy-i-Doab, Saighan and Kahmard districts trained on conflict resolution, leadership and management topics and participated in a watershed management exchange visit.





**Photo:** Watershed management measures (terraces and contour trench) have been applied on a large scale in Ruy-i Doab.



**Photo:** Local communities are actively involved in watershed resource mapping, for clarifying land ownership and elaborating rules and regulations for watershed management.



**Photo:** An aqueduct constructed in Saighan is benefiting 60 families by supplying uninterrupted irrigation. Communities contributed 20% of the project cost.

## QUICK FACTS

<b>Project start</b>	<b>1 December, 2010</b>
<b>Current phase</b>	<b>2010-2011</b>
<b>Major Donor</b>	<b>Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)</b>
<b>Contact</b>	<a href="mailto:afghanistan@helvetas.org">afghanistan@helvetas.org</a>

## THE PERSPECTIVES

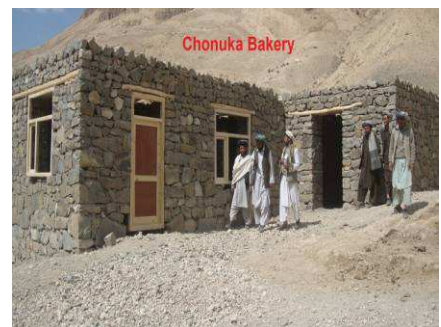
At the national level, Disaster Risk Mitigation is a response to the objectives and priorities set by the Afghan government through Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) and the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-15). SDC too has disaster resilient activities in its thematic components and integrates disaster risk reduction as a cross-cutting theme into its livelihood improvement programmes. The work initiated in this 1-year project is expected to be continued through the SDC funded ILRC phase III. The lessons learned are also shared with other actors through Sustainable Land Management Institute Organization (SLMIO) in Bamyan, which receives funding support from SDC and its members.



**Photo:** Tree cutting planted along streams for bank stabilization.



**Photo:** Workers are trained before implementing watershed management measures.



**Photo:** Community bakeries complement watershed management activities.