



Photo: People from Roy-e Sang village constructing contour trenches in Sourakhak watershed, Kahmard, with a cash for work approach.

SUSTAINABLE WATER AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Mitigating flash flood and drought risks

Sustainable water and land management (SWLM) project was launched in 2011 to address the technical and social problems and challenges of flash flood and drought risks in Saighan, Kahmard and Ruy-i Doab districts, Afghanistan. It supports sustainable watershed management, community bakeries and improved irrigation systems to increase resilience of vulnerable communities to natural disasters in project target areas.

“Many NGOs have implemented projects in Saighan but they never came to our village Khojakesht. HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation is the first NGO to support our village. First HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation organized a community based disaster risk management (CBDRM) workshop in which we selected the construction of an improved intake as our village’s main priority because we face a lot of problems during irrigation. Some people used to damage our locally-made irrigation intake which affected our crop production. That is why we decided to go for improved intake project. HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation engineers completed an engineering survey. Thereafter we completed the project in 2 months. We appreciate that the project was implemented by villagers and they could also get income by participating in construction works“.

- Sher Ahmad, Khojakhest CDC, Saighan

THE CONTEXT

Afghanistan is prone to natural hazards. With the help of national and international partners, Afghanistan's government has prepared the Strategic National Action Plan (SNAP) for Disaster Risk Reduction which lays a road map for a safer and more resilient Afghanistan by addressing the risk of future disasters and climate change in a cohesive way.

Disasters from natural hazards disrupt progress and destroy development efforts, often putting nations in pursuit of growth and stability back in time. Poor suffer the most from the impacts of disasters and are most likely to lose their lives and livelihoods when floods, droughts, earthquakes or avalanches occur. Climate change is expected to increase natural disasters in the future.

THE RATIONALE

Ruy-i-Doab district (Samangan province) and Kahmard and Saighan districts (Bamyan province) are affected by recurring flash floods and droughts which result in loss of property and lives and push back development efforts. The situation has got bad due to over-exploitation of the natural resources.

Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive and participatory approach to disaster risk mitigation (DRM) which includes increasing local capacities to prepare and respond to disasters, to implement sustainable land management and to construct and maintain protective infrastructures.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The project aims to increase the livelihood security of selected communities of Ruy-i-Doab, Kahmard and Saighan districts through flash flood and drought risk mitigation.

Project outcome: Communities restore selected critical watersheds for reducing flash flood and drought risks by applying sustainable land and water management practices, improved irrigation techniques and shrub management in a community based approach.

Output 1: Soil and water conservation measures applied in critical sub-watersheds. The measures include contour trenches, soil bunds, water reservoirs, check dams, terraces, etc. in uplands and improved irrigation schemes in valleys.

Output 2: Community bakeries are established in selected villages for reducing firewood demand at household level which help in less shrub cutting from the watersheds.

The project's actions support Improved Livelihood of Rural Communities (ILRC) project implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and financed by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

APPROACH

- While focusing on reducing disaster risks from a participatory, integrated and upstream-downstream linkage approach, the project works through the established community development councils (CDCs), watershed management committees or duly recognized local institutions.
- Project partners adhere to the principles of good governance and sign a Code of Conduct.
- The project also provides temporary labour and employment and has "cash for work" approach. Community contributes minimum 20% of the actual implementation cost.
- Lessons learned are shared with national and international disaster risk management and livelihood platforms.

INTERVENTION AREA

The project targets 40 community development councils (CDCs) and 6000 families in Ruy-i-Doab, Saighan and Kahmard districts.

MAIN PARTNERS

The community development councils or CDCs are the main project partners. The project will work with the existing watershed management committees. The District Development Assemblies and government representatives are involved in project monitoring and, if necessary, for resolving conflicts.

ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

- Soil and water conservation measures have been applied in 13 critical watersheds which include 7 watersheds in Ruy-i-Doab, 3 in Saighan and 3 in Kahmard.
- 35,480 contour trenches, 80,400 m contour soil bunds, 1130 small-sized terraces, 8463 m³ check dams, 14 water reservoirs and 1 guard room have been constructed.
- 8 projects on improved irrigation systems including improved intakes, flood protection walls, *Karez* (a traditional underground water supply system) and lined irrigation canal are completed.
- 12 community bakeries have been constructed in Kahmard for reducing shrub cutting from the watersheds.
- 7 community based disaster risk management (CBDRM) committees have been organized, trained and equipped in Saighan.

“Now we have enough drinking water for ourselves and our animals!
Sakhydad, CharghandanSufila, Saighan



“I am from *Charghadan Sufila* village. About 90 families live here. Our living conditions were very difficult before as we suffered from scarcity of water for humans, animals and plants. The problem got so acute that we had decided to migrate to Kabul or Mazar-e Sharif. In June 2011, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation selected our CDC and before initiating any project they organized a CBDRM workshop. All the villagers participated in the workshop. After assessing risks, we had to prioritize our needs in a participatory way. We decided to select *Karez* project as our first priority. We were happy that we could select our own need-based project. HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation engineers made a survey and estimated the budget. Then a contract was signed with the CDC which was also a good step because we could implement the project ourselves, earn income and improve our skills for *Karez* construction. We completed the work in 2 months. Now we have about 1.5 inch water which is enough for human beings and animals.”



Photo: Improved intake in *Khojakesht* CDC, Saighan



Photo: Soil and water conservation measures (terraces and contour trenches) in Ruy-i-Doab district.

QUICK FACTS

Project start	15 May 2011
Current phase	15 May-31 December 2011
Major Donors	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
Contact	Afghanistan@helvetas.org

THE PERSPECTIVES

The activities of this Sustainable land and water management (SWLM) project had been implemented within 8 months. As it is linked to the Improved Livelihood of Rural Communities (ILRC) project of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, the supported measures will continue to be monitored and strengthened through Phase III of ILRC.

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation will also continue to provide refresher capacity building trainings for community development councils, watershed management and community based disaster risk management committees.



Photo: Improved irrigation canal in Dome-Jangal, Saighan. 120 families benefit from this canal.



Photo: People prioritizing their needs during CBDRM workshop.



Photo: Community bakery in Kahmard for baking bread or *nan*.