

Supporting the reintegration of returnees and IDPs through an inclusive poultry value chain in Balkh province, Afghanistan

Results summary

Over the course of a 6-month programme, Hand in Hand supported 1,600 women in Afghanistan's Balkh province. Our initiative focused on creating sustainable livelihoods and enhancing resilience by launching and nurturing climate-resilient poultry farming businesses. This effort not only supports the economic independence of these women but also fosters community growth by generating 1,600 new jobs.



46%

income uplift



14%

of women have the power to make decisions about the things that affect their lives



7%

of project members are financially resilient

Problem

Economic collapse and rising food prices: Afghanistan is on the verge of total economic collapse. Food prices are soaring, essential services are failing, and critical public sector workers are unpaid. The banking system is barely operational, making it difficult for aid agencies and citizens to access cash for basic needs. Currently, 11 million people face food insecurity, and by mid-2022, 97% of the population is at risk of universal poverty.

Political and economic instability: the ongoing political turmoil, compounded by the impacts of COVID-19 and widespread unemployment, has exacerbated an already dire situation. High food prices are worsening food insecurity, particularly for those living below the poverty line. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) identified 18.4 million people in need in January 2022, a number expected to rise to 24.4 million within the year. Decades of insecurity and natural disasters, combined with the current sociopolitical transition, threaten to plunge the country into a humanitarian catastrophe.

Internal displacement crisis: Afghanistan faces one of the most severe internal displacement crises globally. In 2021, 736,000 people were internally displaced, and 1.2 million returned from Iran and Pakistan, with 504,000 projected to be newly displaced in 2022. Over 46,000 returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) settled in Balkh province in 2021. The majority lack basic provisions, and the government's capacity to reintegrate returnees is severely constrained by high national unemployment. Most returnees exhaust resettlement cash grants within three months due to urgent needs for food, shelter, and transportation, with scarce job opportunities compounding their plight.

Gender inequality: women in Afghanistan face even greater challenges. According to the Global Citizen report, Afghanistan is the worst country for gender equality. Women face entrenched political and cultural barriers to business, including limited mobility, lack of business networks, and hostile markets. Displaced women experience overcrowded living conditions and restricted movement, leading to heightened stress. Young girls are often forced into early marriages to alleviate the economic burden on their families.

Objectives

Following our well-proven model, Hand in Hand aimed to train 500 women, supporting the creation of 500 enterprises, and transforming 3,900 children, women's and men's lives. We aimed to boost:

- incomes
- sustainability: enterprise survival rates
- financial resilience: participants with the capacity to deal with a financial shock without borrowing money or selling assets
- women's bargaining power: women participating in household decision-making

Our solution

The project aimed to tackle economic inequalities in the Balkh province. It acknowledged that those at the lower end of the economic scale lacked access to opportunities and the skills needed to earn income, which trapped them in poverty.

Participants received Hand in Hand Afghanistan's integrated support program designed to enhance layer poultry enterprise development. This involved Hand in Hand Afghanistan building the capacity of the beneficiaries in layer poultry farming and entrepreneurship through training courses in poultry farming, nutrition, safeguarding, entrepreneurship, and association management, and providing them with enterprise start-up kits, enabling them to start and grow competitive and income-generating layer poultry enterprises.

To achieve this objective, Hand in Hand Afghanistan focused on three outputs, with outputs 1 and 2 concentrating on the new cohort of entrepreneurs, and output 3 linking the two project elements, including activities that were offered to both target groups. Together, these systematically addressed the business- and market-related barriers that threatened the reintegration of returnees.

Output 1: participants received comprehensive support from Hand in Hand Afghanistan's program to develop layer poultry enterprises. This included training in poultry farming, nutrition, safeguarding, entrepreneurship, and association management, along with start-up kits. These resources enabled them to establish and grow competitive, income-generating poultry businesses.

Output 2: enhanced access of poultry entrepreneurs to markets through the creation of a sustainable layer poultry value chain, thereby increasing the economic capacity of the target group.

Output 3: strengthened resilience of 600 micro-enterprises through innovations and increased market linkages. This output was achieved through a combination of market-based and infrastructure interventions. Market-based activities applied lessons from earlier Hand in Hand programs, expanding both supply and demand.

The project's approach was based on the belief that skill development and empowerment could create a positive impact on the lives of the beneficiaries and the broader community. By promoting self-sufficiency and economic independence, the project aimed to create a lasting impact that went beyond its duration.

Results



Income

- The average monthly net enterprise income for women is 2,741 AFN (\$155 PPP). This is an increase of 46% since baseline.
 - 100% of women have daily net enterprise income above \$2.15 PPP
 - 77% of women have a daily net enterprise income above \$3.65 PPP



Women's decision making

- 14% of women are able to make decisions about the things that affect their lives, such as healthcare, visiting friends and family, and household purchases.



Financial resilience

- 7% of women said they could raise emergency funds within 30 days without borrowing money or selling assets.

For more information

Or to talk to our monitoring, evaluation and learning team in more detail about our impact and evidence, please contact admin@handinhandinternational.org or call us on +44 (0)20 7514 5091.

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