

Strengthening resilience and creating economic opportunities for returnees and internally displaced people in Balkh, Afghanistan

Results summary

Over the course of a 6-month programme, Hand in Hand supported 600 individuals (80% women) in entrepreneurship and layer poultry farming in the Balkh province of Afghanistan to launch and grow 600 sustainable, climate resilient agri-businesses, creating 600 jobs.

Problem

Afghanistan is on the brink of total economic collapse. Food prices are rising fast. Essential services are unable to function, and critical public sector workers are not being paid. 30% of the population, 9.5M people, are facing elevated levels of acute food insecurity. The current political upheaval compounded an already challenging environment, reeling from the effects of COVID-19 and rampant unemployment. High food prices are further exacerbating food insecurity, especially for those living below the poverty line.

For those who have been displaced in Afghanistan, these constraints are felt even more acutely. 592,000 people have been uprooted and internally displaced from their homes since the beginning of 2021.

For women, the situation is worse. Women across Afghanistan face entrenched cultural barriers to establishing businesses including limited mobility, lack of business networks, and markets that are hostile to female participation. Women and girls have heightened experiences of displacement. Overcrowded living situations where women are constrained in leaving the house can be oppressive and stressful. Young girls are forced into early marriage to reduce the economic burden on households and the need to secure income to meet other members' basic needs.

Objectives

Following our well-proven model, Hand in Hand aimed to train 600 participants, supporting the creation of 600 enterprises and 600 jobs. 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

This project built the capacity and strengthened the resilience of vulnerable IDPs, returnees, and a small number of host community members in Balkh province by creating future economic prospects through the layer poultry chain.

Hand in Hand followed the 'do no harm' principle closely to ensure that the project had no unintended negative consequences. A conflict, context, and stakeholder analysis was carried out as part of the scoping assessment for the feasibility of implementing activities in the potential areas. By including different groups within the community, i.e., returnees, IDPs, and members of the host community, the project ensured inclusivity and contributed to improved community relations.

Hand in Hand provided capacity building in entrepreneurship and layer poultry farming to 600 persons from ultra-poor households (60% IDPs, 20% returnees, 20% host communities). During the training, basic food support was provided to ensure that the target group could participate consistently.

By offering tailored training and skill development, the project intended to give participants the tools to start and manage their businesses. This was achieved through Hand in Hand's four-stage training model, in which we:

- supported participants to form self-help groups so they could learn and save together
- trained them in essential business and financial skills, such as bookkeeping, as well as techniques to improve their farms' climate resilience, such as irrigation or crop diversification
- offered support to access credit so they could grow their farm business
- created market connections linking women to new value chains, often as part of producer groups

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

- 55% increase in overall average monthly net enterprise income based on household annual income
 - 59% increase in women's average monthly net enterprise income based on household annual income
 - 37% increase in men's average monthly net enterprise income based on household annual income

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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