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A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

ActionAid Afghanistan Annual Report 2014

Our **values** guide us in our mission to transform ourselves, the community and society at large to free people from poverty and injustice:

Mutual respect, requiring us to recognize each person's innate worth and the value of diversity.

Equity and justice, requiring us to work towards equal opportunity for every person, irrespective of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, HIV status, color, class, ethnicity, disability, location and religion.

Honesty and transparency, requiring us to be accountable at all levels to ensure the effectiveness of our actions, and open in our communications with others.

Solidarity with the poor, powerless and excluded - the only bias in our commitment to the fight against poverty.

Courage of conviction, requiring us to be creative and radical, bold and innovative in pursuit of making the greatest possible impact on the root causes of poverty, without fear of failure.

Independence from any religious or political affiliation.

Our **vision** is a world without poverty and injustice in which every person enjoys their right to a life of dignity.

Our **mission** is to work with poor and excluded people to eradicate poverty and injustice.

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ActionAid Afghanistan
 House # 1117, Street # 05
 Qala-e-Fatullah
 Kabul, Afghanistan.
Phone: +93 (0) 202 210 799
Email: Info.afghanisan@actionaid .org
Web: www.actionaid.org

COUNTRY DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

It is my great pleasure to provide you with a quick look into ActionAid Afghanistan's programmes and activities in our 2014 Annual Report. Here, you will learn more about how we are alleviating poverty and suffering amongst vulnerable communities.

In 2014, we faced challenges but also made significant progress in improving people's lives and helping them to enjoy their rights. We remained committed to our rights holders, government officials, donors and supporters, deepening the impact of our programmes by working closely with the people of Afghanistan in their fight to realize their full potential. Our stakeholders appreciated our efforts to change the lives of the Afghan people; together, we reached about 3 million people across Afghanistan during the year through 11 Local Rights Programmes (LRPs).

We worked towards structural change to break down cycles of poverty and injustice, and to make a sustainable impact in the lives of the poor. We helped 1,691 poor rural households to ensure sustainable livelihoods and adopt improved agricultural practices. Our intensive support helped 1,046 female-headed households to increase their income and secure alternative livelihoods. 700 rural farmers collectively facilitated campaigns for access to quality seeds at affordable prices under the umbrella of the Food Security Network (FSN), of which ActionAid is a founding member.

6990 women and girls were educated and enabled to make substantial change in their lives through our adult learning and empowerment sessions. We scaled up our work on gender-based violence and female empowerment, helping to institutionalize women's participation and leadership at the grassroots level. Our joint policy advocacy effort with the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) helped to ensure that female ministers were included in the cabinet of Afghanistan's national unity government. We played a significant role in the One Billion Rising (OBR) Campaign with strong grassroots involvement and support via evidence-based researches and studies. Our education and child rights intervention work helped 18,139 children to continue their education.

We remain grateful to our 9,440 individual supporters, who helped us in implementing 44 percent of our overall Country Programmes in Afghanistan. Women and excluded people emerged as grassroots leaders in 675 community-based organizations. Communities, together with government ministries and departments, implemented 102 development projects that ensured right holders' easy access to basic services and enjoyment of a dignified life.

We helped communities to better prepare for disasters by developing 55 Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Action Plans and developed their capacities in early warning systems. We successfully completed a project under the Disaster Preparedness Programme of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (DIPECHO), with significant impacts on the lives and livelihoods of our rights holders.

We are on track to fulfill our commitments as planned in our Country Strategy Paper (CSP). Our country office management team underwent a major restructure in 2014, with diverse professionals joining the team. We updated the HR, Security, M&E and internal audit policies and frameworks that guide us to achieve our long term goals.

We would like to thank our wonderful donors, supporters, partners and communities for enabling us to make a positive and meaningful change to the lives of those living with poverty - not only in 2014, but for years to come. Many thanks also to our diligent staff, particularly our frontline workers. With your continued support, we will maintain this much-needed momentum in equally ambitious endeavors in the coming years. I know that we will continue in our commitment to serving the poorest people in the best possible way.

Sincerely

Khondoker Ariful Islam
Country Director
ActionAid Afghanistan





WHO WE ARE

ActionAid International (AAI) is an international organization working with over 15 million people in more than 45 countries for a world free from poverty and injustice, with the support of half a million donors and supporters. AAI is collectively governed by all its members, supported by an International Secretariat in Johannesburg, South Africa. In Asia, AAI operates its regional programme from Bangkok, Thailand and provides managerial, governance and technical support to country programmes across the region.

ActionAid International has been working in Afghanistan since 2002, implementing sustainable development programmes with the poor and excluded sections of the society as our main rights holders. ActionAid Afghanistan (AAA) is currently operational in the Bamyán, Balkh, Herat, Jawzjan and Kabul provinces in Afghanistan with 11 LRPs.



HOW WE WORK

We facilitate community-driven programmes, placing high importance on the potential of the community as a driver of change. We implement programmes with our young and energetic Community Facilitators at the forefront. We also seek advice from senior figures and religious leaders to ensure effective programme implementation. Our Community Facilitators are equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence to stimulate participatory development and act as change agents in their communities. They serve as direct links between ActionAid and communities, and engage with local authorities to ensure lasting development.

Community-led and rights-based development initiatives are our core implementation approaches. AAA has been highly instrumental in ensuring transparency and accountability to rights holders with a bottom-up implementation approach. We are careful to link our programmes with local, provincial and national level government plans and strategies. Grassroots communities have an intimate knowledge of the challenges they face, and often a wealth of ideas for potential solutions. Together with the communities we apply various participatory tools to analyze the root causes of poverty and exclusion, find solutions, and develop and implement action plans. Every community member is encouraged to contribute equally from the planning stage through to execution, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender and social status.



WHO WE WORK WITH

We work with the most vulnerable and excluded sections of society such as victims of gender based violence, marginalized and landless farmers, internally displaced people, people living with disability and people vulnerable to disaster. Among these groups women, the elderly, youth and children in particular, in remote rural areas, are our main stakeholders. Through 11 LRP's we have so far reached more than 3 million people in 5 provinces of Afghanistan.

We work with local NGOs to enable them with sustainable

Development (MRRD), the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), the Ministry of Economy (MoE) and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSMD). We also have excellent relationships with provincial and district level government offices which help to foster our grassroots work.

Our funding partners are the Department for International Development (DFID), the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department



grassroots development solutions. Our implementing partners in Afghanistan are People Action for Change (PAC) and the Organization of Human Welfare (OHW). We also implement programmes jointly with other INGOs and consortiums. We work to advocate for changes to policies and practices, and to support ministries and departments of the Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to strengthen their capacity and awareness on various aspects of sustainable development. We work closely with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and

(ECHO), the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of the Government of Australia, the Italian Development Cooperation, the World Bank and ActionAid affiliates and offices from across the world. We also have 9,440 supporters worldwide backing our programme in Afghanistan. We work with the media to amplify the voice of those affected by poverty, and to ensure state accountability; and with academia and research institutions, to collect the evidence required to influence policy change.

2014

Highlights

1,691

households secured sustainable livelihoods and adopted improved agricultural practices

1,046

female-headed households increased their income and secured alternative livelihoods

77

seed banks promoted risk-resilient agricultural crops

143

farmers' groups developed skills and knowledge around sustainable livelihoods

21

hectares of land were saved from erosion as a result of building a bio-dyke

PROGRAMME PRIORITIES

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Our objective is to enhance the food security of rights holders through sustainable livelihood measures that are resilient to shocks while ensuring rights holders have access to and control over productive resources and markets.

Ensuring enhanced food security and sustainable livelihoods is of great importance for AAA, helping people living in poverty to be more resilient to shocks and ensuring rights holders' access to and control over productive resources and markets. In 2014, we promoted and helped communities to find alternative and innovative income generating activities. We encouraged seed and grain banks, formed and maintained Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and community savings groups, and encouraged the participation of women in homestead gardening and livestock production.

We provided training to people living in poverty to help them learn new and valuable skillsets, coupled with inputs such as cash grants and materials to build sustainable and dignified livelihoods. We helped to link vulnerable individuals with the Department of Agriculture and Livestock for on- and off-farm skills development, together with on-the-ground technical support. We developed the capacity of selected women to act as extension workers, and advised and coached women on technical aspects of homestead gardening and other livelihood activities. We built community-based infrastructure such as roads, bridges, canals, bio-dykes, and water tanks for increased production. This infrastructure has helped to better connect the farmers with local marketplaces, increasing the value of their products. This construction work not only benefited the community in the long run, but also created temporary employment opportunities for many people who were previously jobless.

We are a founding member of the FSN, a network of grassroots farmers' organizations working around food security and livelihood issues. In 2014, more than 700 rural farmers from 143 groups actively took part in the network and shared their knowledge, skills, and experience to help their respective communities improve their food security. Through FSN, farmers were organized to collectively address their problems and facilitate campaigns for access to quality seeds at affordable prices.



*Sanifa (35) leads a modest life through ActionAid support
Photo: Zubaida Dil Jan Safi/ActionAid Afghanistan*

WATER RESERVOIR ENSURES FOOD SECURITY

500 villagers of the Yakwlang district in central Afghanistan fought hard to get water for irrigation and drinking. A reservoir now ensures the frequent flow of water in crop fields, resulting in year-round food security and a reduction of water borne-diseases.

Zakia Bamyani, a local and a REFLECT circle member, describes the sufferings of the villagers. "The only source of water was a far distant river; it took two hours every day to fetch water. The villagers, mostly reliant on agriculture, were very poor and couldn't afford to install a water pump."

Through intensive community need assessment that included Zakia and other villagers, AAA helped the communities and formed an action plan to better

address the problem. Drawing on community contributions and following a pre-agreed work plan, villagers installed the reservoir and cultivated 21 hectares of farm land. This enabled them to produce high-yield crops such as wheat and vegetables, and to enjoy safe drinking water - decreasing the risk of water-borne diseases.

"We get water to cultivate our land that gives us food, which ensures our food security and livelihood," says Zakia of the impact of the reservoir. "We have access to safe drinking water as well; we no longer waste our time collecting water, and can use it for productive work instead."



Farmers are happy having their crops in Yakawlang district. Photo: Fatima Mohseni/ActionAid Afghanistan

2014

Highlights

6,990

women and girls were educated and empowered

651

GBV cases mediated by paralegals

62

community-driven initiatives helped reduce gender based violence and promoted women's and girls' rights

375

religious leaders helped ensure women's and girls' rights

1

women's federation helped the grassroots representation of women and girls

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND EMPOWERMENT

Our objective is to promote an enabling environment where women are empowered to enjoy their rights without fear of discrimination or violence.

Gender inequality and discrimination are widespread across Afghanistan. Afghan women are among the poorest in their communities. Women are considered the most vulnerable of all citizens and seldom have a voice in decision-making at the household or community levels. Their literacy and education levels are also much lower than those of men.

We contextualised gender strategy and implemented gender-sensitive programming towards ensuring the active participation of women in all aspects of decision-making processes. Through 192 Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT) circles, we helped to ensure women and girls' access to basic education and helped prevent gender based violence. We also worked with women's networks, religious leaders, and CSOs to raise a stronger and collective voice promoting and protect women's and girls' rights. We encouraged women's economic empowerment, facilitating vocational, homestead gardening and livestock and poultry rearing training. We scaled up and institutionalized women's participation and leadership by building and strengthening alliances of women's organizations at various levels.

We linked the local issues of violence to a national and global campaign and built solidarity amongst actors across Afghanistan. Our paralegals played a catalyst role in preventing gender-based violence at a grassroots level, providing women and girls with education on various rights-based issues and gender based violence. They helped women connect to departments of women's affairs, law enforcement agencies and other like-minded organizations. Paralegals were trained in case management and conducted the same training for the REFLECT circle members and other women across communities.



*International Women's Day celebrates in Bamyan Center.
Photo: Saiera Sarfaraz/ActionAid Afghanistan*

AAA, as an active member of the AWN - the largest network of NGOs and CSOs in Afghanistan on women's rights - has been actively participating in and showing the utmost solidarity towards ensuring proper representation and empowerment of women across Afghanistan. Together with the AWN, AAA was very instrumental in the OBR Campaign, with strong grassroots involvements

and support from evidence-based researches and studies. We supported the drafting of Elimination of Violence Against Women law alongside with AWN and helped the government to make it operational. We also advocated for the inclusion of women ministers in the cabinet of Afghanistan.

PARALEGALS HAVE ENSURED GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL

Hasti, an 18 year old teacher in the Herat province, earns GBP 112.00 per month. That income helps secure her livelihood, and also helps her play a part in the community decision-making process alongside other male members. A few years ago, like many Afghan women, Hasti faced extreme gender-based restrictions from a male-dominated society which often denied her access to basic human rights, including education. Despite these restrictions, she fought hard in making initial strides to protect her rights and completed her study. "My education was barred due to increased security threats, and the poor socio-economic conditions of my parents resulted in early and forced marriage at the age of 16," says Hasti, describing her days of misery.

But ActionAid's paralegal education programme helped Hasti and complete her education up to grade twelve. Nasima, a paralegal assigned to Hasti's village, was amongst 50 AAA paralegals who received training and provided awareness education and counseling support to women and girls in 50 villages across Afghanistan. AAA interventions helped paralegals enhance their skill and capacity around basic human rights, women's and girls' rights, the roles and

responsibilities of paralegals, the broader legal system and the civil and criminal procedures of Afghanistan.

Nasima explains her role in motivating Hasti's family to continue her education. "I explained Hasti's commitment to education, the multifaceted benefits of female education and employment and girls' rights to education in light of Islam and Afghan law - as well as Hasti's potential."

With Nasima's help, Hasti successfully graduated and got a job as teacher in a government local primary school. "I enjoy my role, and educate girls and boys to help serve the Afghan people," she says. "I am very grateful to ActionAid's paralegal education project, which gave me a new life."

With funding from the Italian Development Cooperation, the paralegal education project is being implemented at five districts in two provinces of Afghanistan to educate and organize communities, paralegals, opinion leaders, government officials and civil society members on gender based violence and the importance of equal access to justice for women and girls.



*Nasima receives psycho-social training and learning materials from ActionAid.
Photo: Zahra Ibrahim/ActionAid Afghanistan*

2014

Highlights

18,139

children received ongoing support to enroll in and continue their education

9,440

children secured sponsorships

165

child centers enabled children to unlock their potential

621

youths contributed to infrastructure development and environmental protection work

2,860

students enjoyed safe drinking water that ensured good health

500

child change agents helped drive education on children's rights

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND EDUCATION

Our objective is to protect the rights of children, particularly girl children in of all our LRPs by promoting their education, development, protection and participation in social change.

We aim to protect the rights of children by promoting their education, development, protection and participation in social changes process and system. We directly supported 5,666 children to develop awareness and a voice around 10 core education rights. Children were able to use 165 Child Centers as learning and development platforms, which provided a friendly environment and often a contrast to schools, encouraging children to enroll in continue their formal education. We worked with schools, education departments, and Child Enabling Committees to campaign for improved infrastructure to help ensure easy access to education, with a particular focus on girls' education.



*ActionAid Afghanistan helps children to continue their education in Bamyán Center.
Photo: Saiera Sarfaraz/ActionAid Afghanistan*

We directly supported 9,440 children in more than 100 villages with our sponsorship programme. We also linked our sponsorship programme more closely with our LRPs, and scaled up efforts to ensure that all children get access to quality education. Our Community Facilitators remained strongly involved in facilitating activities for children, monitoring children's school attendance and well-being, and helping convey relevant information to supporters.

We recognized the potential of youth to get involved in with anti-poverty development activities, and invested in them. We contextualized and strengthened activities to build youth leadership in our campaign for change. 621 youths, of whom 160 were young women, mobilized to contribute in constructing infrastructure and planting 1,000 seedlings to help save communities from the effects of natural hazards.



Bibi Hazar (6) at the child center with her friends. Photo: Shamsuddin Mirza/ActionAid Afghanistan

IMPROVED LEARNING OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN

250 students in the Bamyán province of central Afghanistan are now able to enjoy reading a wide variety of books and gaining knowledge on arts, science, fiction, history in five child centers. Following decades of war and conflict, children in Afghanistan struggle to get access to quality education; there is a lack of resources, infrastructure and skills, along with increased security threats. But AAA's efforts help poor and destitute children get access to education, and provide them with facilities to continue their studies.

"We had no option to read other than our text books, and nothing to do in leisure periods since we had limited opportunities to play outside due to increased security risks and rough weather," says Kubra, a fourth-grade student at a local primary school. "We lacked up-to-date knowledge and information on modern sciences, we had little knowledge about our proud history, and we weren't able to read stories as we had no such books."

AAA has established five child centers to help children flourish by learning their rights, reading a broader variety of books, and sharing knowledge. These child centers-cum-libraries play a major role in fostering literacy amongst children who need special assistance to develop their literacy skills. More than 250 students aged between four and twelve from across the community visit these centers, to read the books with

images and stories that interest and attract them. Both children and their parents are very happy to have such opportunities for learning. Abdul Ahmad, a local guardian, is delighted to have a child center in his locality. "My son often visits the library every day and reads fiction and story books that help him enrich his knowledge," he says.

Satar, a fifth grade student, normally borrows books from the library and reads them at home. "I took many interesting books from the library and I read so many good stories that help me to generate ideas," he says. "I never waste my leisure time - I consider reading books is a very good habit!"

Ghulam Hussain, an instructor at a child center, has noticed changes in children's mindsets after the establishment of the centers. "Children eagerly grasp to read books in a well-located environment and strive to learn new things," he says. "I am happy that their reading and writing skills are improving a lot."

AAA's Child Sponsorship and Education programme has helped supporters gain a realistic understanding of the issues of fighting poverty through the real lives of individual children, families and communities.

2014

Highlights

675

grassroots institutions helped to ensure good governance and develop leadership in rural Afghanistan

9

communities chose leaders, exercising their democratic rights

102

development projects ensured social audits resulting grassroots accountability and transparency

4,556

people enriched their skills around good governance, leadership, social audit and participatory monitoring

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Our objective is to promote women's leadership and, more broadly, transparent and accountable democratic governance that assures the fundamental rights of all and pro-poor policies, practices and resource allocation at a sub-national level.

We organized and mobilized communities to secure quality services from government, opened up democratic space and confronted corrupt practices and systems. We formed, strengthened and maintained Community Development Councils (CDCs) and REFLECT circles as effective grassroots institutions to promote and practice governance. In particular, we invested in CDCs and REFLECT circles to help them become true representatives of people and custodians of their rights and aspirations, expanding and exploiting the scope of REFLECT circles to be a force for broader empowerment rather than just a literacy tool. We leveraged the power of youth as social change agents by investing in their awareness and leadership. We promoted women's leadership, transparency and accountability in democratic governance, with a view to safeguarding the fundamental rights of all and fostering pro-poor policies, practices and resource allocations at local, provincial and national level. We invested in building strong women's institutions and their federations at various levels, and contributed to enlarging the spaces for their participation in social and political processes.

We ensured a process of social audit to make duty bearers accountable to the right holders. We provided training and technical support to community members which enabled them to investigate the usage of funds and expenditure, audited against the approved plans of development projects. We strengthened our cooperation with government at local, provincial and central levels, which allowed us to not only support a transparent and accountable reform process, but to influence key policies and practices. We promoted the voice of rights holders on the ground by mobilising people to participate in the development of local planning and budgets, and encouraged women, children and senior citizens to become a part of decision making processes. We also worked with the government at various levels in building capacity to deliver good governance.



*Social audit helps ensuring transparency and accountability in Darzab district.
Photo: Arsalan Asad/ActionAid Afghanistan*

IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE HAS CHANGED LIVES IN NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN

More than 15,000 people in seven villages now enjoy the benefits of a 10.85 kilometer road, costing GBP 31, 584 to build, in the Qarqin district of northern Afghanistan. 34 percent of the district's population previously lacked vital access to proper road infrastructure.

Noor Mohammad, a 40-year old farmer from the village of Ali Baba, had a dreadful experience last year. "We suffered a lot and our life was almost ruined because of not having a road in our locality," he says. "We produced grapes and vegetables, but all our hard labors were in vain as we weren't able to send our products to the city market due to the lack of a connecting road."

AAA organized and trained villagers in planning and leadership development in order to build their capacity and improve their ability to identify and prioritize problems, and develop action plans. With a joint effort from the community and AAA, the new road was built within one year. The construction works not only benefited the community in the long run, but also created temporary employment opportunities for many

villagers who were jobless previously.

Abdul Ghaffar, a grade four student of the local primary school, says happily "I can now go to school by riding my bicycle and can attend my classes on time. My ambition is to complete my study and become a doctor to serve the poor people of my locality."

Aqcha Gull, a 28-year old lady from Yangi Ariqh village, says "Pregnant mothers can get to the clinic in a shorter period of time when they are in need of qualified gynecologists and nurses. The road saves lives."

Noor Mohammad, meanwhile, says the road is helping his family to earn a better living. "We can sell our products to the city market and get the best prices," he says. "We can transport them with minimal cost and save a good amount of money."

AAA's NSP programme builds and strengthens the capacity of CDCs, delivers and facilitates services through development projects and programmes and ensures the emergence of leadership and enhanced governance under the direction of the MRRD, with funding from the World Bank.



*10.85 kilometer road connects 15,000 people with the city center in Qarqin district.
Photo: Arsalan Asad/ActionAid Afghanistan*

HUMANITARIAN MANDATE

Our Humanitarian Mandate contributes to the priorities and mission outlined under Afghanistan's National Disaster Management Plan, guided by the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

Afghanistan is vulnerable to natural disasters and is exposed to diverse hazards including floods, earthquakes, landslides, avalanches, extreme weather, drought and other form of climate induced disasters. Responding to humanitarian calamities and building resilience across communities is a core mandate for ActionAid Afghanistan. To do so, we have been actively working with national and provincial level government institutions and systems such as the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) at central level through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). We also have excellent relationships with provincial and district level officials, including the Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (DRRD). We helped ANDMA in building resilience capacity at provincial and district level. We have strong and solid grassroots foundations with 55 Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) committees, including an active membership of 855 women; we have empowered women to contribute to disaster resilience plans at the village level, and ensure the proper allocation of resources to mitigate disaster risks as reflected in their DRR plans. Six out of eleven of our LRPs developed risk reduction strategies and allocated the required amount of resources to integrate and implement these strategies.

We developed grassroots capacity by organizing training on Early Warning Systems (EWS) and conducted mock drills on Search and Rescue operations for 4,725 women, including 475 girl students from across six schools. The exercises provided participants with the opportunity to better prepare for natural calamities and shocks; they were then able to share knowledge with their families and wider communities. AAA has been very instrumental in building community-based infrastructure such as bio-dykes, embankments, tanks, wells and roads; we have also helped to introduce disaster- and climate-resilient crops across communities. Emergency response is one of our key humanitarian mandates. We helped more than 18,039 disaster affected people in 2014, responding to natural calamities and shocks such as avalanches, flash floods and cold waves; we distributed food and non-food items to 1,005 disaster-affected families. We remain committed to respond immediately to any humanitarian emergencies within the shortest possible time. We developed and set in place an Emergency Contingency Plan to ensure that those affected by disaster can recover from the impact of such hazards and shocks.

2014

Highlights

55

DRR plans made communities more disaster resilient

4,725

women and girls better prepare for disasters through EWS training

1,005

disaster affected households saved lives through emergency relief

6,000

people produced crops with the help of disaster- and climate-resilient infrastructures

1

key MoU helped the government to mitigate and respond to disasters



*Villagers prepare DRR action plan in Bamayan.
Photo: Nahakul Thapa/ActionAid Afghanistan*

INCREASED COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AGAINST DISASTER

Chopash is a remote village in the Sortepah district of northern Afghanistan. The village is situated on the bank of Amu river, with more than 70 percent of its population dependant on agriculture and farming; it is frequently affected by flooding, with a serious impact on lives and livelihoods. Now, Chopash has a crucial early flood warning system in place, where previously the villagers had to depend on local wisdom and traditional knowledge - which, in most cases, failed to predict flooding due to changed rainfall patterns, resulting in the loss of loved ones, houses and livestock.

The villagers not only developed their skillset and knowledge on DRR, but also took adaptation measure such as constructing and maintaining of bio-dykes on the bank of flood-prone Amu river. This community-driven adoptive measure saved 21 hectares of farm land from erosion.

"We were not aware of the early warning systems for floods," says village head Abed Nazar. "We were dependent on traditional weather forecasts from our elders and religious leaders."

AAA's partner NGO, OHW provided technical and financial support to the community to establish water-level a monitoring station and developed their capacity around EWS. OHW also provided the community with a cell phone, enabling them to stay in touch with the ANDMA.

"Now we are getting early warnings of floods, giving us 2-4 hours of lead time to prepare ourselves," says Hazi Akhtar, head of the DRR committee in Chopash. "We have been able to save our livestock and household assets due to the early warnings. No one died in the floods of 2014, and that is a blessing of Allah and effect of the EWS."

The villagers formed a 15-member DRR committee, including six female members. The committee received first aid, light search & rescue training alongside with some equipment to help them support families during disasters and their aftermath.



Amu River Bank; Before, During and After construction of bio dykes.

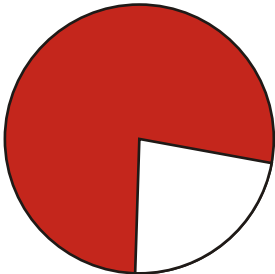
Photo-Nahakul Thapa/ActionAid Afghanistan

ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES

HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

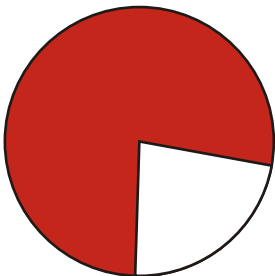
Male-Female Staff Ratio in 2014

- 142 Male
- 41 Female



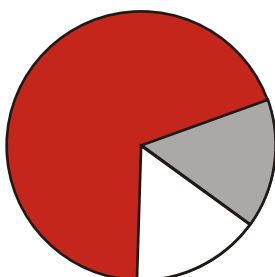
Male-Female Staff Ratio - New Recruitment

- 64 Male
- 19 Female



Representation in Country Office Management Team

- 1 Female
- 1 Field Staff
- 5 Senior Staff



Our aim is to have an efficient team of development workers who are brave, vibrant and creative, working in an environment that fosters camaraderie and talent, united under a mission and shared values.

We believe that our staff and partners are our greatest assets. Our three-member Human Resources and Organizational Development (HROD) team strives to provide the highest possible level of HR services across the organization.

In 2014 we recruited 83 talented, innovative and committed staff with a particular focus on women and diversity. Due to some imposed restrictions on women's education and movement coupled with a range of socio-cultural obstacles, including being targeted by anti-government elements and social stigma, we are still struggling to recruit female staffers in AAA. Nevertheless, we were able to recruit 19 female staff, which was 23 percent of our total recruitment in 2014. We encouraged women to join ActionAid with the provision of special facilities such as pick-up and drop-off to and from home; flexible office hours; and four months' maternity leave. We also promote women in leadership and strategic management positions in the organization.

We absolutely recognize the need to invest in developing the skills and capacity of our staff to help them better perform their duties and responsibilities with integrity and sincerity. Through a systematic approach and precise analysis of staff skills and competencies, we targeted investment in this area. In 2014, 426 staff members including 294 non-core staff gained commendable knowledge in various development and technical areas such as leadership and governance, participatory community empowerment, gender and development, child and youth education, DRR, livelihood and food security, M&E as well as baseline, and financial management. We welcomed our newly joined staff members with comprehensive induction training to provide them with in-depth knowledge on our values, policies and programmes. We put special emphasis on creating a multicultural and diversified team environment, having six international staffers alongside with 177 national staff members.

Our seven-member country office management team ensured grassroots representation, including from provincial-level staff in the team. The AAA Policy Officer was actively involved in strategic decision making processes, with her voice heard in the highest strategic and policy forums of the organization. We went through a broad transition process in 2014, bringing our new Country Director on board along with some other senior management positions roles that were filled with experienced and diverse expat staff.

As part of our regular human resource audit, a team from the Asia Regional Office conducted the 2014 audit which was well received in the context of other AA country programmes. A global staff engagement survey was done in Afghanistan, and key action points identified.

We are on track to achieve our programmatic and organizational priorities and goals, as set out in our CSP. In 2014, we focused on enhancing organizational systems and processes in order to improve our overall accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in all our interventions in Afghanistan. We updated our Human Resource Manual based on extensive consultations with our stakeholders and particularly with our staff members. We introduced a more robust systematic approach to familiarizing our staff with our policies and strategies, with the translation of most policies into the two major local languages of Afghanistan.

MITRA FINDS ACTIONAID A SAFER PLACE FOR WOMEN

Mitra Malekzad, a 21-year old woman hailing from the Kohistan district of northern Afghanistan, found ActionAid a safer place for women to work. She started working in AAA in November 2013 as an intern, but hadn't expected to become a part-time staff member after completion of her internship.

"I had learned and perceived no good things about NGOs in Afghanistan's strict and conservative society, and I was worried about that when I joined AAA. I didn't even know how to approach a colleague in the workplace," she says of her AAA induction. "Moreover, I didn't know anything about keeping a personnel file, preparing contracts and offer letters or maintaining a human resource management information system (HRMIS) before joining."

However, during her internship, Mitra received intensive on-the-job and formal training on HRMIS, compliance and HR documentation to enrich her knowledge and skillset, allowing her to further expand her career.

"I never had a chance to work amongst professionals and supportive colleagues in a friendly working environment like AAA. I would really like to continue,"

she says. "I learnt good things that will boost my confidence to further explore leadership roles in future."

Mitra's parents were very reluctant to allow her to take a job in an NGO. But they are now happy that their daughter is improving her skills and doing well in ActionAid. Her father, Fazal Rabi, made special mention of the working environment that she enjoys in AAA, compared to work in the private sector. "If she wishes to continue her job in AAA for a longer period, we will be happy," he says.

Upon graduating in Computer Science and Engineering from Kabul Polytechnic University in 2015, Mitra wants to become a full-time AAA staff member - and, in a few more years, she's keen to take a leadership position in Afghanistan.

AAA introduced an internship programme to assist in human capital development and experience building for fresh graduates and individuals interested in the development sector. Through internships, AAA promotes women in leadership positions with intensive on-the-job training for six months. Interns who successfully complete their tenure are frequently offered jobs by ActionAid.



Mitra works at her desk in ActionAid Afghanistan. Photo: Abdul Waheed/ActionAid Afghanistan

2014

Highlights

11

LRPs developed M&E frameworks

4

of our LRPs developed implementation strategies

1

LRP handed over to local partner to strengthen our long term partnership

1

study helped strategize actions ensuring women's access to justice and human rights

28

staffers developed M&E capacity that helped quality programming

PROGRAMME QUALITY, M&E AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Our aspiration is to be an accountable organization that delivers high quality, relevant and targeted programmes aided by an efficient operation, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge management systems.

A key achievement of our programme quality and M&E team in 2014 was to strengthen AAA's accountability and transparency framework with appropriate baseline information, informing the logic of our interventions and measuring their impact. Our M&E and baseline training helped 28 staff members to enrich their knowledge and skill in various stages of data collection, collation and analysis. We conducted baseline surveys in our LRP areas in line with our CSP and developed village profiles in all our working areas. All LRPs developed M&E framework in line with country and global M&E frameworks. We updated the profile of our CBOs and helped them in informed decision making.

We conducted intensive action research and collected and compiled best practices and lessons learned from the field. Our action research on the paralegal system helped ensure a well-strategized paralegal support system across our working areas. Alongside with other implementation partners, we conducted an end-line study on our DIPECHO programme which revealed significant community resilience against major disasters and shocks in Afghanistan. We conducted a study on women's access to justice and human rights, and shared key findings with our key stakeholders across Afghanistan. We regularly revised our implementation strategy and plan based on our on-the-ground learning and needs. Four of our LRPs developed implementation strategies which have been aligned with the CSP. We handed over one LRP to a local partner to strengthen our long term partnership.

Our communications officer supported the programme team in developing, editing and designing stories of positive changes and good practices, annual reports, brochures and newsletters. She helped to build staff capacity on communication and photography and maintained and provided content for both the ActionAid website and our internal learning sharing site.

KEY LESSONS

We motivated locals to take adaptation measures such planting tree seedlings, vegetation and grasses on bio-dykes built on the banks of the flood-prone Amu river. Community-driven adoptive measures saved 21 hectares of crop land from erosion.

A good number of REFLECT circle members lacked in terms of basic needs but were not able to attend learning sessions. We helped 60% of them connect with other NGOs and secure income generation support.

NSP directly delivered programmes to the community, resulting in delayed implementation. Our community-driven implementation approach helped CDCs to better implement programmes on the ground, which was very useful in achieving results.

MANAGING RISKS, UNCERTAINTY AND INSECURITY

Our aim is to have a robust and efficient operation amidst the complex, insecure conditions of Afghanistan that protects our people, property and programmes.

Uncertainty was the only certain factor across Afghanistan in 2014. The country continued to be volatile, posing severe security threats and risks to our people, programmes and property as a significant portion of NATO-led international security forces left Afghanistan in 2014.

We conducted a strategic security analysis and strengthened our physical security system across our working areas. We enacted security and risk assessment practices based on the changed situation and increased security needs. We developed a special security and contingency plan that was well managed to ensure staff safety and security, particularly during the Afghan National Election 2014. We managed and mitigated a security incident in which one of our staff members was abducted, and we effectively worked secure his release unharmed.

We enhanced our standing operating procedures (SOPs) after extensive consultations with our key stakeholders. 69 staff enhanced their skills and capacity on personal safety and security through tailored trainings and workshops. We also provided our staff with an on-the-ground crisis management orientation, which better prepared them to manage critical and traumatic situations. We produced periodic and urgent security reports, and disseminated them to our offices in a timely manner. We continued our engagement with governmental and non-governmental security agencies and institutions and collaborated with them by exchanging updates, reports, and lessons learned.

Organizational and programmatic risk was managed with due diligence during the reporting period. In the face of massive security threats and tremendous challenges, we maintained quality programming and managed both internal and external risk factors throughout the year. We maintained strong checks and balance in our organizational affairs. Our internal and external risk management tools, such as internal and external audits, monitoring, and evaluation, helped us to maintain utmost integrity in AAA.

FINANCIAL INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Our aspiration is an organization with the highest financial integrity that is accountable and transparent with efficient and timely delivery.

We ensured the utmost financial accounting and reporting integrity in line with national and international standards for accounting practices and principles. We adhered strictly to the requirements of our own accountability systems as well as those of our donors and national government. We ensured value for money while implementing programmes that helped ensure sustainable development for our rights holders. Our donors were kept well-informed and we periodically reported back to them. We supported our partner NGOs to maintain the highest level of integrity in their financial reporting and accounting systems.

We developed our internal audit policy to make sure that our accounting and financial activities were maintained in line with greater organizational check and balance systems. We conducted an external audit and shared the report with our rights holders, partners, donors and international offices.

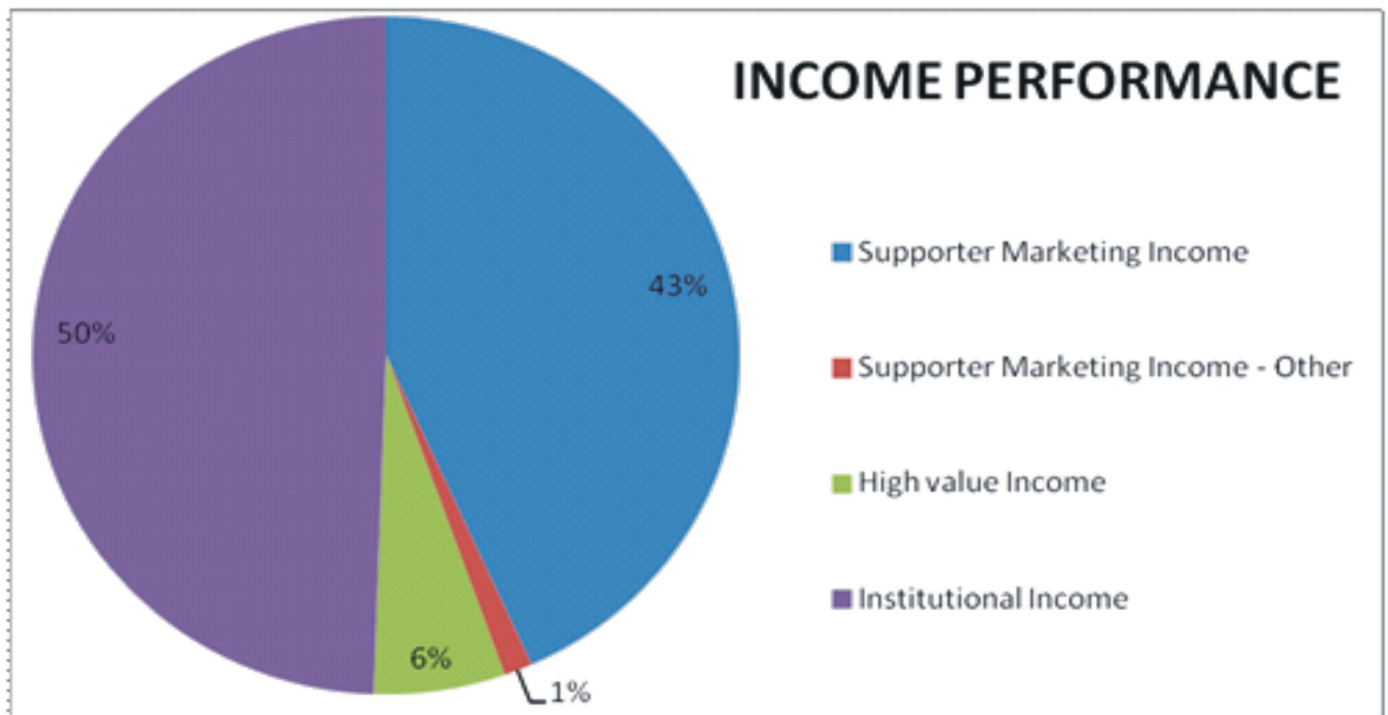
23 staff strengthened their capacity on financial management and accounting in 2014. We developed the capacity of our PNGO staff on compliance, reporting and documentation.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND FUND RAISING

Our aspiration is to be a strong, committed and diverse source base for resources and funds that allow us not to dilute our commitments as outlined in the strategy document.

We wish to increase our income to at least USD \$15 million by 2017, with a strong, committed and diverse base of funding and resources from our individual supporters and institutional donors. We are approaching this milestone, with our income increasing by more than 15 percent in 2014 despite mammoth in-country challenges and shifts in donor priorities. We received funds from two broad sources: sponsorship and partnership (institutional and high value), with a trend of increasing income on both fronts.

We earned 56 percent of our income from institutional and high value donors such as the World Bank, DFID, DFAT, ECHO and the Italian Development Cooperation. With the generous support from our 9,440 individual sponsors we implemented 44 percent of our overall Country Programmes, ensuring improved livelihoods and resilience for our rights holders - particularly destitute children and their families.





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A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Cover Photo: Saiera Sarfaraz/ActionAid Afghanistan