

2024

BI-ANNUAL UPDATE

(January-June)

STFA 
Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan



CONTRIBUTING DONORS



Government of Germany



United Nations Development Programme



Government of Sweden



Government of Luxembourg



Government of Norway



Government of Italy



Government of Denmark



Government of Qatar



Government of Finland



Government of Türkiye



Government of the Netherlands



Government of Czechia



Government of Iceland

The order is by the size of contributions.

PARTICIPATING UN ORGANIZATIONS



**Delivering as
One UN**



United Nations
Development Programme



United Nations Human
Settlements Programme



United Nations Population
Fund



United Nations Conference
on Trade and Development



International Trade Centre



International Labour
Organization



United Nations Office on
Drugs and Crime



United Nations Industrial
Development Organization



United Nations Refugee
Agency



United Nations Entity for
Gender Equality and the
Empowerment of Women



International Organization
for Migration



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



United Nations Office for
Project Services



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the United
Nations



United Nations Capital
Development Fund



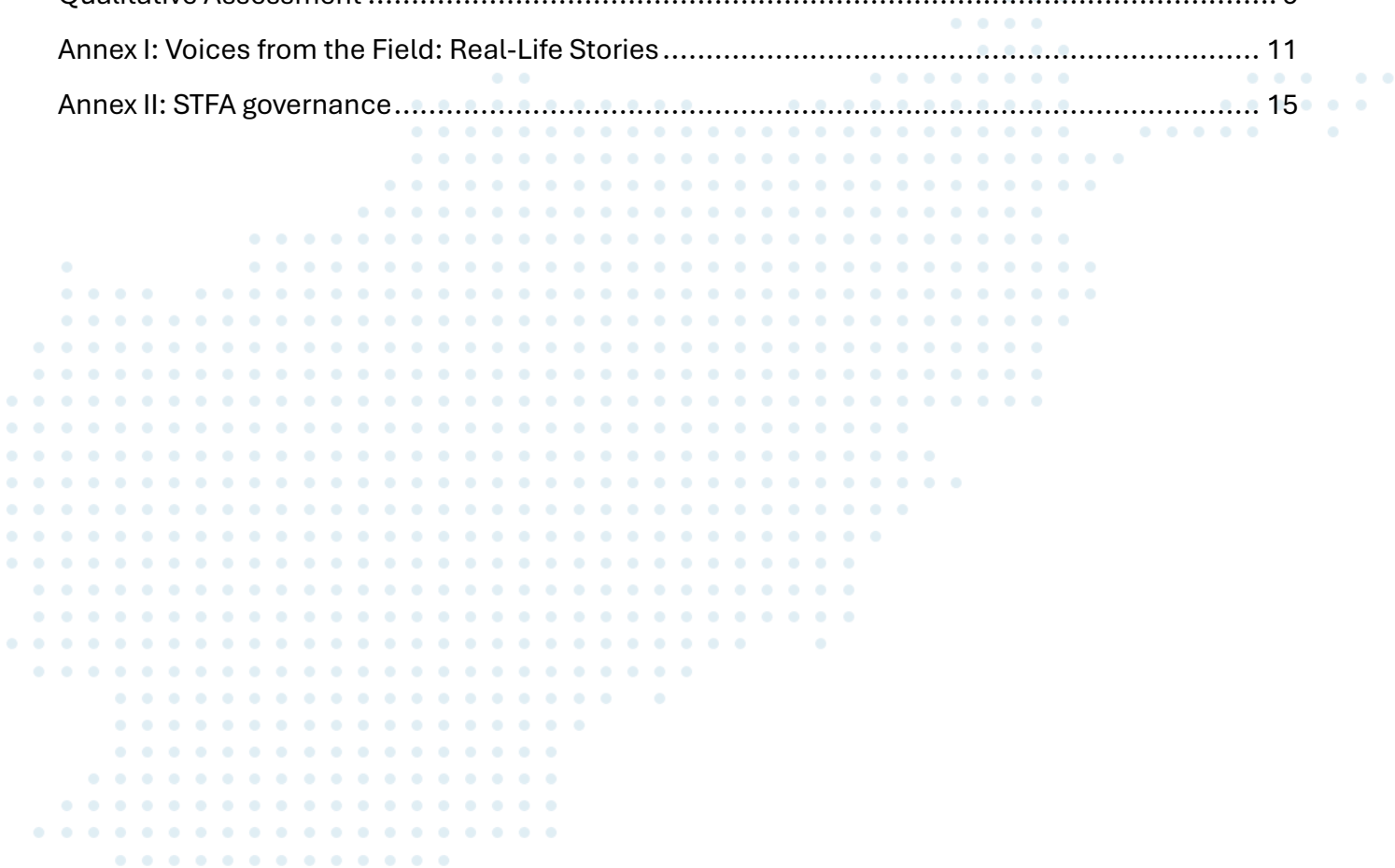
United Nations Mine
Action Service



World Health Organization

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Results	3
Output-level results	4
UNSFSA Priority Area 1	4
UNSFSA Priority Area 2.....	5
UNSFSA Priority Area 3.....	7
Delays in implementation, challenges, lessons learned & best practices.....	8
Qualitative Assessment	9
Annex I: Voices from the Field: Real-Life Stories	11
Annex II: STFA governance.....	15



Executive Summary

From January to June 2024, the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA) supported UN joint programming to help address basic human needs in the Southern, Northern, Eastern and South-Eastern regions and extended to Herat province, Western region. In the period under review, **375,703** people (**149,649** female, **39.8%**) benefited from STFA interventions as below:

- **Output 1:** 228,840 people (115,367 female, 50.4%) benefited from essential services such as basic service infrastructure (e.g. for water and sanitation), health, and education services.
- **Output 2:** 45,387 people (10,328 female, 22.8%) received livelihood support through cash for work, income generating opportunities and unconditional cash transfers.
- **Output 3:** 89,137 people (18,232 female, 20.5%) benefited from improved infrastructure to protect communities against natural disasters, provision of climate resilient crops seeds, as well as training and awareness raising for preparedness in the event of natural disasters.
- **Output 4:** 12,339 people (5,722 female, 46.4%) participated in social cohesion activities aimed at protecting community-level systems.

Since the inception of STFA programming, a cumulative total of 5,477,136 people (2,529,319 female, **46.2%**) have benefited from interventions implemented across the four output areas.

Results

STFA continued implementation in the Southern, Northern, Eastern and South-Eastern regions; and started implementation in the Western region of Afghanistan.

Joint/Sectoral Programme	Start Date	End Date	Allocated Resources in 2024 (USD mil)
Northern	1 January 2022	31 December 2025	0
Southern	1 January 2022	31 December 2025	0
Eastern	4 November 2022	31 December 2025	13.1
South-Eastern	14 August 2023	31 December 2025	20.5
Western	17 April 2024	31 December 2025	8.6

Table 1: Active regional joint programmes/sectoral projects supported by the STFA and their timelines

Output-level results

UNSFPA Priority Area 1: Sustained Essential Services

Output 1 – Essential services and community infrastructure – including for health, agriculture, education, and energy supply - are functional, sustained and expanded to meet different needs of women and men.

The STFA joint programme activities provided essential services to **228,840** people (**115,367** female, **50.4%**). The key services delivered include to essential services such as healthcare, psychosocial support and awareness-raising, education, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), educational programmes, including literacy classes and vocational training. These efforts not only meet immediate needs but also contribute to the long-term well-being and resilience of the communities.

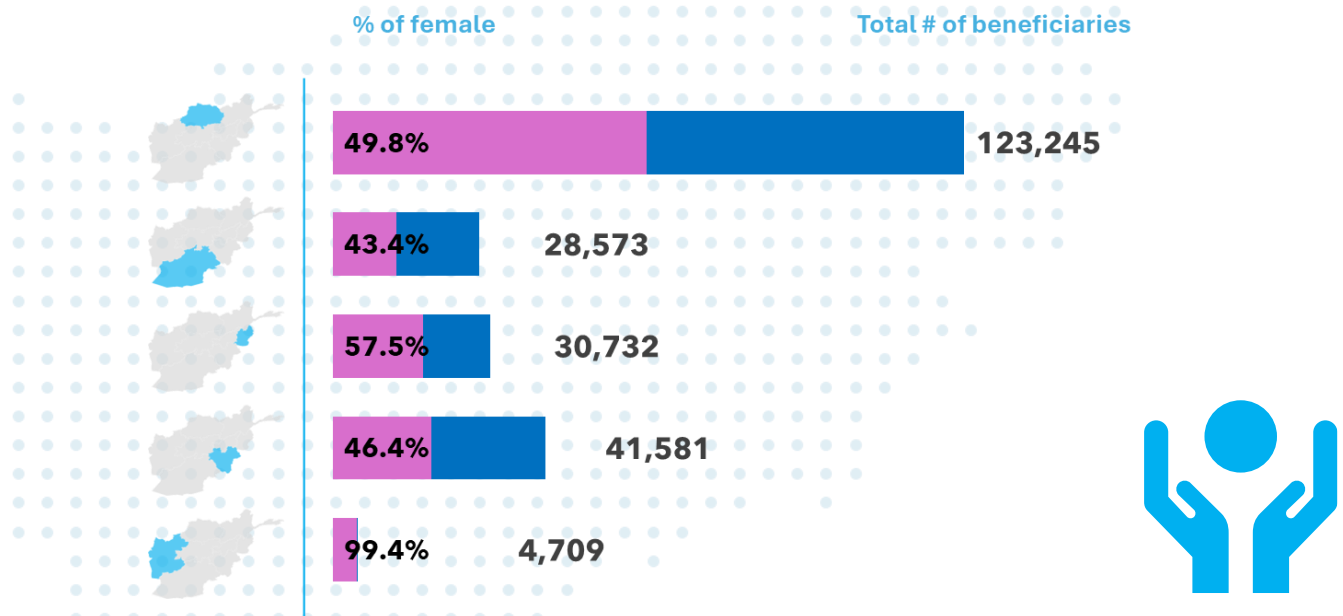


Figure 1. Number of beneficiaries and percentage of females by region under STFA Output 1.



UNSFPA Priority Area 2: Economic Opportunities and Resilient Livelihoods

Output 2 – Livelihoods, businesses, and the local economy can recover, more sustainable and be more resilient to instability

From January to June 2024, **45,387** people (**10,328** female, **22.8%**) received livelihood support through the STFA JP activities through short term employment facilitated by Cash for Work (CfW), Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCTs), Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprise (MSME), and agriculture-based livelihood support. At least 1,961 heads of households (73.0% female) and their families benefited from UCTs. In addition, 29,413 people (3.4% female) benefited from temporary job opportunities created through Cash for Work initiatives. Also, 14,473 people (54.7% female) benefited from income generation and agriculture-based livelihood support. Lastly, 897 MSMEs (91.9% female-led) MSMEs, benefited from training and in-kind support to sustain and expand their businesses. A total of 11,000 vendors benefited from street solar lights to enable extended trading after sunset thereby potentially increasing profitability opportunities.

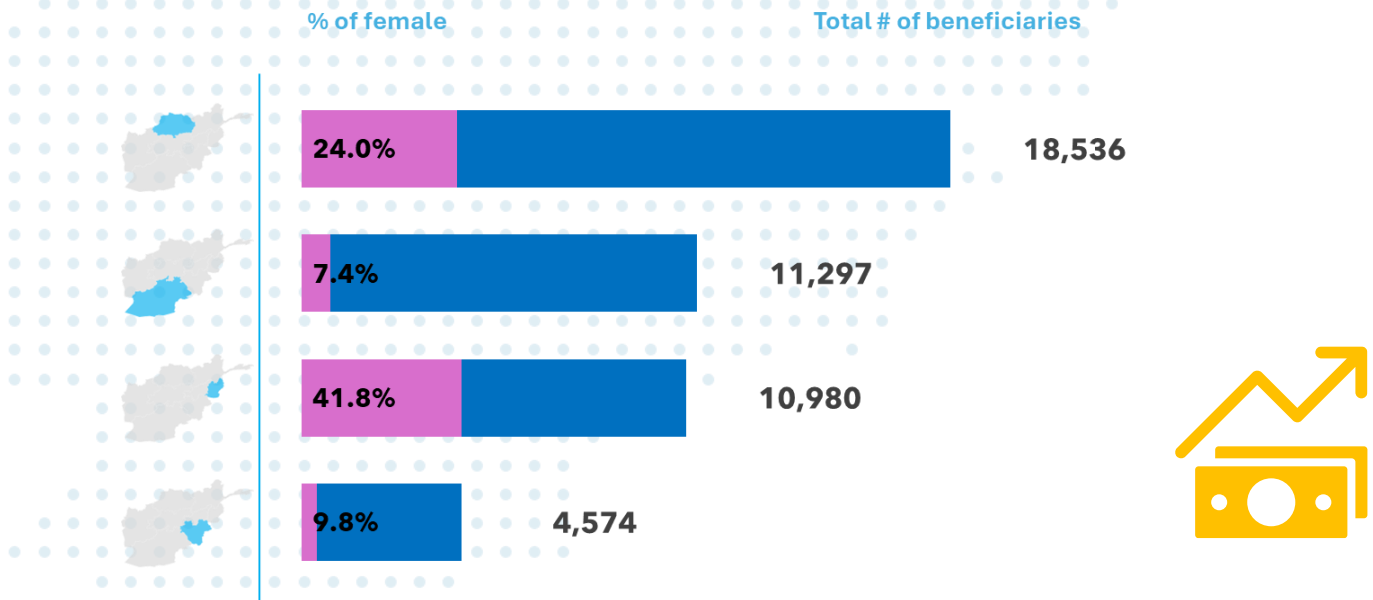


Figure 2. Number of beneficiaries and percentage of females by region under STFA Output 2.



Output 3 – Communities have improved infrastructure, access to water and preparedness mechanisms to protect farm-based livelihoods and cope with climate and environment shocks and natural disasters.

From January to June 2024, STFA continued to support local communities to improve their capacities against natural disasters and shocks. The disaster risk management support delivered includes access to climate resilient infrastructure, disaster risk management trainings and awareness raising to improve preparedness when natural disasters occur reached **89,137** people (**17,067** female, **20.5%**). At least 25,800 people (1.6% female) acquired knowledge and skills on disaster preparedness and climate-resilient livelihoods. Another 61,837 farmers (27.6% female) benefited from training and assets for improved, climate-smart, agriculture. Also, 1,500 farmers (51.0% female) benefited from rehabilitated and/or newly constructed disaster-resilient community infrastructure and nature-based solutions.

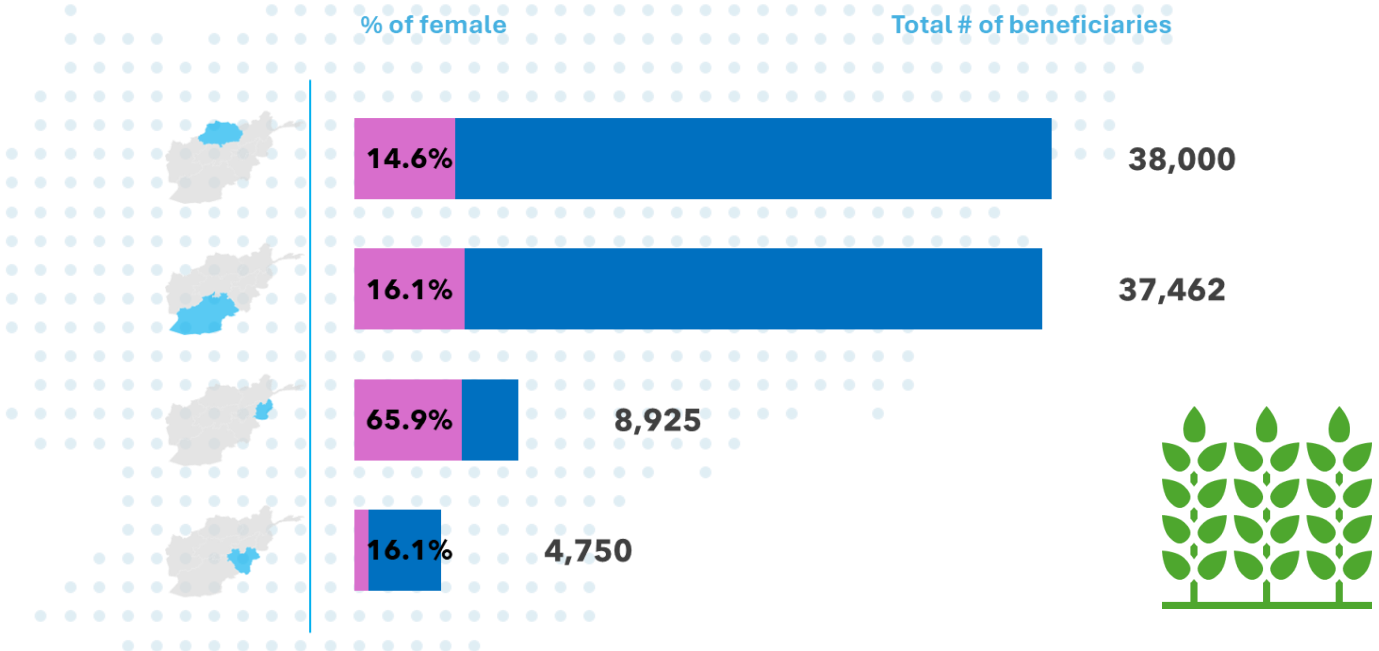


Figure 3. Number of beneficiaries and percentage of females by region under STFA Output 3.

UNNSFA Priority Area 3: Social Cohesion, Inclusion, Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Rule of Law

Output 4 – Social cohesion, respect for human rights – including, in particular, the rights of women and girls and access to justice are progressively strengthened at the local level – contributing to greater community resilience.

STFA joint programmes continued to contribute towards promoting social cohesion and empowering community members to foster social harmony. A total **12,339** people, including **5,722** females (**46.4%**) benefited from trainings and awareness raising on various social cohesion subjects. In addition, STFA interventions implemented awareness raising sessions and provision of alternative livelihood opportunities to integrate drug use affected people in their respective communities.

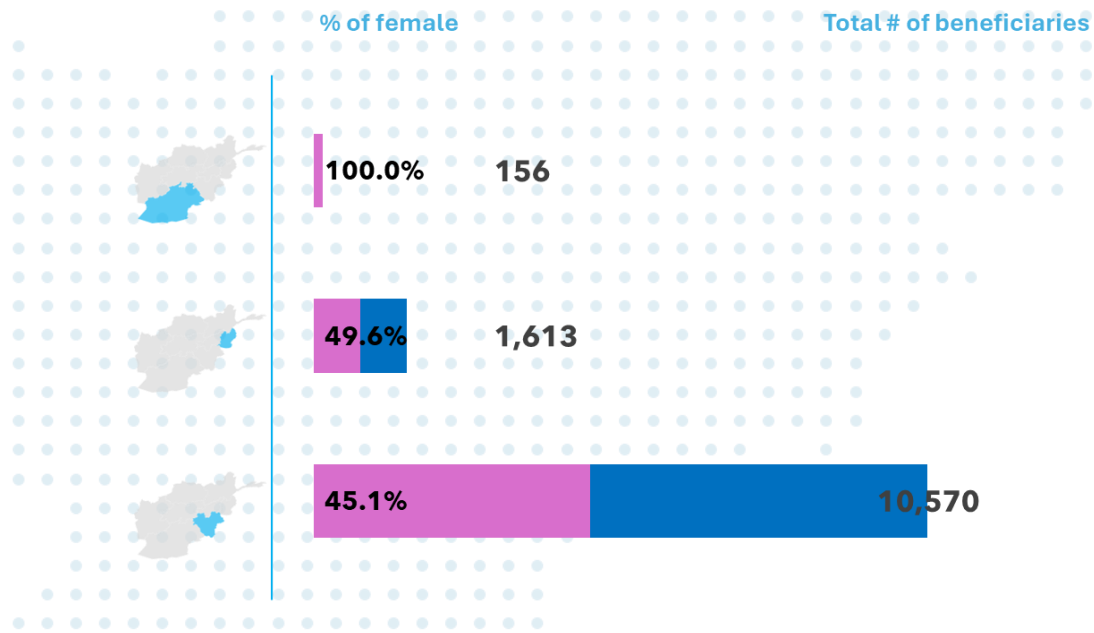


Figure 4. Number of beneficiaries and percentage of females by region under STFA Output 3.

Delays in implementation, challenges, lessons learned & best practices

Continued restrictions: The operating environment has continued to be challenging, restrictions on Afghan women have continued to hamper the extent to which women can effectively participate in programme implementation. Mitigation measures adopted include integrating enterprise components and identifying home-based activities such as basket and carpet weaving to facilitate participation of women in economic activities.

Increased involvement of local authorities: The requirements for project registration and MoU signing with the local authorities has prolonged the timeframe from approval of programmes by the Steering Committee to actual start of programme implementation. In addition, the new requirements for the design of family health houses (FHHs) have significantly increased the cost of each FHH and the original targets are now under-funded because of the changes to the structural design, including the addition of boundary walls and waiting rooms. Some PUNOs are also increasing the use of skilled labour within targeted communities through cash for work modalities to reduce labour costs. While the dissolution of community development councils (CDCs) has significantly reduced the local governance structures existent in the various regions, the UN agencies have made necessary adjustments and are working closely with other accepted community structures for required community engagement to guide programme design and subsequent implementation of agreed upon activities.

Challenges with implementation of cross-cutting activities: The contextual complexities in addressing gender and human rights issues, coupled with operational restrictions on women-focused NGOs and projects related to awareness, conflict resolution, advocacy, and peacebuilding, have significantly impacted presence and visibility. This has led to extended timelines for mapping and identifying suitable partners and readjusting the implementation modalities of interventions targeting gender and human rights related issues. The UN agencies are adopting innovative approaches to programming, which requires longer lead times to align interventions with STFA objectives and ensuring the interventions do no harm post-STFA implementation.

Sustainability of programme interventions: As some of the programme interventions are ending with the decline in resources, revamped value chain analyses and linking short term economic activities supported by STFA to longer-term employment opportunities post-STFA is necessary. Therefore, some exit strategies developed during programme design processes, may need to be modified during implementation to explore private sector linkages. Flexibility and innovation in developing pragmatic solutions are crucial, especially in the current fragile context.

Collaboration and innovation can strengthen quality of programming: In the Northern region, the PUNOs coordinated a Cash for Work Plus Working Group with other non-STFA UN Agencies,

Funds, Programmes (UN-AFPs) to identify and address common problems, share experiences and knowledge, and organize joint visits and activities.

Qualitative Assessment

Overview of achievements

In 2024, there continues to be agility in STFA programming in response to the various edicts and new operational requirements communicated by the *de facto* authorities. Implementation is at advanced stages in Northern and Southern regions which started programming in 2022. Programme implementation is gaining momentum in the Eastern region and programme implementation is starting to pick up in the South-Eastern region.

Quality assurance and oversight

The STFA, through a third-party monitoring firm completed the Sustaining Essential Health Services final review¹ and first round project visits across the Northern, Southern, Eastern and South-Eastern regions to assess potential effectiveness of the programme activities based on the extent to which they meet their intended objectives.

Eastern region: Of the 30 projects visited, 10 percent were highly effective, 80 percent were effective while 10 percent were rated as contributing to some accomplishments but needed further improvement. It is recommended to conduct market assessments to further inform selection of income generation activities.

Southern region: Of the 152 projects visited, while support to basic services was well delivered, there is need to reactivate operations and maintenance of some projects post-STFA. The livelihood support interventions achieved high level of satisfaction especially amongst female beneficiaries, the agricultural resilience interventions were also effective in many areas. The social cohesion activities proved utility in behavioural change and raising awareness on human rights and enhanced the participation of various socio-economic groups of the targeted communities.

Northern region: Of the 600 project sites visited, 10 percent were highly effective, 65 percent were effective while 25 percent were achieving some accomplishments but needed improvement. The field visits suggest that 60 percent of the beneficiaries were very satisfied with the project interventions while 34 percent were satisfied with the JP activities implemented in the region. The ratio of satisfaction was higher among male respondents compared to female respondents. There is need to improve technical quality of some infrastructure projects.

¹ Reflections already reported in the STFA annual report and Health project final report.

South-Eastern region: Of the 30 project sites visited, 9 percent were highly effective, and 73 percent were effective, suggesting that the projects generally contribute towards the intended objectives. The remaining 17 percent were observed to be achieving some accomplishments but needed improvement. At least 95 percent of male and 83 percent of female respondents were satisfied with the activities being implemented in the region. Areas for improvement include technical quality of some infrastructure projects and inadequate situation analysis and beneficiary selection criteria for some livelihood support projects.

TFMU mission to Eastern Region: The team visited 22 projects implemented by six different PUNOs across the four output areas. Support towards provision of essential services, DRR and community resilience was effective and aligned with community needs, particularly benefiting IDP and returnee populations. However, there is room for improvement in making intervention packages more comprehensive and sustainable by crafting proper value chains. Livelihoods support interventions effectively enabled vulnerable individuals to earn a living. However, post-distribution monitoring could be further strengthened for improved oversight and tracking of exit strategies. There is room to further improve STFA visibility at the project sites, standard guidelines have been shared.



Annex I: Voices from the Field: Real-Life Stories

Stitching a Brighter Future

Story of Shukria, a resilient mother and entrepreneur.

"I am thankful for this grant as it significantly improved my life. Now, I can earn enough to support my family."



Meet Shukria

Shukria, a 28-year-old mother of four, has faced immense challenges in her life. Displaced by conflict and now living in Ghazni province, she and her family struggle daily. Her husband, a labourer, finds it difficult to secure steady work, making it hard to support their household.

However, Shukria's determination to overcome her circumstances never wavered. With a passion for tailoring, she dreamt of starting her own business. Unfortunately, her old sewing machine and lack of resources made this dream seem impossible. Despite her perseverance, the inability to afford fabrics and essential sewing accessories kept her dream just out of reach.

This all changed when Shukria received a cash grant from the STFA-funded programme aimed at supporting small businesses. "I finally had the means to invest in sewing and embroidery machines, along with other essentials," Shukria shared.

With the grant, Shukria not only transformed her life but also became a beacon of hope in her community. She hired four women from her neighbourhood, offering them apprenticeships to learn tailoring skills and work alongside her. Together, they are stitching a brighter future.

Today, Shukria's thriving business earns her 7,000 Afghanis (USD \$98) each month, providing her family with the stability they once only dreamed of.

Shukria's story is a testament to the power of resilience and the impact of support in times of need. STFA funding has helped more than 200 families across South-Eastern Afghanistan, offering them not just financial aid but a chance to rebuild their lives.



Resilience Amidst Adversity

The Story of Saloon Shoe Making Co.



The Cornerstone of Craftsmanship

In Checknoweri Area of Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province, Saloon Shoe Making Co. has been a cornerstone of craftsmanship since its establishment in 2009. Specialising in casual shoes and footwear for all age groups, with a particular focus on the youth, the company quickly became a key player in the Eastern region, supplying its unique products to wholesalers and retailers across various provinces.

At its peak, Saloon Shoe Making employed ten skilled male workers, contributing to the local economy and supporting the livelihoods of many families. However, the collapse of the previous regime in 2021 brought unprecedented challenges. Consequently, the company suffered a significant 60 percent loss in market share, which had a profound impact on its sales and production capacity. Unable to sustain operations, Saloon Shoe Making was forced to lay off six employees, including Mr. Kamran, a talented 25-year-old shoe designer who had joined the company just a year earlier.

"The impact of the regime collapse was devastating, but we refused to give up."

A Ray of Hope

During his period of unemployment, Kamran faced immense hardship. He struggled to find consistent daily wage work, often returning home empty-handed. The lack of a steady income plunged his family into financial distress, leaving them in a constant state of uncertainty and making it difficult to meet even their basic needs.

Despite the dire situation, Saloon Shoe Making Co. was determined not to let the downturn define its future. Though operations were limited throughout 2023, the company managed to keep afloat with six remaining employees. Yet, the increasing costs of essential tools and raw materials prevented it from meeting market demand.

In June 2024, a lifeline arrived in the form of the STFA funded Furlough Scheme. This initiative provided critical support, covering the salaries of nine male employees, including Mr. Kamran, who was re-employed thanks to this assistance. The impact of this support was transformative, enabling the company to retain its skilled workforce and reinvest the salary savings back into the business.

"Rejoining Saloon Shoe Making was a turning point for me and my family."

A Future Reclaimed

With renewed vigour, Saloon Shoe Making Co. began regaining its lost market share. The funding from STFA allowed the company to stabilise operations, innovate products, and enhance marketing strategies. By rebuilding relationships with existing clients and expanding into new markets, the company saw a resurgence in demand for its unique shoes.

As a result, Saloon Shoe Making not only reclaimed its market position but also set its sights on a future of growth and success. For Kamran, the opportunity to return to his craft has been life-changing. No longer burdened by the uncertainties of unemployment, he now contributes his unique design skills to a company that is on the path to recovery.

His story is one of resilience, reflecting the broader journey of Saloon Shoe Making Co., a small business that, with a little help, has managed to overcome adversity and look forward to a brighter future.

Annex II: STFA governance

From January to June 2024, STFA held three Steering Committee meetings and three TCWG meetings. The key decisions and discussions of the SC meetings are highlighted below:

Date	Key Decisions
29 January	No decisions taken. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflections on STFA Donor Mission. 2. Discussion on draft STFA Strategic Note and outline of tentative proposals for consideration notably: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening women-led CSOs - Twinning programme • Herat Earthquake Recovery Response • Durable Solutions for IDPs/Returnees
5 March	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Draft STFA Strategic Note 2024-25 2. Herat Earthquake Recovery Response (Western Region) 3. Strengthening Women-led CSOs - Twinning Programme 4. Regional JP for South-Eastern Afghanistan: Second Tranche
19 June	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proposal for resource allocation for durable solutions for internally displaced people (IDPs)/returnees 2. Proposal for resource allocation for drug use prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation