

Partnership for Change: the power to end poverty

Strategy 2014-16



'If you educate the mother, you are educating the children.' Ahama Heshemi (left) is a firm believer in the power of education to change women's lives. She is pictured with one of her pupils at a women's literacy class run by our partner WASSA. Women are also taught basic maths and how to manage their income. Once they can read, women no longer need men to accompany them because they can understand signs and essential information. 'There has been a lot of change in society,' Ahama says. 'When the women started coming they were too shy to stand in front of the class. Now they know how to read and write, they know how to raise their children.'

CAID in Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, poor women and men live in a state of precarious security with limited development prospects. They are often excluded from their community, which makes them more vulnerable to poverty and hunger as they face the desperate situation caused by 30 years of destructive conflict.

Working with partners used to working in transitional and dangerous environments, CAID is committed to delivering a long-term development programme that addresses these issues by focusing on gender equity and building thriving, resilient livelihoods.

We believe risks and emergencies – conflict, displacement, drought, floods, cold winters – should not undermine longer-term development. We balance resources between humanitarian initiatives and projects seeking sustainable impact over time.

Long-term development

CAID's programme in Afghanistan has been running for three decades under four regimes – from the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, which controlled the country during the Soviet invasion, to the current government voted in after the US-led intervention of 2001.

Our programme has evolved from humanitarian work to development-oriented projects, but war and the severe drought of 1999 to 2003 have severely hampered this transition.

Our focus is deeply rooted in Afghan people's vision of what they need to climb out of the cycle of conflict and underdevelopment, despite the huge challenges facing the country.

We invest in long-term initiatives with communities that resonate with their own recommendations. Communities understand local power dynamics and the complex nature of the risks they face.

'Barely 16% of women have jobs and less than 6% have completed secondary education'

They have strong proposals to ensure they can cope with ongoing conflict, strengthen community mobilisation and power, and hold those with power and influence accountable for their actions.

We work in areas that are difficult to access, with people who would not usually benefit from development assistance and with partners that have strong rural acceptance and work in a culturally sensitive manner. We don't infringe on the legitimacy of our partners at a local level.

Gender equity

Though there have been improvements in gender equity in Afghanistan, it remains among the worst countries in the world in this respect. Barely 16% of women have jobs, less than 6% have completed secondary education, and the female maternal mortality is high, especially for girls. More than a third of the Afghan population live below the poverty line, with more women affected than men.

Since 2006, our work has focused almost exclusively on women and their rights to ensure they can have thriving, resilient livelihoods. More recently, our programmes have also targeted men, who uphold the discriminatory status quo, seeking to change their attitudes and support women to prosper and play a pivotal role in development.

The potential for women to play a transformative role in society and the economy of Afghanistan is high, but there are cultural, social, political and economic obstacles that limit their ability to take part in decisions about the use of land, resources, money, and leadership.

We have continued to support strong female-led partners that are not afraid to tackle sensitive gender issues and challenge the power imbalance in Afghanistan. These partners are regularly consulted by government and UN agencies on legislation and programming. Our partners also raise awareness of gender rights and entitlements at grassroots level.



These women in the Karukh District of Herat Province run a successful business, turning fresh tomatoes into tomato paste. With support from our partner CRDSA, 100 women were able to set up a tomato processing cooperative, and CRDSA also helped them market and package the final product. The cultivation and production of fresh tomatoes is very profitable in this area and the women have seen demand for their business grow.

Thriving, resilient livelihoods

Resilient livelihoods work represents 70% of our programme, so we are in a strong position to work on projects that increase household income, access to markets, assets and control over resources.

We support pro-poor market development initiatives that bolster local cottage industries and boost entrepreneurship in rural areas. Projects we support around silk, saffron and milk are showing real gains in rural communities.

We have tried and tested methods in emergency preparedness and response, and the protection of livelihoods in the event of conflict-related displacement and climate-related events.

Projects that focus on vocational skills training, diversifying crop production, more efficient farming methods, and creating links with regional and national markets will diversify incomes, boost food security, and help marginalised and poor women and men to cope with the shocks of conflict and other natural disasters in their communities.

'Helping people to have a secure way of earning a living represents 70% of our programme'

No matter how hard he worked, Whakil used to be in a permanent cycle of debt. Every year he borrowed money to buy wheat to grow, but his harvests were often meagre and his family slid deeper into poverty and debt. Our partner AHDAAGave him fertiliser and good quality wheat, so now he harvests much more than before. 'Now my family are happier and healthier, and I can even buy clothes for them,' he says proudly.



Our strategy for Afghanistan

Our strategic objectives in Afghanistan are:

1. To influence policy and practice on gender inequality, ensuring equal access to essential services and economic opportunities.

For this objective, our goals are:

- creating a legal system that prevents, recognises and responds to violence against women
- ensuring women and girls have increased ownership and control over productive resources
- promoting positive gender attitudes.

2. To strengthen resilient livelihoods and build community capacity around preparedness, mitigation and response in humanitarian crises.

For this objective, our goals are:

- preparing communities and individuals to face major disasters
- supporting communities and individuals so they're able to meet their basic needs
- ensuring food security
- increasing access to education and job opportunities.

Our work in focus

We're strengthening our programme in Afghanistan by having a more focused direction. This will include:

- providing greater investment and accompaniment for advocacy
- linking our resilient livelihoods programme with our disaster risk reduction work
- developing systems to monitor the progress of projects remotely, so we can respond quickly when new challenges arise
- increasing awareness of and funding for our work.

We will seek to create positive change by protecting guarantees enshrined in national policy that support women's participation and inclusion in public life and their protection against gender-based violence.

By combining gender sensitisation with literacy projects, skills-building initiatives and income-generating activities, we will increase the voice and confidence of marginalised women. We will work to reduce exclusion and enable more women in marginalised communities to have greater mobility and access to education, work, justice, healthcare and protection from gender-based violence.

'Our work will remain community-focused, directly addressing the needs of poor women and men'

We will continue to support our partners to speak out against gender-based exclusion, especially of the rural poor. We will work with women and men to change attitudes and norms, prioritising advocacy work following up on key legislation.

Linking disaster risk reduction projects with livelihoods initiatives will also be important in reducing the effects of hazards in communities where we work.

Livelihoods projects will include a protection element and begin with a risk and vulnerability analysis of natural and man-made disasters – drought, conflict, food price fluctuations – that affect communities. The next priority will be to enhance the ability of communities to deal with disturbances and hazards to their livelihoods so they can survive, learn and build back better.

The programme will also have a humanitarian aspect, providing life-saving assistance in rural areas affected by conflict.

Our work will remain community focused in all stages of programme development, directly addressing the interests of marginalised rural poor women and men.

We will support partners to build networks with communities, the private sector, local authorities and markets, and prioritise development initiatives that are inclusive of vulnerable and poor women and men and increase the value of their produce.

Contact us

CAID Afghanistan
PO Box 100, London SE1 7RT
T: +44 (0) 20 7620 4444

Who we will work with

We will target women, men and young people, particularly those in rural areas. We will also work with medium-income farmers, as they are often the catalysts for effective marketing approaches or technological innovations that help the poorest to improve their livelihoods.



The programme will work across the country, with a focus on western, central and northern regions, and include national interventions initiated from Kabul.

We'll also work alongside religious leaders and community development groups (shuras) who are important influencers of change in Afghanistan.

We will actively seek to work in alliances with a diverse range of national and international stakeholders and networks to increase the impact of our work. We continue to be a member of the UN cluster system and we are open to opportunities of working with other international NGOs to deepen the impact of our work.

