Contact us

CAID Afghanistan is based in Herat, with a support office in Kabul.

We also draw on the expertise of colleagues across Asia and the world, staff at CAID’s UK headquarters, and INGO networks in Afghanistan and beyond.

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Poverty is an outrage against humanity. It robs people of dignity, freedom and hope, of power over their own lives.

CAID has a vision – an end to poverty – and we believe that vision can become a reality. We urge you to join us.

Background

Afghanistan is one of the poorest nations in Asia, with more than a third of the population living below the poverty line.

While there has been some progress in tackling poverty, life remains extremely challenging for much of the population. Levels of poverty vary considerably, with significant differences across regions and between rural, urban and nomadic populations.

Economic development is limited. Insecurity and corruption undermine people’s ability to find employment and other opportunities to make a living. Many young men see no alternative than seeking their livelihood through the ongoing conflict or leaving the country to find work.

In many rural areas, progress has been poor, with access to social and economic infrastructure limited. Decades of war, insecurity and civil unrest, lack of good governance, weakness in state institutions and corruption all push people further into poverty and contribute to a rising sense of frustration.

Society is badly affected by inequality, discrimination and exploitation. Women are still considered to be lesser humans in Afghan society, denied access to basic services and rights. Almost one in nine Afghan women face physical, sexual or psychological violence, or are forced into marriage.

Lack of security remains a primary concern. 2016 saw the highest number of civilian casualties in a single year and 2017 was one of the most violent years on record. With the growing presence of various armed groups in Afghanistan, the complexity has further increased.

“Strengthening the women’s shura has brought governance close to the disadvantaged groups, and raised women’s awareness of peace-building and how they can play a constructive role in a community organisation. Young people feel more confident about participating in community issues and play an important role in social development.”

Matlab Shah, member of a women’s shura in Faryab province

CAID in Afghanistan

CAID has worked in Afghanistan for more than three decades. We work with local organisations on long-term development and humanitarian programmes in western and northern parts of the country, and have also responded to emergencies in the Central Highland, and south central and eastern parts.

Building resilience

Building resilience is an important aspect of all our work in Afghanistan – it is particularly important given the context of insecurity and conflict. We support communities to handle shocks from disasters, climate change, market forces and political instability, and to overcome cultural barriers.

Our rural infrastructure work has included building solar and wind-powered wells, piped water and canal-cleaning projects, and reducing the impact of soil erosion and dust storms.

From 2011 to 2016, through our Programme Partnership Arrangement with the UK government’s Department for International Development, we focused on helping communities to be more resilient and better able to respond to disasters. This work benefitted more than 67,000 people (55% of them women). The resilience framework we developed can now be used to support a more transformative agenda around social justice, accountability, good governance and peace building.

Women’s empowerment and gender equity

We have worked to empower community groups, supported the development of women’s shuras (local councils) and facilitated dialogue between women and men.

These platforms have been recognised by the provincial departments of various ministries and have helped women to engage in decision-making processes and resolve family, village and community conflicts.

Another important area of work is community capacity building, using our “REFLECT” approach. REFLECT groups offer a space for women to meet regularly, get basic education, and discuss issues that affect them, such as literacy, livelihoods, local governance, empowerment, and violence etc. They provide a unique opportunity to raise people’s awareness in a context where appropriate understanding of the political economy is essential, especially among women. We support partners working on Violence Against Women.

“We have learned many things on the benefits of education and women’s rights. Now we talk with more confidence, in our community, which helps solve problems,” Gulnar, who took part in a CAID project in Baikh.

Advocacy

CAID believes in the empowerment of civil society and local organisations. We support our partners to engage with various social, political, religious and governance structures around justice, equality, human rights and women.

To further strengthen local civil society groups we have taken part in a twinning programme, supported by the UK government, where we mentor local organisations in the western region.

‘As the result of regular mentoring by CAID, under the twinning programme, local partner organisations are meeting standard requirements to receive funding support from UN-DCHA. We have completed a lot of activities, including policies on human resources, code of conduct, procurement, programme cycle management and gender policy,” Eng. Azi Sanjavy, Director of a local partner organisation.

Humanitarian response

We support communities affected by conflict, slow and rapid onset natural disasters – including droughts and floods – by providing urgent relief and aiding their recovery.

We have received humanitarian funding from many donor organisations, including UN clusters, and over the last few years we have supported almost 31,000 people with water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter and essential items.

Community-based disaster risk management committees have been established to take on specific responsibilities before, during and after disasters.

Networks

CAID remains an active member of the British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) and Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBARI). We provide support and coordination to help them during and after release from jail. We also support women in improving hygiene and with access to sanitary napkins.

Objective 1: To strengthen the social and economic rights of women and address gender-based violence

Support marginalised women and men in economic empowerment work and enable them to exercise their democratic rights in governance mechanisms at local, provincial and national level.

Our actions with partners will include:
- Interventions towards economic empowerment of women and girls through building assets, increasing rights to property, promoting leadership, increasing literacy, education and skills, and creating rights awareness.
- Interventions to change social norms, through research and policy analysis based advocacy work, support women’s rights organisations and women’s human rights defenders, work with men and boys, engage faith leaders, traditional elders and politicians.
- Interventions providing gender-sensitive services, through strengthening core activities of women’s rights organisations.
- Interventions with women in jail to support them in gaining access to legal services and justice, and skills training to help them during and after release from jail. We also support women in improving hygiene and with access to sanitary napkins.
- Interventions to build political will and legal and institutional capacity to end gender inequality.

Objective 2: To provide life-saving humanitarian response, disaster risk reduction and advocacy

Support affected communities through emergency humanitarian response to include communities affected by conflict, displacement, drought, floods and the impact of extremely cold winters.

Our actions with partners will include:
- Supporting initiatives that help communities to take a lead in addressing issues of internally displaced people, refugees and returnee populations.
- Ensuring emergency preparedness and responses to deliver timely services with standard quality and accountability.

Objective 3: To support inclusive economic transformation, community capacity building and livelihood creation

Promote peaceful solutions and conflict transformation, to effectively manage disaster and risk, and work towards secure society without conflict and violence.

Our strategy

Our strategy focuses on gender justice and women’s empowerment, responding to emergencies and promoting peace.

Objective 4: To work towards a peaceful and stable Afghan society free from conflict and violence

Empowering vulnerable women and men to successfully address key drivers of violence, support them to rehabilitate, engage with peace building initiatives, and transform violence into lasting justice and security.

Our actions with partners will include:
- Strengthening access to justice as a means of reducing violence and promoting peace outcomes for poor and marginalised women in Herat and Badghis. Tracking progress and learning to ensure this work can be scaled up or replicated in other parts of Afghanistan.
- Mapping out peace outcomes appropriate for Afghanistan and scoping what is needed for exiting conflict and violence.
- Supporting marginalised sections of society, especially women, in realising their personal, customary and constitutional rights to safety, security and protection.
- Strengthening peace building and reconciliation work from local to national and international levels.

Promote peaceful solutions and conflict transformation, to effectively manage disaster and risk, and work towards secure society without conflict and violence.
Our Theory of Change
Our focus is deeply rooted in the Afghan people’s vision of what they need to be agents of their own development.
Partner organisations enable communities to understand local power dynamics and the complex nature of the risks they face. 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 are trusted in the rural communities in which they work.

We believe:
- Locally appropriate and culturally sensitive interventions among marginalised communities can bring structural changes. We encourage rights-based dialogue among women and men, empower, support and resource them to claim their space as individuals and collectively.
- Increased ownership of, access to and control over resources can bring about changes in the political, legal and economic situation which is currently unjust and unfair to women and girls.
- Advocacy with Government and other duty bearers can make them equally accountable to women and men for the attainment of their economic, social, cultural and political rights; and ensure everyone can safely access justice at all levels, including customary and religious laws.
- Peacebuilding processes that involve the active participation of vulnerable and marginalised communities are more likely to address the key drivers of violence and injustice.
- If we can influence local and national power holders to improve protection and justice, people will find innovative solutions to their own issues.
- If people living in violent contexts are supported to survive, thrive and develop, they will be resilient despite the risks they face.
- Everyone has the right to protection and dignity in emergency situations. Emergency response initiatives can help bring about equality through proactive inclusion of marginalised and excluded communities.
- Emergency responses can and should move towards giving people access to land, basic social services and sustainable livelihoods, and work for the reintegration of returnees and internally displaced people.

Silk: a solution to poverty
CAID is helping thousands of women in Western Afghanistan earn an income through silk production, through a programme supported by Monsoon Accessorize Trust.
Our partner Rehabilitation Association and Agricultural Development for Afghanistan (RAADA) has provided farmers with materials, equipment and solar electrification to help modernise the traditional silk industry. They have also provided training in skills such as natural dying, and made links with local business centres and Fairtrade organisations to help with marketing. Silk products from Zindajan are now being sold in new markets, including overseas.
A key aim of the project was to help widows and women-headed households to earn money. CAID helped to set up the Zanan Herat Silk Production Company, a collective of 1,500 women, with its own elected board.
As well as contributing to economic development in the district, the company has also functioned as a female-led advocacy group, helping to make a big difference for women in Zindajan. Women are now represented in district and provincial authority meetings, and more girls in the area are now getting an education. Women across the district are taking advantage of new opportunities to work in silk processing centres or in home-based silk weaving.
Maryam Sheikh, head of the company, said: ‘The families have benefited in various ways from this programme. Women spend their income on their children and send them to school to create a better future for them.
‘The awareness-raising programmes for women, like workshops and trainings, were also very useful and brought a change in our community.
‘Right now, through this programme, women have their own income and are more independent; they have benefited a lot and now they can even help their husbands with household expenses.’
Maryam has benefited personally as well. She said: ‘My family didn’t have trust in me and always said that women cannot work. I had an interview with Herat National TV and talked about our company and the women’s activities. My friends and neighbours saw it and told my father. He was very happy then, and encouraged me to continue working for the community.’
Find out more at www.zanaheratsilk-pc.com

Bringing water and hygiene to displaced people
In July 2014, thousands of people from North Waziristan in Pakistan fled their homes because of army operations. They sought refuge in south eastern Afghanistan, where they lived with host communities in very difficult conditions, lacking access to basic needs.
CAID partner the Afghan Development Association (ADA) assessed the situation and helped in four villages where large numbers of refugees were living. They dug wells and installed hand pumps and safe and secure sanitation facilities. With support from donors, they provided hygiene kits and gave hygiene education to the refugee families.
Despite strict cultural views limiting women’s involvement in community decision making, ADA sought women’s views and key decisions, such as the number of bathrooms and latrines, were informed by the women’s suggestions.
Thanks to this work, 400 refugee families – about 2,800 people – gained access to clean drinking water, clean and safe toilets and washing facilities.