



## **Final Evaluation of Food Aid and Improved Access to Shelter, Drinking Water, and Hygiene Using Cash Transfer Measures for Internally Displaced Persons, Returnees, and Host Communities in Herat Province**



**Prepared for**  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2021, Caritas Germany (CG) commissioned Afghan Australian Research and Management Consulting (ARM Consulting) to conduct an independent final evaluation of the “Food Aid and Improved Access to Shelter, Drinking Water, and Hygiene Using Cash Transfer Measures for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Returnees, and Host Communities” project. It is a 33-month project, started in January 2019 and anticipated to conclude in September 2021. The project has been implemented by Caritas Germany (CG) in five districts of Herat: Ghoryan, Karukh, Robat Sangi, Kohsan, and Pashtoon Zarghoon. With a total budget of 3,772,606 Euros, CG implemented the project through international implementing partners (Terre des Hommes [TdH] and Cordaid) and a national partner, viz., Rural Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan (RRAA). The overall objective of the project is to alleviate the acute emergency of IDPs, returnees, and host communities by humanitarian aid and protection measures.

The evaluation examined the extent to which the project has accomplished or made progress against its intended objectives. The evaluation has also identified lessons learned and made recommendations on possible changes to improve the design and implementation modalities of similar interventions in the future.

The methodology adopted for the evaluation comprises a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The qualitative data was gathered through a literature review as well as Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and field observations with relevant project stakeholders. The evaluation involved 30 interviews with key informants (7 females; 23 males), including the project implementation team, government officials, and community leaders and members. Besides that, a total of eight FGDs were administered with child beneficiaries, in which 108 children (61 girls; 47 boys) participated. The quantitative data was collected through questionnaire-based structured interviews with 405 community members.

The evaluation unveils the following key findings on the project performance:

### Beneficiaries’ Demographics

- 1. Adequate representation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the project:** The respondents were asked whether there were any PWDs in their households, to which 23% responded in affirmative while 77% denied the existence of PWDs in their households. The evaluation concludes that the representation of PWDs in the project has been on the high side considering the national prevalence of disability in Afghanistan, 13.9% as per the 2019 Model Disability Survey of Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, the shelters constructed by the project did not fully consider the needs of PWDs.
- 2. Under-representation of IDPs and returnees:** The project was anticipatively designed to primarily target IDPs (60%), returnees (20%), and host community members (20%). The survey data demonstrate that more than two-thirds (69%) of the respondents are host community members, followed by IDPs (29%), and returnees (two percent). The project has fallen behind in achieving the originally envisioned targets for IDPs and returnees as it encountered difficulties in accessing them. The under-representation of the IDPs has undermined the impact of the project on the target groups’ lives. The project was designed based on a cluster approach to humanitarian assistance, that is to say, that a cluster of services (food security, WASH, shelter, and protection) will be delivered in a community, largely populated by IDPs, which is usually in dire need of such services. The project faced difficulties in accessing the required number of IDPs, therefore, the four components of the project were not delivered in the same communities. These were rather split based on the needs. There is a consensus among the project stakeholders that had the project implemented all of its four components in the same communities, its impact would have been more tangible, as the components complement each other.

1. <https://asiafoundation.org/2020/05/13/disability-survey-is-afghanistans-first-in-15-years/>

- 3. Systematic beneficiary selection, although, elite influence cannot be overruled:** The selection of the villages was conducted by a site selection committee consisting of government entities, project team members, and community leaders, locally known as “Arbabs”. The committee identified the most vulnerable individuals in communities based on criteria that favourably advantaged female-headed households, IDPs, PWDs, child-headed households, widowed, orphans, and other vulnerable groups. Given the extensive influence of the Arbabs at the village level, they reportedly influenced beneficiaries’ selection. To counter this, the project team was required to survey the proposed households to determine their vulnerability and those identified to be in a better economic state were excluded. Besides, the implementing partners and CG filtered the list of proposed beneficiaries at the national level before finalizing the beneficiaries.
- 4. Extensive poverty prevails in the targeted communities:** The mean monthly income of the targeted households stands at 4,903 AFN (62 USD), while the median is lower at 4,000 AFN (50 USD). The evaluation reveals that all the respondents live below the poverty line defined by the World Bank (WB) as 1.90 USD per day per person.<sup>2</sup> Since targeting the most vulnerable was a key criterion, the project has performed remarkably in targeting the poorest individuals in the targeted areas. The evaluation suggests viewing the income data in the highly fragile context of Afghanistan. The national economy has become more fragile and has seen a sharp reduction in Gross Domestic Production (GDP) since 2013 as well as there has been a notable increase in poverty, primarily due to COVID-19, political instability, and the intensity of conflict between the Afghan government and the Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs).
- 5. Rampant unemployment:** A majority of the respondents (62%) reported that they were jobless. Just eight percent have full-time jobs, less than a quarter (23%) are working on a part-time basis, while the residual seven percent are engaged in seasonal jobs. This clearly shows a high degree of unemployment among the targeted population. Even those who are working, are underemployed as their full potential is yet to be unlocked. Key reasons for unemployment were cited as inadequate skills, insufficient job opportunities, limited market linkages, and lack of access to adequate capital to start a business.

## Food Security

- 6. Extensive prevalence of hunger:** The extent of hunger among the targeted population was determined by asking the respondents where there had been months in the last year in which they did not have enough food to meet their family’s needs. An absolute majority of the respondents (83%) responded in affirmative, while the remaining 17% indicated that they did not experience food shortage in the last 12 months. It is a worrying sign that most of the targeted households have experienced food shortages. The in-depth discussions nonetheless suggest that food security improved for the short-term when the cash was distributed to the target groups, but it re-emerged after a while.
- 7. Increased food insecurity compared to the baseline:** The evaluation team also measured the targeted groups’ Food Consumption Score (FCS), which is a proxy indicator for measuring the current food security status. The targeted households’ FCS have witnessed a sharp decline compared to the baseline. At the start of the project, 15% of the consulted households had a poor scoring, almost fivefold lower than at present (70%), an indication that, despite the project’s support, the situation has worsened in terms of food and nutrition security for a considerable number of the households. In addition, 46% of the consulted households had a borderline FCS, which has dropped down by more than half to 22% at present. The most notable difference can be seen in the decline of households with acceptable FCS during the baseline (39%) compared to now, just nine percent. The households are more food insecure at present than they were a couple of years ago, due to a wide range of reasons including high unemployment, increased droughts, political instability, deteriorating security situation, and COVID-19 pandemic. It is also worth noting that by nature, the project was a humanitarian project aimed at providing immediate relief to vulnerable individuals rather than addressing their food insecurity in the medium to long run.

2. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/brief/global-poverty-line-faq>

- 8. Reduced resilience against shocks:** Using the Coping Strategy Index (CSI), the food security and resilience of the targeted population have worsened compared to the baseline. At present, more than three-fourths (76%) of the households have received a high CSI score, which is close to twice the baseline (46%). It's a clear indication of the deteriorating livelihood and food insecurity situation. Similarly, more than half of the households (53%) had a medium CSI score, while at present, 21% of the households have received the medium CSI scoring. Overall, the average CSI score stands at 14.5 while the median is 13.
- 9. Transparent cash assistance distribution:** The evaluation asked the respondents whether they had to pay anyone to receive the cash assistance, just one percent of them indicated in affirmative while an absolute majority (99%) disconfirmed paying anyone for inclusion in the beneficiary list. The in-depth discussions point to a handful of cases in the first year of the project implementation wherein the Arbabs had received a portion of the cash assistance in exchange for including some community members in the beneficiaries' list. However, after the community members notified this through Complaints Response Mechanism (CRM), the project team acted swiftly in coordination with district-level officials, and, thus, the Arbabs were asked to return the monies to the beneficiaries. The review of the cash distribution process shows that the project had put the adequate check and balance measures to ensure transparent distribution of cash to beneficiaries.
- 10. Strong preference for cash assistance:** An absolute majority of the respondents prefer cash (95%), while the residual five percent prefer in-kind food assistance. The target groups prefer cash over other types of assistance is because it offers them a maximum degree of choice, flexibility, and dignity. From the project implementation perspective, cash assistance was found an easier option to implement compared to the hectic logistical procedures needed to procure kits and then distribute them to beneficiaries.

## WASH

- 11. Improved access to clean drinking water:** At the start of the project, a majority of the households (81%) were reliant on unprotected wells, followed by surface water (eight percent) obtained from sources such as a river, stream water, lake, spring, and others. Both these sources are considered unsafe for drinking purposes. At present, 51% of households indicated piped water as the primary source of water followed by public tap (38%), both considered safer and cleaner sources of water than unprotected well and surface water. This clearly shows a significant shift from unsafe to safer and cleaner sources of water in the targeted areas. Furthermore, when asked whether there is a change in their access to drinking water, an absolute majority of the respondents (92%) indicated that their access to water was better compared to the start of the project. The remaining eight percent considered no change accessing water, while none stated that their access to water has worsened. The evaluation also finds the construction of the water supply networks as the most impactful project activity which has improved both access and quality of water in the targeted households.
- 12. Moderate improvement in access to sanitation:** The data show that 83% of the households have a latrine facility at home while the residual 17% do not have a sanitation facility within their households. Furthermore, 78% of the households have a traditional type of latrines, and 22% have standard concrete latrines, which are relatively better quality compared to the former. This is an improvement over the baseline when all households had traditional latrines, which are not conducive to better hygiene, and, due to the risk of water contamination, are harmful to the environment too. Moreover, the households were asked whether their access to latrine facilities changed compared to the start of the project. More than half of the respondents (59%) reported no change in their access to latrines, 40% indicated improvement and just one percent reported worsened access to sanitation.

**13. Increased prevalence of hygiene practices:** The evaluation calculated an arithmetic average of the hygiene behaviour to understand the overall change in the targeted households. It was calculated for both baseline and final evaluation. Overall, 38% of the households never practiced hygiene behaviour at the beginning of the project, followed by 24% rarely and 23% sometimes. The remaining 15% of the individuals reportedly always practiced hygiene behaviour at the start of the project. At present, a majority always practice hygiene behaviour, a considerable increase over the baseline value of 15%. The evaluation further concludes that the target communities have become healthier because of improved hygiene practices and better access to clean drinking water.

## Shelter

**14. Insufficient space:** The constructed shelters were of good quality concrete, but these did not have adequate space. The mean number of rooms stands at 1.3 while the median is 1. Many of the respondents complained about the lack of an adequate number of rooms as they had bigger households. Around three-fourths (71%) of the respondents complained that the transitional shelters did not provide enough space for them. Only 29% were found satisfied with the space in shelters. The project has constructed a 1-room shelter in line with the cluster guidelines. However, given the household size in the targeted communities, single room space is not adequate to accommodate seven members.

**15. High access to sanitation within the built shelters:** 91% of the beneficiaries of the shelter component have common latrines for women and men. Just five percent of the households have separate latrines for women and men. The researchers assessed the hygiene status of the latrines within the shelters and found 28% of these as very clean, 57% clean, 14% somewhat, and just one percent as unclean. Thus, the overall hygiene situation of the latrines in the shelter was satisfactory in the targeted areas. Furthermore, when asked whether their access to latrines has improved compared to the start of the project, 82% of the shelter beneficiaries responded in affirmative while the residual 18% reported no change.

## Protection

**16. Better access to education than at the national level:** When asked whether there were out-of-school children in their households, 23% of the respondents stated in affirmative, while an absolute majority (77%) did not report out-of-school children. According to UNICEF (n.d.),<sup>3</sup> 3.6 million Afghan children are out of school, 60% of whom are girls. Compared to the national statistics, a significantly higher number of the targeted children are attending schools. The qualitative data also confirms that the community members actively send their children to schools. They have also experienced a positive change in their perceptions and attitudes towards children's education, particularly girls.

**17. Limited prevalence of child marriage:** 97% of the respondents disconfirmed the existence of child marriage in their households while the residual three percent reported in affirmative. It is worth noting that despite being illegal, child marriages are practiced in Afghanistan, especially in rural areas. A study conducted in 2018 reports that 34% of women and seven percent of men had been married before turning 18 (UNICEF, 2018).<sup>4</sup> The evaluation concludes that the prevalence of child marriage in the targeted population is comparatively lower than in the rest of the country.

**18. Women better prepared to deal with pregnancies and taking care of babies:** The project awareness and training have helped women to overcome misconceptions regarding pregnancies and taking care of babies. For instance, women believed that pregnant women should not do their routine activities and rather sleep and relax all the time. Because of enhanced awareness, pregnant women now continue their household tasks, helping them to better deal with pregnancies than in the past. The quantitative data also shows a significant increase in women's ability to deal with

3. <https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/education>

4. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF-MoLSAMD-afg-report-Child-Marriage-in-Afghanistan.pdf>

pregnancies than at the start of the project. 64% of the respondents agreed with the statement that women dealt with pregnancies better than they did previously. Only, 36% partially agreed. During the in-depth discussions, the interview participants reported a decline in the mortality rate of babies and mothers compared to the start of the project.

**19. Enhanced women's social empowerment and participation:** More than half of the respondents (57%) agreed that women felt more empowered and confident compared to the project's beginning, 41% somewhat agreed, and only two percent disagreed. Similarly, 58% of the respondents agree, and 42% somewhat agree that women's mobility and respect have increased because of the project. Moreover, there is an increase in women's participation in household and community-level decision-making in contrast to the start of the project. More than half (60%) of the respondents indicated agreement with the statement that women's participation in household decision-making increased compared to the beginning of the project, followed by 33% in partial agreement, and three percent in disagreement. Similar results are witnessable regarding women's participation in community-level decision-making.

**20. Decline in violence against women:** Around two-thirds (64%) of the respondents agree that there is a decline in violence against women and girls in their targeted areas, followed by 33% somewhat agree, and three percent disagreeing. The in-depth discussions also show that women have improved their understanding of personal rights because of the enhanced awareness efforts of the project. It helps them to defend themselves better.

The evaluation also examined and rated the project under the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Development Assistance Criteria (DAC) criteria, namely (i) relevance, (ii) efficiency, (iii) effectiveness, coverage, and accountability, (iv) coordination, coherence, and connectedness, and (v) impact.<sup>5</sup> On coordination, coherence, and connectedness, the evaluation rated the performance of the project as "**Somewhat Satisfactory**"<sup>6</sup> while on the remaining four criteria, the project has performance has been "**Satisfactory**"<sup>7</sup>. The project has not received any "**dissatisfactory**"<sup>8</sup> ratings on any of the criteria.

In terms of implementation challenges, the project was affected by insecurity, strained relationships with government entities, Arbab influence, COVID-19 restrictions, limited literacy among the targeted population, difficulty in targeting IDPs, centralized procurement, and management system, and higher expectations among beneficiaries. Overall, the evaluation concludes that the project has made considerable progress towards its goal and objectives. However, the evaluation team presents the following set of recommendations for Caritas Germany, implementing partners, and other relevant stakeholders to improve the design and implementation of similar projects in the future.

1. For similar interventions, the focus should be on disability-inclusive shelters and settlements to align the project with a rights-based approach to humanitarian assistance.
2. Before the design phase, the need assessment should be as rigorous and specific as possible. Alternatively, during the inception phase, the project design could be refined and better aligned with the context, especially in a volatile situation.
3. The government entities should be engaged in the design phase of similar projects to manage their expectations. This will help to secure the buy-in of the relevant authorities during the implementation phase.
4. It is imperative to urgently register the lease agreements of shelters at the district level to avoid Arababs reclaiming the land they have given to IDPs and returnees for constructing transitional shelters.
5. Humanitarian agencies should look at the possibility of replacing the in-kind assistance modality

5. The OECD/DAC criteria consisting of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. The criteria have been used widely by development agencies for evaluating development projects since 1991. <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.html>

6. Area where the quantum of findings is substantial enough to partially put the project's activities and gains at risk.

7. Area where the quantum of findings is of low substantiality and may not endanger the activities and gains of the project at risk

8. Area where the quantum of findings is substantial enough to put the project's activities and gains at considerable risk.

with cash assistance as it offers more flexibility, choice, and dignity to the beneficiaries. Such an arrangement is also easier to plan and implement from a logistical point of view.

6. The one-room shelters constructed in the project did not have sufficient space given the household size in Afghanistan. Two-room shelters could be considered as a better alternative.
7. Improvement in food security in the medium to long-term requires the inclusion of livelihood interventions combined with humanitarian assistance.
8. Given the collapse of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, it is anticipated that food security, poverty, and unemployment will increase. Projects like these need to keep engaging with the population in the targeted districts.