

## A Working Forest in Qalai Qazi Village

In December 2009, local farmers and shura council members from the village of Qalai Qazi welcomed Global Partnership for Afghanistan (GPFA) into their community and participated in a 4-day learning workshop on managing natural resources. The villagers responded to the training with enthusiasm and embarked with GPFA on a nine-month project to establish a community forest.



Qalai Qazi is a village in Sayed Abad District, Wardak Province, of roughly 1,000 people or 180 families. It is a poor region and, like much of Afghanistan, the land is rocky and barren from conflict, drought, overgrazing, and desperate villagers collecting fodder and firewood.

Through the support of the Afghan National Environment Protection Agency, GPFA and local farmers set out to restore the land and its capacity to sustain life. In keeping with GPFA's approach to development work, a core objective was to train the community in sustainably managing the woodland area.

### New Life on a Dry Hill

Two hectares (roughly 5 acres) of denuded land were cleared, terraced, irrigated and planted by local farmers and GPFA staff. 1,500 local, hardy saplings including almond, mulberry and elm were planted and two kilograms of redbud seed were sown. Farmers were trained in the creation of A-frame terraces, stone walling, and the installation and maintenance of an hydraulic ram pump irrigation system.



Enthused by the nearby work, Sheikbahad High School, which has 1,800 students, began using the site to teach practical biodiversity and conservation. One of the students commented on the school's excitement, "It is wonderful watching the plants grow and learning how to care for them. One day we will be able to sit under the trees to study our school work."

### Revitalizing Land in More Communities



GPFA is seeking to replicate this program to establish community forests in districts across Afghanistan while expanding work in Qalai Qazi. The experience there has shown that when provided with training and financial support, villagers are eager and capable of revitalizing land that has long been barren. GPFA is already fielding requests for similar work from farmers and village shura councils.

A participant explained: "We are very happy with this watershed and grateful for the financial help to do it. Everyone in our village is excited and people are even coming from other villages to see it – then they say they want to do the same in their villages."