

A New Approach at Mohammad Agha

The Best District Center in the Country

Global Partnership for Afghanistan (GPFA) is transforming the Mohammad Agha District Center in Logar Province, Afghanistan. In consultation with District Governor Abdul Hamid Hamed, village Shura councils and local people from the surrounding areas, GPFA is reimagining the role of the Agha Center in public life by increasing its capacity to deliver services and encouraging outreach to the community.

Similar to county governments in the U.S., district centers are the local form of Afghan government responsible for basic services to citizens. Unfortunately, in most areas, these centers are completely dysfunctional. GPFA is leading a partnership that includes the U.S. Department of State and the Afghan Government to make Agha a model for district centers across the country by redesigning the grounds, instituting a new approach to community outreach programs, and investing heavily in agricultural development.

“Everyone is convinced this will be the best District Center in the country,” says GPFA Executive Director Roger Hardister.

A New Landscape

The centerpiece of this development project is the construction of a farm demonstration landscape, currently underway, that will serve as a vital educational resource, beautify the site, and provide a sustainable source of income to District Center operations.

The planned demonstration landscape will consist of a series of plots, segmented by walkways and benches, showcasing best agricultural practices including irrigation techniques and inventive energy applications. On-site plots will include orchards, a small trellised vineyard, a farm forestry woodlot, fruit and forestry nurseries, intercropping for soil enrichment, home vegetable gardens, a greenhouse, a chicken pen, strawberries, ornamentals plants, and live fences and hedges. In addition, local contractors are building a Community Education Building that will host a variety of health and education programs.



Complimenting this initiative, GPFA is furnishing men and women in the surrounding areas with the capital and supplies necessary to launch farm-based businesses of the kind demonstrated at the Center. Thus farmers will have the opportunity to make direct use of the training and resources available at Agha in their own enterprises.

Agriculture experts from the Afghan Dept. of Agriculture will provide ongoing orientation and training for visitors to the demonstration landscape. And GPFA is currently teaching District Center staff to maintain the plots.

Infrastructure Development: Power and Knowledge

From the beginning of this project, it was clear that considerable investments in infrastructure were necessary if Mohammad Agha was to effectively deliver services to the community. GPFA and its partners have confronted this issue by designing and constructing a reliable power system and computer network.



Solar Electrification: GPFA has completed installation and integration of an energy system comprised of 30 solar panels that will provide the main office round-the-clock energy covering 100% of its power needs. The new system has virtually no maintenance costs.

Information Technology: GPFA has provided hardware, an internal network system with internet connectivity and related office equipment. This will enable the District Center to link to other district, provincial and central government offices and offer citizens important learning resources previously unavailable to them.

Market Facilities: GPFA is planning construction of a market as an outlet for the sale of produce from local farmers, including cooperatives and women's groups, as well as the Center itself. These facilities will be located on the main road from Kabul south, just in front of Mohammad Agha, to attract travellers.

Reaching Out to Women

The Mohammad Agha program is specifically reaching out to women with services that will include a minimum of 100 agriculture-related income-generating activities aimed at raising incomes for Afghan women and their families. GPFA is currently training a female District Center staff member to serve as a long-term support person for participating women farmers.



A Model for the Country

GPFA is driving this multi-dimensional initiative through its contribution of vision, technologies and expertise, delivered by its creative, enthusiastic and committed staff.

"GPFA is hosting an upcoming meeting with its governmental and civilian partners and key personnel from Logar Province to sit down together and ask: how do we assure that the benefits of our work make a difference in the lives of local farmers? We're applying this kind of vigilant approach every step of the way," says Roger Hardister.

The ultimate success of the Mohammad Agha project may be the development of a model focused on strengthening local government institutions and investing in the economies of surrounding communities that can be replicated in District Centers across the country.