



Global Partnership for Afghanistan (GPFA)
Case Study for Afghanistan's Rural Development That Works

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GPFA is a New York nonprofit organization and NGO registered in Afghanistan that assists rural Afghans alleviate poverty, build sustainable livelihoods and restore their environment. Our capacity-building programs provide men and women with trees, supplies, technical and business training, and other support needed to increase their incomes through farmer-owned micro-enterprises such as orchards, vineyards, and woodlots. GPFA also helps communities revitalize forests, improve water management and reverse the impact of environmental degradation.

THE NEED AND GPFA'S RESPONSE. With 80% of Afghanistan's population dependent on agriculture for livelihoods, GPFA began operations in 2004 to help the country's farmers re-establish their orchards, vineyards and forests lost through war and drought. Today, with **6 million trees planted**, GPFA's programs **reach more than 422 villages in 12 provinces where 10,000 families are now building sustainable businesses with revenues that often rival or exceed income from poppy cultivation.**

GPFA's programs are **a model for successful development of Afghanistan's agriculture sector.** If applied more broadly, our model can help the country achieve sustainable incomes, food security, enduring peace, economic self-sufficiency and stability. With funding, including from individual Americans committed to Afghanistan's success and agencies like USAID, U.S. Department of Defense Agro Business Development and Provincial Reconstruction Teams, the European Union, World Bank, and GTZ, GPFA has initiated **sustainable programs that can be replicated for short, medium and long-term results.**

GPFA's programs currently include:

- **Farm Forestry Woodlots and Agroforestry.** Farmer entrepreneurs each plant up to 8,000 poplars and other trees for income from the sale of cuttings within a year and of trees, which at maturity in 7 years can earn them up to \$60,000 from a half acre of land. Participants also produce trees for urgently needed fuel and environmental protection without destroying natural forests and degrading the environment.
- **Orchard and Tree Nursery Development and Revitalization.** Home vegetable gardens provide immediate income while fruit orchards offer the potential to generate revenues that will help support a typical family of 7 within 3-5 years. GPFA's participation in the European Union Perennial Horticultural Development Project (PHDP) and the World Bank Horticulture & Livestock Project (HLP) provides government, commercial and private nurseries and farmers access to the best quality tree and plant stock and assures farmers' investments of labor, land and capital will yield good results.

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- **On-Farm Income Enhancement.** GPFA also helps farmers build underground fruit storage facilities, form farmer associations and supports other local initiatives, such as beekeeping and food processing, to increase small farmers' income and market power.
- **University and GPFA Forestry and Horticulture Research and Demonstration.** Working with Kabul University, Albironi - a local university in Kapisa Province, Paktya University, and GPFA's *Tree House* training and education center in Guldara, GPFA is building outreach, research and demonstration projects which train university students, faculty and local farmers in practical forestry and horticulture skills, and ultimately promise reform of agricultural education, bringing university training more in line with the needs of students and an emerging national economy.
- **Water Resource Management.** GPFA is working to provide more efficient water management support to communities and small farmers. With water critically short in Afghanistan, this dramatically increases land available for farming and productivity.

PROGRAM ATTRIBUTES THAT ASSURE SUCCESS. Since 2004, 10,000 farmers in 9 provinces have planted 6 million income-producing trees in partnership with GPFA. Significantly, much of this has been in the past two years. GPFA programs are successful largely because they are community-based, coordinated with local stakeholders and government priorities and implemented by Afghan staff. Programs are designed to build capacity, transparency and accountability. They embody the following principles:

Tea, Trust, Trees and Training Win Hearts and Minds:

1. ***Start Local: Partner with Local Leaders.*** Our program was launched by drinking tea with local and provincial leaders - Shuras and Community Development Councils (CDCs). These ongoing consultations lay the groundwork for program design and implementation. GPFA begins not with the goal of doing things *for* people or simply funding projects people want to do; rather, we respect their views and share ideas to realize existing possibilities and bring new approaches to the table.
2. ***Follow the Need.*** Farmers - whether recently returned refugees, ex-combatants, young people, widows/single female heads of household or simply the poor - lack **working** capital to buy quality trees and supplies. They also need up-to-date knowledge to rebuild the successful horticultural and forestry businesses that once supplied 40% of Afghanistan's export income. GPFA struck a deal: Farmer-entrepreneurs supply land and the commitment to work it. GPFA delivers the trees, supplies and training that enable farmers to launch tree-based businesses to rebuild livelihoods. Local shuras provide security and other support. As programs progress, farmers are asked to contribute more resources.
3. ***Strategic Choices - Focusing on Income, Commerce, Food and Capacity Building in Rural Provinces.*** Many studies have spotlighted the urgency of funneling aid to Afghanistan's rural communities, where unemployment is 40-60% and food is increasingly scarce. Yet, relatively **little support has found its way to those who need it most in rural areas** and into providing alternative livelihoods to poppy production. Starting in the outlying areas of Kabul province, and expanding to provinces like Logar, Wardak, Paktya, Kapisa, Parwan, Panjshir, Paktika and Khost, GPFA is

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taking its income-generating projects where today others are infrequently seen on a sustained basis. GPFA programs help realize not only the aspirations of Afghanistan's rural people but also the **US government's goals to improve food security, increase agricultural productivity and rural employment, and improve family incomes and well-being**, by enabling Afghans to help themselves and thereby reduce pressures on the poor to grow opium poppy. These same goals underpin Afghanistan's National Development Strategy.

- 4. Sustainability - Staff Locally, Connect Globally to Build Afghans' Capacity.** Afghans often complain that development programs funnel resources through international contractors—leaving rural Afghans without training and tools to help themselves when the contract ends. GPFA's first steps were to hire local staff. Today **120 trained Afghans are central to our work in 12 provinces**. The numbers are growing. GPFA also invests in training Afghan horticulturists, foresters, agronomists, and village facilitators as well as lead farmers who train others in their communities.

Our American Executive Director, based in Afghanistan, supports capacity development of our Afghan staff through coaching and supervision, a myriad of training initiatives and our innovative and unique *Tree House Training Center for Excellence in Horticulture, Farm Forestry and Entrepreneurship*. Local professional development is supplemented by practical training in countries like Turkey, India, Pakistan, Canada and the US, and by experts visiting from institutions such as Cornell University. Our Afghan staff travel freely to villages where they work hands-on with farmers to pass on what they have learned and to assure success and application of lessons learned. GPFA's relationships with local universities and government institutions help ensure that lessons learned are shared with others.

- 5. Success Feeds Success - The Farmer-Entrepreneur is Catalyst for Change.** GPFA-trained enterprise farmers are now developing income-generating businesses such as nurseries, improved orchards, woodlots for timber and underground fruit storage facilities. In a country with per capita income of less than \$2 a day, **GPFA's enterprise farmers are seeing short-term income grow by several hundred to several thousand dollars a year - with the potential for exponential growth as tree crops mature**. This lasting legacy spurs others to participate resulting in growing farmer demand to participate in our programs. Our Afghan staff and GPFA's American and Afghan-American leadership are warmly welcomed by local communities, even in volatile areas such as Logar and Wardak. GPFA's success has led to increasing requests for development assistance from US Commanders, PRTs, HTTs and ADTs for expansion in areas where the Taliban are being uprooted and where immediate attention to local development needs by local resources like GPFA's staff is required. New initiatives in cooperative with DOD units in Kapisa Province and others under discussion in Paktya will expand GPFA activities into areas previously inaccessible, bringing new opportunities to thousands of impoverished people.
- 6. Rural Women Entrepreneurs Share Both Knowledge and Opportunities.** Working through Shuras and CDCs with full support of local leaders, GPFA's program now includes 800 women entrepreneurs in 9 provinces as direct **beneficiaries**. In total, GPFA's programs now benefit some 35,000 women and girls. Our growing **female staff of 34** help village women increase their income and food supplies, not only as orchard and woodlot entrepreneurs but also through short-term

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income opportunities such as underground fruit storage facilities, beekeeping, vegetable production and poultry, which can fit comfortably into their culture, compounds, and traditions.

- **GPFA's Successes are Replicable and Scaleable.** Critics complain that many aid projects focus either on short-term impact without delivering sustainable long-term benefits or on long term prospects that neglect the immediate needs of the poor. In contrast, GPFA's replicable tree business model delivers both short and long-term benefits. On-farm initiatives increase short-term income through better training, irrigation, fruit storage, and vegetable production, while the 6 million trees planted will exponentially increase long-term income. 10,000 families are increasing earnings and building sustainable businesses that often rival or exceed income from poppy cultivation.
- **GPFA Partners with USAID and Department of Defense (Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) and Agro Business Development Teams (ADTs).** In addition to ongoing work with USAID, the EU and the World Bank, GPFA has partnered with US Military Commanders, ADTs, PRTs and HTTs for projects in Kapisa, Paktya, Logar, Wardak, and Panjshir. Our strong local community connections from six years on the ground and our Afghan staff assure respect for and sensitivity to local culture, local acceptance and security. GPFA's multiple partnerships, leveraging of funding, and variety of local spinoffs create synergy on the ground, increasing and enhancing benefits to local people.
- **GPFA Brings Meaningful Change and Hope for A Better Future.** The long-term commitment of GPFA and its staff to Afghanistan and to improving the lives and livelihoods of the country's rural poor enable them to hope once again for a better future and to realize that they can, on their own and with assistance, become part of that future. Their hope, coupled with proven results and continued support, will help bring peace and security to Afghanistan.

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A New York non-profit, GPFA was formed in 2002 by 4 New York professionals with long-standing ties and commitment to Afghanistan and its people: Bruce Freyer, a retired businessman; Dana Freyer, a senior partner in the Skadden, Arps law firm who in the 1960's worked for the Afghanistan Ambassador to the UN and traveled with Bruce to Afghanistan in the 1970's; Ishaq (Ned) Nadiri, New York University Jay Gould Professor of Economics; and Mohammad Anwarzai, formerly Afghanistan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Australia and New Zealand.

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