



Frequently Asked Questions *Global Partnership for Afghanistan (GPFA)*

What is GPFA? GPFA is a people-to-people, capacity-building organization that provides Afghan farmers with the resources and assistance needed to restore their orchards, woodlots, tree nurseries and vineyards and build sustainable farm forestry and orchard enterprises that increase incomes and food supply and help restore the environment. Founded by 4 Americans with ties to Afghanistan in November 2002, GPFA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and an Afghan-registered non-governmental organization (NGO), with offices in New York City, Kabul and 7 Afghan provinces.

Why Tree-Based Enterprises? Over 80% of Afghans live in rural areas and depend on farming to meet their basic needs. Through the 1970s, Afghanistan was called the “Orchard of Central Asia”, known for its abundant harvests of high-quality fruit and nuts that were exported around the world. Lush orchards and forestry trees covered the hillsides and valleys, providing forest products, fuel and food. Three decades of war have destroyed 60-80% of the country’s orchards and vineyards, devastating the country’s economy and natural environment and creating widespread human suffering. After years of conflict, drought and overgrazing, just 2% of Afghanistan is forested today. Sustainable development of the country’s tree resources and tree-based enterprises is essential to meet the Afghan people’s daily needs.

How do GPFA's programs work?

Planting Trees, Building Businesses. Since 2004, GPFA has played a leading role in speeding Afghanistan’s economic and environmental renewal by helping farmers develop sustainable businesses through planting and revitalizing woodlots and nurseries of poplar and other tree species for vital wood production, fruit and nut orchards, vineyards, tree nurseries, and vegetable gardens. While trees mature, farmers learn how to intercrop with vegetable gardens which yield both food and cash crops.

Quality Materials, Loans and Training. By providing high-quality planting materials, loans, market information and technical and business training, our staff help Afghan men and women to restore their long tradition of cultivating trees for fruits, nuts, wood and income, Local GPFA technicians deliver essential field instruction, working with lead farmers who manage model farms and demonstration plots that facilitate knowledge sharing. New techniques in irrigation, pruning, harvesting and cultivation are constantly being tried and tailored for each farmer to improve yields and increase incomes.

Increasing Market Access and Power. Our programs help orchard and woodlot owners gain market power by forming producer associations, information sharing and construction of cold storage facilities. Learning from GPFA how to measure, grade and crate their fruit and store it until optimum selling periods, farmers have increased their profits over 150% on average.



Increasing Supply of Quality Tree Stock. GPFA partnered with Afghanistan's Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock to collect and conserve planting materials of indigenous fruit and nut varieties and supply them to government and private nurseries. In 2008, we supplied 1.7 million high quality budwoods of native fruit trees to government and commercial nurseries which in turn support private nurseries across the country.

Water Harvesting, Conservation and Storage. Water is key in any agriculture program. This precious commodity is in short supply in Afghanistan. GPFA is embarking on programs to train farmers in water harvesting, conservation and storage. With flood irrigation being the main method of watering crops, we are beginning to work with farmers on simple methods of drip irrigation to eliminate waste and concentrate this precious natural resource directly to the source of plant, tree and vegetable growth.

Environmental Benefits. Our agro-forestry programs are also yielding long-term environmental gains by protecting biodiversity, curbing global warming, providing forage for animals and controlling erosion.

How do we educate staff and farmers in "appropriate" 21st-century technology? A key component of GPFA's program is Capacity Building – connecting staff and farmers with 21st century agriculture, forestry and horticulture methodologies and locally appropriate technology. Afghans thirst for such knowledge. From local farmer field schools to training sessions in Turkey, Pakistan, Canada, the US and elsewhere, our staff and farmers are beginning to bridge the knowledge gap created by 25 years of war. To expand our training's reach, trained farmers impart their knowledge to untrained farmers and the knowledge spreads.

The Tree House. The Tree House is a farm-forestry and horticulture center of excellence for agriculture training and enterprise development created by GPFA to develop the knowledge, skills and ability of Afghans to develop farm forestry and horticulture enterprises and enhance their productivity. Through demonstration projects, practical workshops, and partnerships with local farmers, experts and other institutions, the Tree House supports the development of quality planting stock, productive orchard and woodlot enterprises, producer associations, fruit storage facilities, low-cost irrigation, business skills and market and credit access. Tree House trainees and interns have access to a full range of ongoing tree-based enterprises through contacts with GPFA farmers located near the center. Tree House initiatives are producing skilled agricultural professionals and farmers who will expand GPFA's existing programs and extend them throughout Afghanistan.

How are farmers selected for participation? GPFA works with local communities to identify eligible farmers who must meet GPFA's criteria for participation. The men's and women's "*shura*" or other local councils are the starting point in building relationships. Many farmers, having observed others' successes, now ask GPFA if they can participate.

Does GPFA give handouts? GPFA discourages handouts to farmers. In most programs farmers receive a loan of plant materials, equipment and supplies, tools or fertilizers. These are then repaid to GPFA in-kind. Farmers embrace this concept and have stated from the outset that, "We do not want handouts. We are a proud people and we will work hard to enable others to benefit." GPFA's farmers are proactive partners in building their own futures. Our "in kind" loan program has been highly successful. Returns on GPFA and donors' investments enable us to extend the program to more participants and regions.

How successful have GPFA's programs been?

Beneficiaries. Since 2004, when we created our first model farmer-owned tree businesses, we have helped more than 10,000 Afghan families, including a growing number of women-headed households, revitalize or establish orchard, woodlot, vineyard and tree nursery enterprises, benefitting more than 70,000 individuals in 422 villages across 7 provinces. More than half of the beneficiaries are women and children. Many of these enterprises are owned by farm families who returned to their villages after having been displaced during the conflicts.



Increases in Income. The impact of GPFA programs on farm family income is significant. Participating farmers can increase their income from \$140 per year to several thousand dollars per year – significant amounts in a country where most live on \$2 per day. GPFA woodlots yield an additional financial bonanza for farmers at harvest time when income from the sale of timber can net \$60,000+. Projected income from mature trees exceeds profits from the cultivation of poppies.

New Trees Planted. GPFA's farmers' businesses now encompass more than 6.1 million new trees. Some of these trees and the cuttings they produce are being sold both at market and for use in GPFA's program expansion, thereby increasing farmers' income and food supplies and renewing the environment. Our programs are currently being implemented in 10 provinces. GPFA farmers' businesses, together with fruit nurseries established in partnership with

GPFA and the project's own nursery, are expected to produce 500,000 fruit and timber saplings for sale within the next few years. Within six years, GPFA farmers' woodlots will produce 100,000 trees for sale as timber. These will supply 200,000 beams for household construction and repair.

How does GPFA help women become better farmers? Increasing women's participation in our programs is a priority for GPFA. Since 2005, we have brought nearly 800 women from 7 provinces into our programs to run woodlot businesses and grow fruit orchards and vegetable gardens. These women have worked hard to create financially successful farms which feed their families and pay for their children's education. GPFA's 30 women extensionists and village facilitators provide women farmers: technical and business training in classrooms and in farmer field schools, assistance in forming producer associations, and ownership of cold storage facilities and equipment which can be leased to other farmers. GPFA is rapidly expanding women's participation in our programs. To that end, we have established a Gender Advisory Group to explore obstacles to women's participation and implement initiatives to capture the benefits of fuller participation of women in GPFA programs.

What about Poppies? Poppy production has been a primary source of funding for terrorist activities and farmers are often coerced into this illegal activity. GPFA provides farmers with an alternative to growing poppies. We provide all means necessary to create thriving, profitable businesses that match or exceed income from poppy production. A study by Altai Consulting indicates that an \$80 KG farm gate price for poppies makes them less profitable than apricots, peaches, almonds, pistachios, apples and grapes. By providing farmers with the above alternatives to poppies and by training farmers in business management and marketing, building underground storage facilities and improved irrigation and

fertilization techniques, farmers' incomes from lawful, sustainable farm businesses are increasing dramatically every year and deterring farmers from growing poppies.

What are the sources of GPFA's funds? For 2009, approximately 35% of revenues are expected to come from individuals, foundations, corporations and GPFA directors and 65% from government grants, including the U.S. Agency for International Development, the European Union, GTZ (German government agency for international cooperation), the World Bank, Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Agri-business Development Teams.

Where are GPFA's projects? GPFA launched its tree enterprise projects in Guldara District, Kabul Province in March 2004. These were expanded in 2006 to include the Farza District of Kabul Province as well as Logar, Wardak and Paktya Provinces. In 2008, Parwan, Panjshir, and Kapisa Provinces were added. In addition, GPFA works with farmers in Balkh, Kunduz and Samangan Provinces to prepare and collect budwood to establish certified nurseries to service the south central region.

Will my investment be secure? GPFA has continued to operate successfully in all locations because we have a nearly all Afghan staff, most of whom are recruited from the communities in which they work. Our provincial and village-based staff develop programs in partnership with the community leaders and farmers. This community-based business model, in which farmers and community leaders are heavily invested, reduces the security risk to farmers, staff and our projects.

Why should I help GPFA? A stable, economically secure Afghanistan is essential to creating peace and security in the region, the Middle East and throughout the world. With 80% of Afghans living in rural areas, many of them on little more than \$2 a day, most do not have access to reliable food sources, education, health care or clean water. Millions of Afghans who returned from neighboring countries have no means of livelihood. GPFA is providing as many farm families as possible with the means to build a prosperous, secure future for their families. Our farmers contribute to local and regional economies that provide the foundation for widespread prosperity and security. GPFA's programs are a catalyst for revitalizing a healthy civil society in Afghanistan and creating a moderate and engaged citizenry.

What will my investment yield? An investment of \$1,500 will create a new family orchard business that will permanently lift a family of 7 or more out of poverty. An investment of \$500-\$1,000 will plant a new nursery or revitalize a ravaged orchard. Every dollar increases our ability to maintain our existing program and to build on our successes and expand these programs to the thousands waiting for the opportunity to improve their lives and rebuild their country.

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