

More Wood for Wardak



“This is the kind of project we really need it will support our communities for many years to come and help us to earn a decent living with no need for outside help” a Jalrez farmer said.



Growing hybrid poplar woodlots in Afghanistan provides multiple benefits.

Timber is used in construction and carpentry. It slows the destruction of dwindling natural forests. It can replace poppy cultivation since it is at least as profitable. A half acre woodlot costs farmers US\$ 2,500 to establish and maintain. Over 7 years it can produce an income of over US\$ 10,000 from sales of cuttings. Sales of timber, as trees mature (8 years), can bring a windfall profit of as much as \$60,000.

Global Partnership for Afghanistan, in response to these opportunities, is expanding its woodlot program in Wardak Province, south of Kabul. Farmers in Narkh and Jalrez districts are cooperating to establish 94 woodlots covering 94,000 square meters. The project is supported by a Wardak CERP project grant.

As with all GPFA projects, this one began with wide spread discussions with local Shuras (village councils), farmers' associations, and district and provincial officials. Local leaders nominated farmers for the project and GPFA selected them on the basis of criteria such as availability of land and water and farming experience.

GPFA provided training on forests and their environmental impact, establishing poplar woodlots, cutting selection and planting, irrigation, pest and weed control, increasing soil fertility and provided ideas for marketing of poplar cuttings and timber.

More than 375,000 cuttings were purchased from farmers who had previously been supported by GPFA. These were distributed and planted. After one month in the ground, survival rates for cuttings were close to 100%.

GPFA will give ongoing support and advice to framers, who will pay back a number of cuttings similar to those they received. These will be passed along to other farmers or distributed for planting around public buildings, canals, and on homesteads.

The project is sustainable with farmers increasing the size of woodlots using their own cuttings next season. In this way farmers can harvest timber on a long-standing plot while introducing additional cuttings on new lands.