

**IMPROVING COMMUNITY'S RESILIENCE THROUGH
CASH FOR FOOD AND SENSITIZATION ACTIVITIES
ON NUTRITION AND CHILD PROTECTION IN
NANGARHAR PROVINCE**

SAVE THE CHILDREN - JAPAN AND AFGHANISTAN

**THIRD PARTY EVALUATION (TPE) OF JPF FUNDED
PROJECT IN AFGHANISTAN**



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Strategic Partner for Development

info@askariaconsling.com

0093 785 081 430

0093 790 636 960

Kart-e-Chahar, Kabul Afghanistan



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Acronyms

ASK	ASK Aria Consulting
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FSL	Food Security and Livelihood
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HH	Household
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace Building
IOM	International Organization of Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
JMMI	Joint Market Monitoring Initiative
JPF	Japan Platform
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	Organization for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PDM	Post Distribution Monitoring
RCSI	Reduced Coping Strategies Index
SC	Save the Children
SCA	Save the Children Afghanistan
SCJ	Save the Children Japan
TPE	Third-Party Evaluation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme

Acknowledgment:

The third-party evaluation of an emergency response to support for capacity building of Households (HHs) through awareness-raising activities on cash transfers and nutrition and child protection in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. This was a project of the Afghanistan Humanitarian Crisis Response Support Program *“Improving community’s resilience through cash for food and sensitization activities on nutrition and child protection in Nangahar Province”* implemented from August 20th, 2022, to June 19th, 2023, by Save the Children Japan and Afghanistan with the financial assistance of Japan Platform (JPF), was conducted from January-April 2024. The Evaluation was carried out by Ask Aria Consulting Afghanistan.

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I Executive Summary

The project aimed to mitigate food insecurity and protect vulnerable groups, particularly children, through cash transfers and awareness-raising activities on nutrition and child protection. It targeted 850 HHs, comprising approximately 5,950 individuals, and sought to educate 1,700 local residents. This evaluation focuses on understanding diverse perspectives within the target population, emphasizing gender and age demographics. The survey of this project revealed a balanced gender distribution among respondents, highlighting potential differences in needs and perspectives. A significant portion of respondents were aged 35-54, indicating strong engagement from this demographic, making it essential to tailor interventions effectively to meet their specific concerns.

The majority of respondents were married, highlighting the influence of family dynamics on community engagement and resource needs. A notable proportion were widows, indicating a need for targeted support for this vulnerable group. With varied occupational profiles, including many housewives and unskilled laborers, nuanced approaches are necessary to support economic stability and enhance livelihood opportunities. Designed to address critical humanitarian needs exacerbated by global crises, the project involved extensive consultations with local communities and drew from past successful initiatives in Afghanistan. By focusing on inclusive strategies, the project aimed to ensure that cash distribution and other forms of aid reached those most in need, based on clearly defined selection criteria.

A key component of the project was raising awareness about food security and child protection. Educational sessions addressed various aspects of nutrition, hygiene, and the specific needs of pregnant and lactating women. The community's positive response and high level of engagement indicated the effectiveness of these efforts and their readiness to support vulnerable members. The project achieved high levels of community awareness and improved nutrition among respondents. The design and implementation considered the specific needs and preferences of both women and men, reflected in the strategic criteria used for beneficiary selection. However, to enhance the lasting impact of these interventions, a re-evaluation of certain aspects is needed for future programs.

Despite financial challenges due to fluctuating exchange rates, the project was executed efficiently, meeting all its targets. Effective resource management, strategic planning, and robust coordination with stakeholders were key to overcoming these challenges. Regular coordination meetings with local authorities and comprehensive reporting practices ensured transparency and accountability. The project further aligned its resource allocation and expenditure with community needs by implementing a community-led design and localization process. Communities were actively involved in establishing and approving beneficiary selection criteria, ensuring thorough consultation and consideration of community interests. Notably, the gender balance in community committees, with women comprising 50% of the leadership, was a significant aspect of the project.

Through strategic selection of target areas and beneficiaries, the project successfully provided immediate relief to vulnerable populations. By integrating cash transfers with educational activities, it addressed urgent food needs and enhanced community awareness on vital issues, fostering a more informed and resilient community. The project's success in mitigating immediate food insecurity and raising awareness underscores the importance of integrated humanitarian interventions. Moving forward, it is crucial to continue such efforts with a focus on sustainability, ensuring long-term resilience for vulnerable populations. Strengthening economic opportunities, enhancing community education, and maintaining robust monitoring will be essential for sustaining the positive impacts achieved.

2 Introduction

2.1 Project Background

Afghanistan is facing a serious humanitarian crisis as a result of many years of conflict, political instability, frequent natural disasters, and the spread of COVID-19 infection. In 2021, the situation deteriorated further due to the worst levels of drought and armed clashes in the past 27 years and the commencement of substantial domestic control by the Taliban forces after August 15. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), approximately 19.7 million people, or about half of the country's population, are at or above the "crisis level" of IPC3.¹ Since the political upheaval in August 2021, the domestic economy has also been facing a serious economic crisis, and as many people experience unemployment and a decline in income, rising prices have further impacted HHs. A survey conducted by the Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) in April 2022 found that 73% of respondents reported food price increases, and that food and fuel prices increased by several percent to 40 percent compared to the time of the previous survey.²

The food security level of the entire Nangarhar province, the target of the project, is IPC3 at the "crisis level" and IPC4 at the "emergency level" in the urban areas of Nangarhar province. Similarly, in the Multi Sectoral Assessment conducted by Save the Children (SC), food needs are reported to be higher in urban areas (90.7%) than in rural areas (86.6%), suggesting that urban areas with no agricultural land to grow crops are more severely food insecure.³

People affected by conflict or political upheavals also have limited livelihoods and tend to take negative measures to obtain cash. In 2021, debt, asset sales and child labor were reported as the most common remedies. However, with the economic crisis last year, lack of cash distribution, and increasing unemployment rates, there are fewer options for debt and loans, and the proportion of HHs choosing to sell assets or child labor is increasing.⁴ In addition to child labor, victimized defeats include early marriage, selling children in exchange for money, and begging on the streets, which are at high risk of physical, sexual and psychological abuse and exploitation. In the entire state of Nangarhar, 1.4 million people are reportedly in need of humanitarian assistance. By eliminating HH food insecurity and making a living condition that requires no negative coping measures, it is expected that this will not only improve food insecurity, but also help protect children and other vulnerable groups.⁵ Therefore, it is extremely appropriate to implement food assistance through cash transfers and awareness-raising activities on nutrition and child protection.

The impact of a decade of conflict, political instability, frequent natural disasters, and the spread of COVID-19 infection has put food security levels across the province at risk, with many HHs adopting negative coping strategies that could lead to child exploitation and rights violations. In Nangarhar province, 45% of the population is facing food insecurity above IPC3, which is a "crisis level," and in addition, due to the effects of income decline and inflation, all HHs are unable to obtain adequate food. The impact is also on children, with an increasing number of children showing signs of malnutrition. In the province of Nangarhar, 55.6% of caregivers said they would send children to child labor to increase HH incomes.

¹ IPC, Afghanistan IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis March-November 2022, May 2022, p.1

² REACH, WFP, Afghanistan Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) (10 - 20 April 2022) - Afghanistan | ReliefWeb, 22 May 2022, p.3

³ Save the Children, Afghanistan Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment, January 2022,

p.55 <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/Afghanistan-MSNA-Full-Report-March2022.pdf/>

⁴ Protection Cluster Afghanistan, protection_analysis_update_q4.pdf (humanitarianresponse.info), 28 Feb 2022, p.10-11

⁵ OCHA, Humanitarian Response Plan 2022 Response Overview, p.4

The project had one component:

Assistance aimed at supporting HHs through cash for food, as well as initiatives focusing on nutrition and child protection through awareness-raising activities.

This component aimed to:

Distribute cash for food to HHs (850 HHs: 5,950 persons (average of 7 persons per HH) Raise awareness on nutrition and child protection to 1,700 local residents from these HHs.

The project aimed to enhance beneficiary access to vital foods and boost awareness regarding nutrition and child protection. It particularly targeted children working on the streets, their families, and HHs impacted by various crises like conflict, political instability, and natural disasters in key urban areas of Nangarhar. The goal was to improve the situation of vulnerable populations and bolster HH resilience.

2.2 Study Objectives

This final evaluation report seeks to assess the overall effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of the project based on its stated objectives, outcome, and outputs. By analyzing key performance indicators, stakeholder feedback, and data collected through various methods, this evaluation aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the project's achievements, challenges faced, and lessons learned.

Through a combination of qualitative insights gathered from interviews and focus group discussions and quantitative data obtained from surveys and project documentation, this evaluation endeavors to provide evidence-based conclusions and actionable recommendations for future interventions in similar contexts. The evaluation matrix outlined in this report serves as a structured framework to guide the analysis and interpretation of data across relevant evaluation themes such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

Ultimately, this evaluation report not only aims to assess the immediate outcomes of the project but also seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions and efforts aimed at improving humanitarian interventions, promoting sustainable development practices, and enhancing the well-being of vulnerable communities in conflict and disaster-affected regions.

2.3 About JPF

The JPF is an international humanitarian aid organization which offers emergency aid in response to humanitarian needs, focusing on issues of refugees and natural disasters. JPF conducts such aid through a tripartite cooperation system where NGOs, business communities, and the government of Japan work in close cooperation, based on equal partnership, and making the most of the respective sectors' characteristics and resources. JPF serves as an intermediary support organization providing various types of assistance to member NGOs in Japan to deliver quick and comprehensive aid on their own. JPF has supported aid activities of 46 member NGOs, each with its own set of diverse strengths. It has delivered humanitarian assistance to 50 nations and regions about 1,800 projects, with a total financial contribution of 72 billion yen. JPF has built a strong reputation based on trust by promoting cooperation among private sectors and NGOs and by accurately reporting all its activities.

2.4 About Save the Children Japan (SCJ)

Save the Children (SC) is an international NGO that works to make children's rights to survival, development, protection and participation a reality worldwide. It was established in the UK in 1919 and is currently at work in approximately 120 countries. The UN and the governments of many countries have a high regard for SC as a pioneer of children's rights, and they have achieved breakthroughs in the way the world treats children.

SCJ was established in 1986. SCJ is active in international programs in fields such as child protection, health and nutrition and education. When conflicts or natural disasters occur, SCJ provides emergency and humanitarian responses. In Japan, SCJ has actively addressed issues of child poverty and child abuse and have also conducted various programs in response to large-scale disasters, through these programs, SCJ works to make children's rights a reality.

2.5 About Save the Children Afghanistan (SCA)

SCA has been working in Afghanistan since 1976 to deliver lasting change to the lives of children across the country. They work closely with children, parents, teachers, village councils, religious leaders, government ministries, non-governmental organisations, and other stakeholders. Their programmes focus on education, health and nutrition, child protection, food security and livelihood, and humanitarian response. They also help children learn by ensuring both girls and boys are in school. Their programmes provide the opportunity for children that have left school to access community-based education opportunities as well as return to the formal education system and they work with the government to support quality education.

2.6 Key Information of the Project:

Table 1: Key Project Dates

Program Name	Afghanistan Humanitarian Crisis Response Assistance
Project Title	Improving Community's Resilience Through Cash for Food and Sensitization Activities on Nutrition and Child Protection in Nangarhar Province
Implementing Entity	Save the Children Japan
Executing Entity	Save the Children Afghanistan
Amount and Duration	76,872,002 Yen for 273 days
Project Inception	August 20, 2022
Project Completion	June 19, 2023

Key Project Outcome and Output

Table 2: Outcome and Output Framework

Desired Outcome Improved access to food and knowledge of nutrition and child protection for children working on the streets, their families and HHs affected by multiple crises such as conflict, political upheavals and natural disasters, in the main urban areas of Nangarhar, will improve the situation of vulnerable populations and enhance the capacity of HHs to cope.	Indicators and targets (identification methods) for measuring outcome achievement 1-1. Percentage of HHs covered by cash transfers whose food consumption score (FCS) is at the "acceptable" level: 20% increase compared to the value at the time of selection (survey at the time of selection of beneficiary HHs, post-benefit monitoring). 1-2. Percentage of HHs with reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) among HHs eligible for cash benefits: a 10% increase compared to the value at the time of selection (survey at the time of selection of HHs eligible for benefits, post-benefit monitoring) According to our survey, these indicators have been achieved only for the duration of the project.	
Desired Output 1-1. Children working on the streets and their families, and HHs vulnerable to multiple crises such as conflict, political upheavals and natural disasters, will have access to the food they need through cash transfers.	Indicators and target values (verification methods) for measuring achievement of output 1-1-1. Number of HHs receiving cash benefits: 850 (list of HHs receiving cash) 1-2-1. 1,700 local residents (participants list) participated	Activities to achieve output 1-1. Selection of Target Areas and Beneficiaries 1-2. Survey of market prices of daily necessities included in food baskets 1-3. Implementation of cash benefits

1-2. To carry out awareness-raising activities on nutrition and child protection, and to promote the improvement of people's knowledge.	in awareness-raising activities on nutrition and child protection	1-4. Implementation of awareness-raising activities on nutrition and child protection for local residents 1-5. Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM)
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2.7 Study Scope

At ASK Consulting, we believe this Third-Party Evaluation (TPE) services will serve as an integral component of the broader Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Mechanisms within JPF. With this in mind, the primary responsibility of ASK Consulting is:

- Collecting and reviewing all project documents as well as relevant other documents
- Conducting preparatory discussions/meetings with the relevant stakeholders
- Designing qualitative and quantitative data collection tools, sampling methods, field survey schedules and division of tasks
- Arranging/appointing data collectors and orientation of the data collectors/enumerators
- Collecting data and information from different levels and stakeholders including the project beneficiaries and groups, community people, JPF, SCJ, and SCA staff.
- Processing field data collection and analyzing the data applying statistical software and MS Excel.
- Writing draft report and arranging a presentation session on the draft report with JPF and collecting feedback on this report.
- Finalizing evaluation report after incorporation of feedback and submitting to JPF.

2.8 Study Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, specifically in Nangarhar province, and the impacts of interventions aimed at improving food security, nutrition, and child protection, several limitations must be acknowledged:

1. The survey responses and feedback from beneficiaries might be influenced by their personal biases.
2. The study's reliance on sampling for selecting beneficiaries might limit the generalizability of the findings.
3. The evaluation period was relatively short, spanning from August 2022 to April 2023. This timeframe may not be sufficient to capture the long-term impacts of the interventions on food security, nutrition, and child protection.
4. The rapidly changing economic and political landscape in Afghanistan, particularly following the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, introduces additional variables that could affect the study's findings. Inflation, unemployment, and policy changes might have influenced the results in ways that are difficult to disentangle from the effects of the intervention.
5. The specific context of Nangarhar province, including its unique socio-political dynamics and demographic characteristics, may limit the applicability of the findings to other regions of Afghanistan or other conflict-affected areas globally.

Acknowledging these limitations is crucial for interpreting the study's findings accurately and for informing future research and intervention strategies in similar humanitarian contexts. Further studies with extended timelines, robust longitudinal designs, and more comprehensive data collection methods are recommended to build on the insights gained from this evaluation.

3 Study Design

This research assignment delved into evaluating Save the Children's (SC) Afghanistan office's support to 850 HHs and 1700 individuals in Eastern Nangarhar province, focusing on nutrition, food security, and child protection awareness. The evaluation questions spanned various dimensions including relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, and cross-cutting concerns. They ranged from assessing inclusivity in cash distribution and adherence to humanitarian principles to gauging community awareness, involvement, and satisfaction levels. Questions also delved into transparency of documentation, resource allocation, impact on beneficiary behavior, sustainability of practices, visibility of funding sources, collaboration with other organizations, and overlap with related initiatives. The assessment aimed to enhance project outcomes by addressing specific queries regarding implementation, effectiveness, and sustainability while fostering collaboration and transparency.

3.1 Geographical Coverage Area

The project has supported several communities in the province of Nangarhar which has residents comprised of internally displaced persons from rural areas within and outside Nangarhar due to drought and prolonged conflict. The following list provides a brief overview of the geography of the communities and areas where the project was implemented.

Community	# of Respondents	Community	# of Respondents
Angurbagh	40	Joyhaft	35
Baburyan	37	Kacha Garae	5
Bagrami	2	Majbur Abad	39
Bargaino Shata	1	Narang bagh	40
Bari Pacha	3	Omid abad	49
Base ikmalati	36	Qasaba	3
Campona	4	Rokhan Mina	1
Farm Hada	4	Sarhadi Lewa	1
Jalalabad city	38	Ulfat mina	36

Table 3: Communities

Some of these areas, like Kabul Station were subsequently not considered due to some technical issues from the community side reaching some unanimous decisions. It was then replaced with other areas in the province. Several communities benefited from this project in Nangarhar province. According to our survey, respondents, different in numbers, were spread around 18 diverse communities in the province. The following table and the above map show the geographical coverage of the project. The percentages in the bar chart represent the ratio of participation from each village.

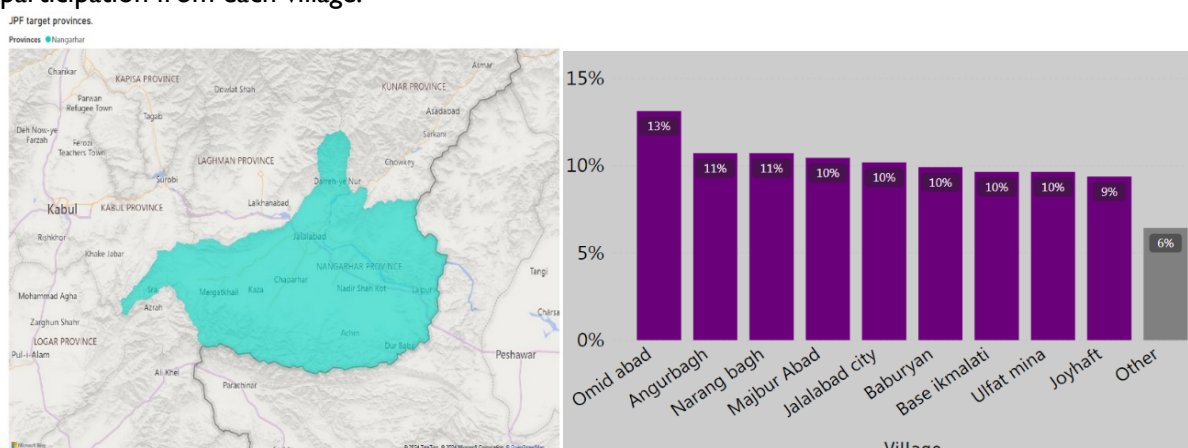


Figure 1: Project Geographical Coverage

4 Evaluation Framework

4.1 Research Methodology

The Evaluation was carried out in compliance with OECD –DAC Criteria and Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, Sustainability were studied in detail to reach conclusion. The chosen research design for this study was a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. This approach provided a comprehensive and in-depth way to approach the research objectives, allowing for a holistic analysis of the project activities in the targeted rural communities and for ASK to provide well-informed recommendations to JPF. The rationale for selecting a mixed methods approach stemmed from the need to gather both qualitative and quantitative data to capture the complexities and nuances of the research topic. By using qualitative methods such as Key Informant Interviews (KIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), rich and contextual information could be obtained from community members, project actors, JPF, and other stakeholders. These qualitative methods allowed for in-depth exploration of experiences, perspectives, and barriers faced by different groups within the communities. Qualitative data, on the one hand, provided a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, and gender aspects. It captured narratives, perceptions, and experiences that may not be easily quantifiable. Quantitative data, on the other hand, provided objective measures, trends, and statistical relationships, offering a broader perspective.

For evaluation activities, English was the primary language for communication and literature development. However, while engaging with the communities and collecting data from the field, ASK consulting translated the questionnaires into local languages that the communities speak, in this case, Pashto Language. Additionally, ASK's enumerators explained each question to the respondents to elicit information from them and assist them in responding to the surveys.

4.2 Sampling Strategy

This study required a robust sampling strategy for the 7,650 beneficiaries (850 HHs with 5,950 members including 1,700 local residents who received awareness raising training) with a 95% confidence interval. Ensuring the representativeness of the sample drawn was crucial to accurately generalize the findings to the entire population. To address the need for a representative sample in light of the population size, a stratified random sampling method was employed, with stratification based on relevant factors such as age, gender, or location. The sample size was calculated using the formula for estimating sample size in a population, considering a confidence level of 95%. The sample size was 366.

4.2.1 Key Informant Interviews (KIs)

To assess the project comprehensively, a series of interviews were conducted with key personnel from various stakeholders. These interviews served as an opportunity to capture their experiences, perspectives, and knowledge related to either the nutrition/awareness raising project or the broader JPF humanitarian program in Afghanistan. This multifaceted approach ensured a well-rounded analysis of the project, covering various levels of stakeholders and offering rich qualitative data.

Methods	Stakeholders	Description	Targeted	Reached	Achievement Rate
Key Informant Interviews	SCJ Staff	2 interviews with key SCJ Staff engaged in the project	10	10	100%
	SCA Staff	4 interviews key SCA Staff from top and middle management and field staff			
	Community Leader	4 Interviews with Community Leaders			
Focus Group Discussions	Parents and HH Members	2 FGDs, one for women and one for men where each FGD will consist 10 members (2 members from each training session)	2	2	100%
Survey	HHs	354 surveys with HHs receiving cash assistance	354	374	105%

Table 4: Data Collection Stakeholders

4.2.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

To capture a broader range of voices and experiences, FGDs were conducted with various community members. These discussions facilitated the emergence of shared experiences and perspectives within the community, encompassing elders, male and female community members. These FGDs involved HHs with at least one person with disability. The aim was to gather insights into how the project has impacted and influenced the broader community.

4.2.3 Surveys/Questionnaires

Surveys in the form of questionnaires were administered to a diverse sample, encompassing HHs who received cash assistance. A total of 374 questionnaires were conducted with the beneficiaries of the project. These surveys aimed to systematically collect quantitative data on participants' perceptions and experiences in relation to both the food security and nutrition project and the comprehensive JPF humanitarian program in Afghanistan. Surveys, through standardized responses, provided a systematic and efficient means of obtaining data from a large participant pool, offering statistical rigor to complement the rich qualitative data gathered through interviews.

5 Findings

5.1 Demographic

Approximately 54% (202 respondents) of the total respondents were male, while around 46% (172 respondents) were female. This data suggests potential variations in perspectives and behaviors that may exist between genders within our target population. The age group 35-44 comprised the largest proportion of respondents, followed by 45-54 age group. 15-24, 55-64 and above 64 constituted smaller portions.

Age Group	Percentage	Numbers
15-24	6%	23
25-34	-	
35-44	38%	142
45-54	25%	94
55-64	9%	34
Above 64	3%	12

Table 5: Segregated Data by Age

Analyzing the demographic breakdown of respondents is essential for ensuring the inclusivity and effectiveness of the project. The concentration of respondents within the 35-44 age group suggests that this demographic segment is actively engaged and interested in the issues addressed. Understanding the concerns and priorities of this age cohort allows to tailor interventions to meet their specific needs effectively. Additionally, the significant representation of respondents aged 45-54 underscores the relevance of the project to middle-aged individuals, who may play pivotal roles within their communities and families. While the older age groups (55-64 and above 64) constitute smaller proportions of the sample, these demographic segments often possess valuable insights and experiences that can inform the design and implementation of humanitarian interventions. The project targeted the right demographic group since many of them had children and were engaging in negative coping strategies. Furthermore, they may be particularly vulnerable to certain challenges, such as access to healthcare or social isolation, which require targeted support from projects. The presence of respondents in the youngest age group, 15-24, signals the importance of engaging youth in humanitarian efforts. This demographic cohort represents the future of the community and holds immense potential to drive positive change. By involving young people in project planning and implementation, interventions can harness their energy, creativity, and enthusiasm to address pressing social issues and foster sustainable development.

GENDER

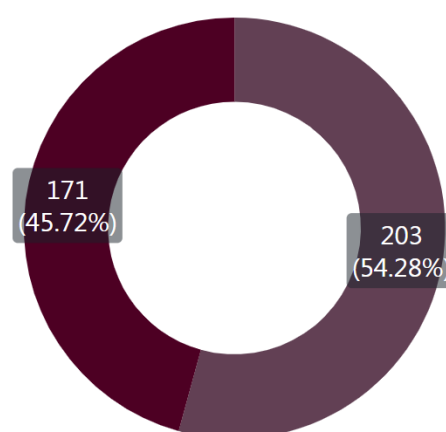


Figure 2: Gender Based Analysis

The respondents' education levels were categorized into two groups: Illiterate, and Literate. Among these groups, the Illiterate category had the highest percentage of respondents, with approximately 81% (304 respondents) of the total respondents. The literate group comprised 18% of the total population. Among the literate group, the High School, comprising around 33% (22 respondents) of the total literate respondents followed by primary school 33% (23 respondents), Secondary school 16% (12 respondents), and University 1% (4 respondents). Among the Illiterate

Education Level	Count	Percentage
High School	22	6%
Illiterate	304	81%
Primary school	23	6%
Secondary school	12	3%
University	4	1%
Grand Total	374	100.00%

Table 6: Respondent Education Level

respondents, females had a higher percentage, accounting for approximately 28% of the total respondents in this category, while males constituted around 23%. In the High School category, males had a slight majority, comprising approximately 0.6% of the total respondents, while females represented around 0.3%. Analyzing further, in the Primary school, Secondary school, Literate, and University categories, males dominated, with percentages ranging from 0.3% to 0.01%. Females had very low representation in these categories, with each comprising less than 0.01% of the total respondents. These findings provide insights into the distribution of education levels among the respondents, with a notable proportion falling under the Illiterate category, particularly among females.

The distribution of marital status among the respondents reveals that the majority, approximately 76% (285 respondents) of the total, were married individuals. Among them, males constituted around 52% (149 respondents), while females accounted for about 24% (69 respondents). Additionally, approximately 21% (79 respondents) of the total respondents were widows, with females representing the entirety of this group. Single individuals comprised a smaller proportion, approximately 3% (12 respondents) of the total respondents, with males comprising around 2% and females around 1%.

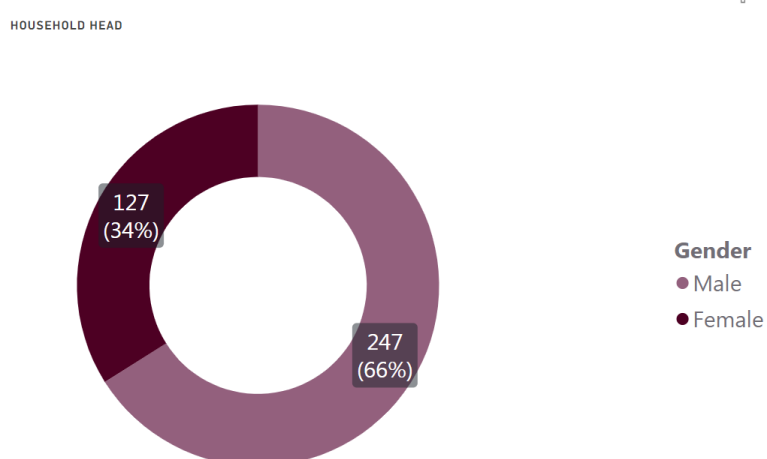


Figure 3: Households data

These findings shed light on the marital status composition of the surveyed population, indicating a significant representation of married individuals, followed by widows/widowers, and a smaller proportion of single individuals.

Approximately 38% (143 respondents) identified as housewives, all of whom were female. Unskilled laborers accounted for around 35% (131 respondents) of respondents, predominantly male 98% (367 respondents) with a small female representation 2% (7 respondents). The jobless constituted about 6% (25 respondents) of respondents, exclusively male. Skilled laborers made up approximately 7% (27 respondents) of respondents, with males comprising 81% and females 19%. Shopkeepers constituted 1% of respondents, all male. Tailors represented less than 1% of respondents, exclusively female. These statistics offer a glimpse into the varied occupational profiles within the surveyed population, highlighting different gender distributions across professions. The Nangarhar community is also supported by multiple donors working to achieve the HDP-nexus. The World Food Programme (WFP), for example, is providing the community its support in the form of immunization awareness with a comprehensive school feeding [programme](#)⁶, targeting teachers and parents.

5.2 Relevance

The evaluation focused on the relevance of humanitarian aid and community engagement, examining various dimensions thoroughly. It scrutinized the strategies employed to ensure inclusivity in cash distribution, assessing their alignment with humanitarian principles. According to a SCJ staff member, SCJ has been supporting children in Afghanistan through their partnership with SCA for over 20 years.

⁶ WFP Afghanistan: Situation Report, February 2024, <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/wfp-afghanistan-situation-report-february-2024#:~:text=With%20funding%20from%20the%20Bill,programme%2C%20targeting%20teachers%2C%20parents.>

When designing projects, SC typically draws from past support mechanisms in the country, such as Afghanistan. Thus, this project was developed in consultation with the SCA team and based on prior experience in the country. Food security emerged as a major concern, exacerbated by multiple humanitarian crises. Its severity was identified as critical, compounded by the Ukraine war, which inflated prices and disrupted supply chains.

The project maintained an inclusive approach to supporting communities. Prior to project design, it was mandatory for SCA to consult local communities about their needs. A local needs assessment was conducted by SCA became part of a proposal that SCJ submitted to JPF. According to the information provided by at the KIIs with SCJ staff, before this project, SCA was already supporting a similar initiative. Community leaders were consulted for beneficiary identification, prioritizing HHs based on a leader's criteria: firstly, those in extreme poverty, and secondly, those in intermediate poverty levels. Since the project provided immediate cash support for purchasing food, it didn't address all community needs, but it aimed to fulfill them as effectively as possible. Almost all the community stakeholders believe that the cash distribution was relevant to their food needs as many could not feed their children with enough food. Moreover, awareness-raising sessions helped communities understand child protection measures.



Figure 5: KII with Community elder

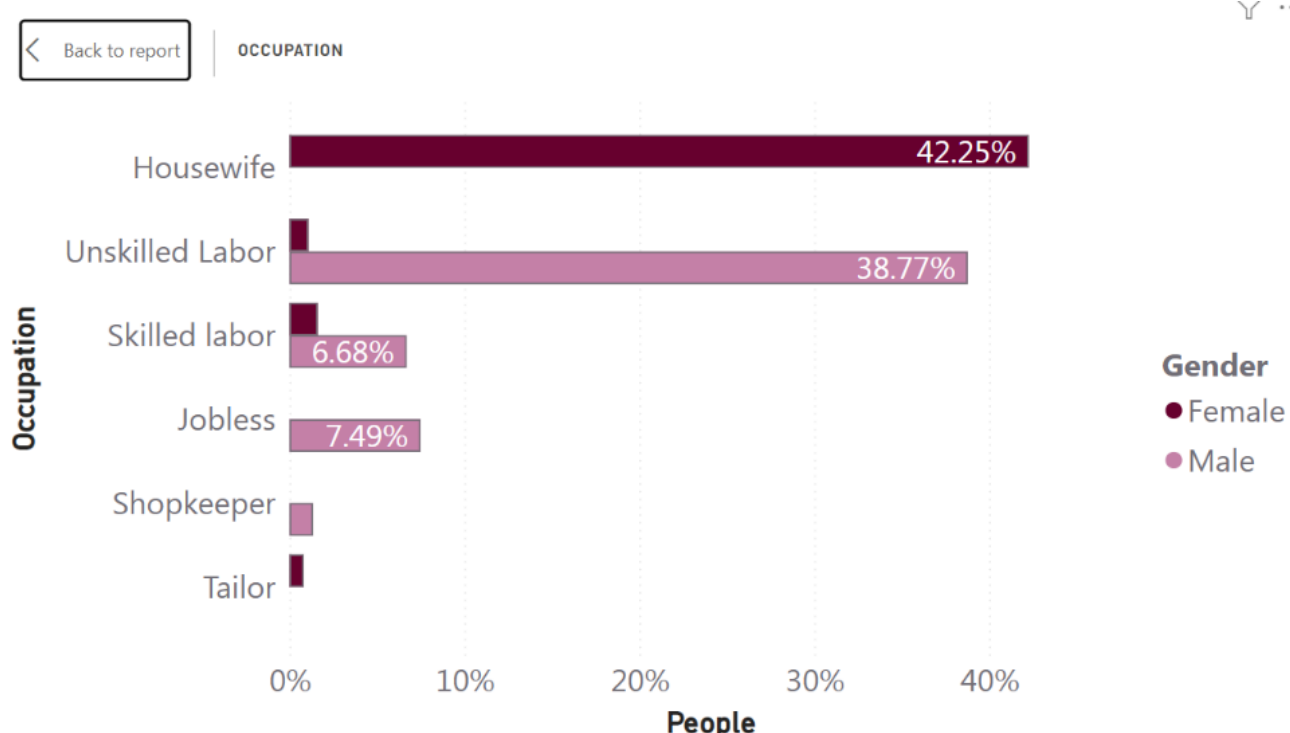


Figure 4: Demographic Findings

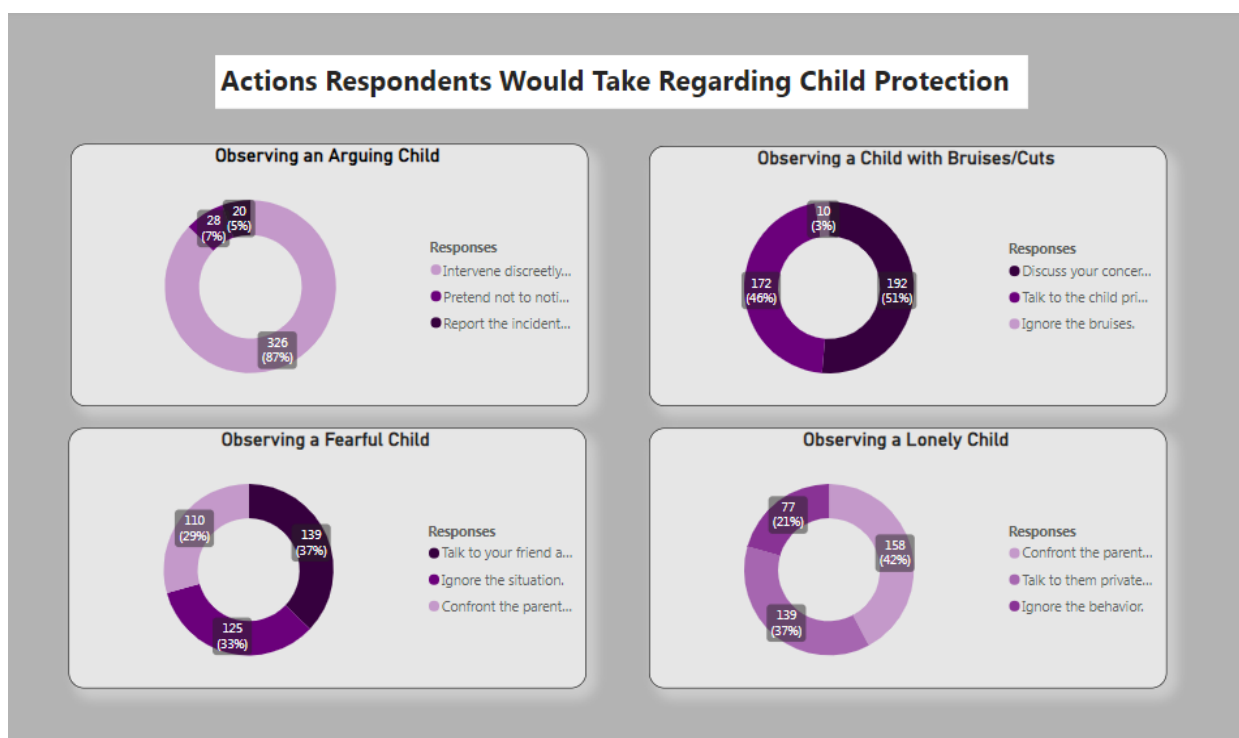


Figure 6: Child Protection Scenarios

According to our survey, a significant 87% (326 respondents) of the respondents will intervene discreetly to understand the situation if they observe a child arguing. Over 90% (over 336 respondents) of them would take action if they see a child with cuts and bruises. Over 60% (over 225 respondents) would take action if they observe a fearful child. Over 75% (over 280 respondents) would take action if they observed a lonely child. On top of these survey results, the FGD responses show that many women learned about child protection such as their nutrition, health, hygiene among many others.

The beneficiary selection process for the project was transparent and fair. A total of 8 selection criteria were assigned during the design stage. Each of these selection criteria are:

- 1) Poor HHs that resort to food-related coping mechanisms such as selling productive assets, child labor, or reducing food intake due to COVID-19 or other shocks.
- 2) Poor HHs with land of less than 3 Jirb (less than 1.5 acre) or with limited other productive assets.
- 3) Poor HHs with 2 or more children under 5 years old.
- 4) Poor HHs with a chronically ill member.
- 5) Poor HHs with a member living with disabilities.
- 6) Poor HHs with a pregnant and lactating woman or malnourished children.
- 7) Poor HHs headed by widows or children.
- 8) Poor HHs headed by older people (over 60 years old).

In the selection of the beneficiaries, briefings were held in advance for local stakeholders on the purpose of the project and the criteria for selecting the beneficiaries from the group introduction, and the process was followed by the process of creating a list of candidates HHs by members (five men and five women) selected from the local residents. This not only enables the selection of beneficiary

HHs that truly need assistance in a locally rooted manner, but also improves the understanding of local residents regarding the beneficiary selection process.

The evaluation of our humanitarian project, based on survey data, reveals several key insights.

-
- PDM sessions reflected high satisfaction levels with the beneficiary selection process, with nearly 100% (374 respondents) of HHs reporting satisfaction or equity.
- During cash distribution, 100% of beneficiaries reported no problems or risks, highlighting effective management.
- Approximately 50% of beneficiary (204 respondents) rated project design as excellent, and more than 95% (359 respondents) expressed confidence in the clarity and appropriateness of the selection criteria.

Concern

- Approximately 40% (145 respondents) of respondents recognized active beneficiary involvement in project planning and execution, indicating a significant level of community engagement, while over 55% (206 respondents) expressed uncertainty regarding beneficiary participation, signaling a need for improved communication.

Recommendation

- While the project demonstrates strengths in beneficiary satisfaction and effective resource management, there is room for improvement in communication and transparency surrounding beneficiary involvement, suggesting opportunities for enhanced community engagement and project sustainability. Continued monitoring and evaluation will be crucial for addressing emerging challenges and refining project strategies moving forward.

The following table presents responses from both female and male participants regarding various aspects of the project design, selection criteria, distribution methods, beneficiary involvement, and consideration of neglected groups. The majority of both female and male respondents rated the design of the project as either "Excellent" or "Good". 46% (79 respondents) of females and 62% (125 respondents) of males considering it "Excellent" and 36% (62 respondents) of females and 16% (33 respondents) of males considering it "Fair". There is a significant difference in the perception of fairness, with more females (36%) rating it as "Fair" compared to males (16%). Overwhelmingly, both female (92%) and male (100%) respondents were aware of the selection criteria. Interestingly, there were no respondents who indicated that they did not know about the selection criteria. It shows that the entire community was informed of the selection criteria. The findings underscore the

Response:	Female %	Male %	Female Count	Male Count	Total Count	Total %
Design						
Excellent	46%	62%	79	125	204	55%
Fair	36%	16%	62	33	95	25%
Good	16%	22%	27	44	71	19%
Poor	2%	0%	3	1	4	1%
Selection Criteria						
Dont Know	8%	0%	14		14	4%
No	0%	0%		1	1	0%
Yes	92%	100%	157	202	359	96%
Distribution Method						
Dont Know	0%	1%		3	3	1%
No	5%	1%	9	3	12	3%
Yes	95%	97%	162	197	359	96%
Beneficiary Involvement						
Dont Know	58%	53%	99	107	206	55%
No	9%	4%	15	8	23	6%
Yes	33%	43%	57	88	145	39%
Neglected Groups						
Dont Know	34%	32%	58	64	122	33%
No	62%	67%	106	136	242	65%
Yes	4%	1%	7	3	10	3%

Table 7: Gender-based Responses

importance of considering gender perspectives in project planning and implementation. While both female and male respondents generally rated the project design positively, variations in perceptions of fairness highlight potential areas for improvement to better address the needs and preferences of female participants. Furthermore, the high level of awareness regarding the selection criteria reflects effective communication strategies in beneficiary selection, contributing to community engagement and trust. Moving forward, continued efforts to solicit and incorporate feedback from diverse gender groups will be essential for enhancing the inclusivity and effectiveness of the project, ultimately leading to more equitable outcomes for all beneficiaries.

There was a high level of awareness among both genders regarding the distribution method, with very few participants indicating uncertainty. The majority of both female 95% (162 respondents) and male 97% (197 respondents) respondents confirmed that they were aware of the distribution method. Both genders showed relatively high levels of awareness regarding beneficiary involvement in the project. However, 43% (88 respondents) of male and 33% (57 respondents) female participants were aware of beneficiary involvement. Participants generally showed awareness of the consideration given to neglected groups in the project. 62% (106 respondents) of female and 67% (136 respondents) of male participants were uncertain of the project's efforts in this regard.

While both female and male participants demonstrated high levels of awareness regarding key project aspects such as the distribution method and beneficiary involvement, differences in awareness levels between genders suggest areas for improvement in communication and engagement strategies in this aspect of the project, particularly with regard to female participants. Addressing these disparities through targeted interventions and inclusive outreach efforts will be crucial for ensuring equal participation and representation across genders, ultimately fostering greater community ownership and impact of the project's initiatives.

There seems to be a high level of awareness among participants regarding various aspects of the project, including selection criteria, distribution methods, consideration of neglected groups, but beneficiary involvement. There are some differences in perception between female and male respondents, particularly regarding the fairness of the project design and awareness of beneficiary involvement.

5.3 Effectiveness

The project successfully achieved its objectives in raising community awareness regarding food security, meeting its predetermined targets. As part of Activity I-I, the project conducted four rounds of monthly in-person multipurpose cash distributions, complemented by the dissemination of crucial nutrition messages. These messages covered a range of topics, including the importance of providing a diverse diet for children aged over 6 months old, guidance on the appropriate timing and consistency of complementary feeding, hygiene practices during food preparation, identification of foods to avoid such as sweets, tea, coffee, and juice, the significance of sustained breastfeeding, and the importance of nutrition for pregnant and lactating women.

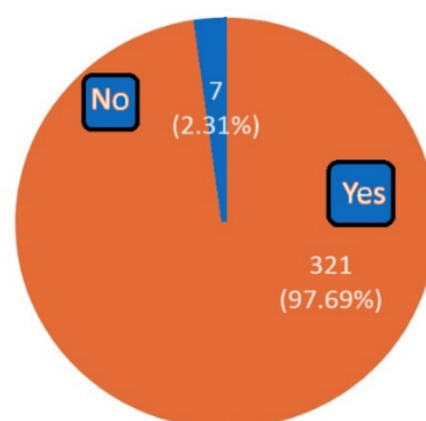


Figure 7: Addressing of Root Causes

Additionally, the project emphasized the necessity of maintaining hygiene during cooking and provided information on the essential nutrients crucial for children's development. Our survey results indicate that over 95% (321 respondents) learned about the root causes of their community's and how Activity I-I addresses them.

Moreover, a significant 83% (282 respondents) believe that the project helped them improve their nutrition levels. Almost all of the respondents think that the project design was effective; however, they believe it was of an ephemeral nature. This suggests the need to rethink some aspects of future programs to increase the long-term effects of support.

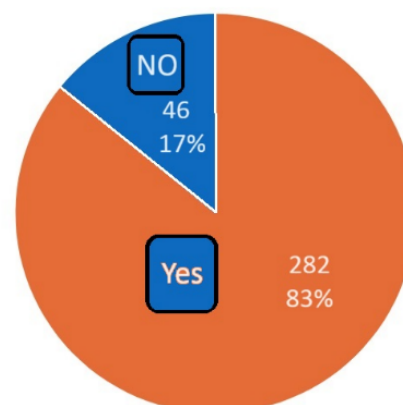


Figure 8: Increase in Nutrition Level

The project considered the specific needs and preferences of women during the planning and implementation phases. Over 85% of women believe that women and men benefitted equally. According to a senior field staff member from SCA, multiple criteria helped us deliver support equally to women and spread the impact across gender domains. For example, one key criterion was the presence of at least one pregnant or lactating woman. Families headed by women were also significant criterion.

5.4 Efficiency

The project was executed with notable efficiency. SCA demonstrated effective and strategic resource management, communication, and coordination, considering the project's scope, stakeholders, and donors. As evidenced by the endline results, the project successfully achieved all its outputs, boasting a 100% success rate. SCA facilitated a total of 3 rounds, each round amounting to USD 96, and conducted awareness sessions reaching 1,700 local residents. The USD to AFN exchange rate at the start of the project in August 2022 was 91 AFN, however, at the time of evaluation as of May 2024, this rate has decreased to 71 AFN.

Financial resources posed challenges during the project, primarily due to fluctuating exchange rates of USD-AFN. Additionally, the support provided to the Nanagarhar community fell short, given the humanitarian crises they are facing.



Figure 9: KII with Community Elder

Nevertheless, SCA surpassed its targets to address the nutrition needs of the most vulnerable community members. To manage these fluctuations, SCA employs close coordination and reporting. According to a senior staff member at SCJ, they regularly request expense reports from SCA, to monitor financial aspects and to be notified in advance of any fluctuations or changes.

Concerns: The original budget plan was insufficient. Although SCA initially planned for 4 rounds of distribution, due to funding limitations, SCA had to reduce it to 3 rounds. It might be due to the depreciation of the yen, but failing to consider such a possibility demonstrates a lack of foresight and planning, especially considering the associated risks.

Despite the constraints, SCA strategically merged some activities to reduce operational costs and allocate more towards support costs. For instance, SCA integrated cash transfers with awareness-

raising activities to convey messages related to child protection, resulting in more efficient use of limited funds. SCA meticulously documented all attendance sheets, noting locations, meeting quantities, and participant numbers.

Coordination among stakeholders was a pivotal strategy for the successful completion of the project. SCA effectively mobilized all relevant stakeholders in a timely manner. In the project's first month, a coordination meeting was held between SCA representatives and the Economic department at the department's office in Nangrahar. The primary objective was to coordinate the Economic department's involvement in implementing the JPF project across the 9 zones of Jalalabad City, Nangarhar. All essential project information, including target areas, beneficiaries, assistance amounts, and phase numbers, was shared with the directorate. Authorities expressed gratitude to SCA and the people of Japan for supporting the most vulnerable families in Afghanistan, affirming their cooperation with SCA. Additionally, SCA shared its semi-annual report (covering 6 months) with relevant authorities for responsible reporting and public compliance purposes. Internal coordination, however, was more robust and quicker to avoid the any unwanted aggravations. According to a senior staff member at SCJ, concerns, challenges, or lessons learned are immediately shared among the different country offices.

SCA effectively allocated and spent resources in alignment with community needs, demonstrating a localization process in its activities by actively involving communities to ensure community-led design and implementation. For instance, the project established 8 selection criteria for beneficiary selection, with community committee members given authority to approve and sign off on this document prior to activity commencement, indicating thorough consultation with and consideration of community needs and interests. Regarding gender balance within community committees, 20 out of 40 community leaders were women, representing a 50% participation rate in local decision-making processes. Additionally, SCA established documented guidelines for various aspects such as targeting approach, beneficiary selection, criteria setting, registration, verification, finalization, and sensitization. These guidelines not only facilitated efficient project management for SCA but



Figure 10: KII with Community Elder

also enabled effective coordination and community awareness of support efforts. Community involvement and localization strategies were successful at the level that some community leaders, during interviews, voluntarily recommended alternative support mechanisms as they felt that they were being heard and given power to decide. Their recommendations were aimed at further sustainable support and livelihood projects. At SCA, these guidelines and established project management processes and procedures are the result of previous support. According to a key staff member, SCJ has been supporting the children in Afghanistan through SCA for quite a long time. As a standard norm, SCJ always goes through its previous support mechanisms in the country to enlighten new projects.

Regarding communications and reporting, SCJ and SCA diligently submitted a total of 11 monthly progress reports to JPF apprised of field progress. These reports were accompanied by visual elements, including pictures from the field, adhering to responsible reporting standards. All reports were presented in the standard JPF format, maintaining a concise, informative, and to-the-point style. Additionally, SCJ submitted a needs assessment report, PDM reports, and End of the project reports.

Visibility was another component in project communications. JPF was given visibility across the communities of Nangarhar. The senior staff member explained how they always used JPF logo in meetings at the community level. During the project kick-off meeting with SCA, SCJ emphasized the visibility of JPF, the senior said. SCA has prior experience in JPF-funded projects in other provinces including Balkh.

The project's complaints mechanism remained active throughout its duration. According to the complaint's mechanism file, a total of 24 instances were recorded, with 6 reported by women. Of these instances, only 1 constituted a formal complaint. The remaining instances were categorized as either i) expressions of appreciation, ii) requests for help beyond the project's scope or capability, or iii) inquiries. The single formal complaint received concerned the project's failure to distribute cash to a specific family, despite distributing to three others in Narang Bagh community. The three others were from the same village who received the support, but this specific family was not supported despite all four of them were observed to receive cash. SCA addressed this complaint by determining that the family did not meet beneficiary selection criteria, and as the project was nearing its conclusion, it was unable to extend support to them. Of the 24 instances, only 5 were formally closed by SCA, with remarks provided. The remaining 19 instances were closed without remarks. Among these, 3 were inquiries from male beneficiaries regarding the timeline for cash distribution (2 inquiring about a second round, and one potentially about the first round).

Concerns: Based on the collected information, while beneficiaries were aware of the existence of the Complain Box, they did not fully understand its functionality and limitations. Detailed explanations from SCA staff are necessary to ensure privacy is maintained and to reassure beneficiaries that any complaints submitted remain anonymous, causing no issues for the complainant. Without this understanding, it is challenging to collect accurate information and improve project outcomes. Additionally, it is essential to allow staff to submit complaints via the Complain Box. After the implementation of this system and the explanation to all beneficiaries, staff and other stakeholders, it is necessary to digitize the provided complaint data, submit it to SCJ, hold meetings to consider solutions, and record whether the issues were solved at regular intervals.

In terms of human resources, SCA has assembled a highly qualified team to advance the project. The team comprises 8 dedicated members, with 4 of them being women. The project falls within SCA's Food Security and Livelihood (FSL) department. The team includes 1 FSL Manager (male), 1 coordinator (female), 1 livelihood officer (female), 1 FSL Officer (male), 2 FSL Assistants (one female, one male), 1 Market Linkage Officer (male), and 1 Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) Officer (female). Notably, the project lead is a female staff member. The team members bring a range of experience to the table, spanning from less than a year to 10 years with SCA. The Livelihood Officer boasts the most extensive tenure with 10 years of service, while both the FSL Manager and Livelihood Officer have over 4 years of experience. This collective wealth of institutional knowledge and experience underscores the project's implementation with expertise, equipped with valuable management insights and lessons learned. Prior to joining SCA, team members held various roles such as Senior Project Officer, Project Supervisor, Senior Protection Officer, DRR Officer, M&E Officer, Project Coordinator, Social Worker, and Program Officer, showcasing their diverse backgrounds and skill sets.

Detailing the team's composition and past experiences is paramount, highlighting each member's specific skills pertinent to planning and executing the food security and nutrition project. The FSL Manager brings expertise in project management, strategic planning, and coordination, ensuring efficient oversight and implementation of project activities. The MEAL Officer's proficiency in

monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning facilitates continual assessment and adjustment of project interventions, enhancing outcomes and impact. Furthermore, the coordinator's abilities in gender-sensitive programming and community engagement foster inclusivity and effectiveness throughout the project lifecycle.

During the field visit, it was noted that according to information gathered from implementation staff, it appears that the project may have inadvertently contributed to unforeseen challenges, particularly tensions among residents in one of the targeted communities. As a result, the decision was made to redirect the food distribution from this community to another community. The project implementation staff clarified that they were not directly involved in these incidents, and their reports did not document any related information.

The process of food distribution began with informing the community committee had been informed about their selection and was asked to assist in identifying beneficiaries, which led to significant discussion among community members regarding who should receive aid. The exact cause of these disputes remains unclear. It is uncertain whether they stemmed from inadequate explanations from the community committee regarding the criteria for prioritization, the existence of more potential beneficiaries than available food supplies, or perhaps from communication gaps between the implementing staff to the community committee.

Furthermore, the nature of the communication provided to the community when the decision to change the target community was made remains unknown.

Moving forward, it may have been beneficial to engage more deeply with the community to address these tensions and continue with the food distribution, or if cancellation was necessary, to ensure that any negative impacts were mitigated and resolved. This approach could have helped minimize any potential harm and maintain trust. There is currently no information on the impact it had on the community or on the trust in the support from Japan.

While these observations are speculative and may necessitate further exploration, it would be advantageous for JPF and its member organizations to consider these points and conduct risk assessments prior to providing support. Reflecting on these insights could provide valuable insights and contribute to the enhancement of future interventions.

5.5 Impact

The project left a short-term impact at the community level. It is because the impact of a decade of conflict, political instability, frequent natural disasters, and the spread of COVID-19 infection has put food security at such a great risk that the sector needs a lot of financial support to recover. The project managed to, for a few months, prevent many HHs from adopting negative coping strategies that could lead to child exploitation and rights violations. It further improved access to food and knowledge of nutrition and child protection for children working on the streets, their families and HHs affected by multiple crises such as conflict, political upheavals and natural disasters, in the main urban areas of Nangarhar. The project improved the situation of vulnerable populations and enhanced the capacity of HHs to cope.

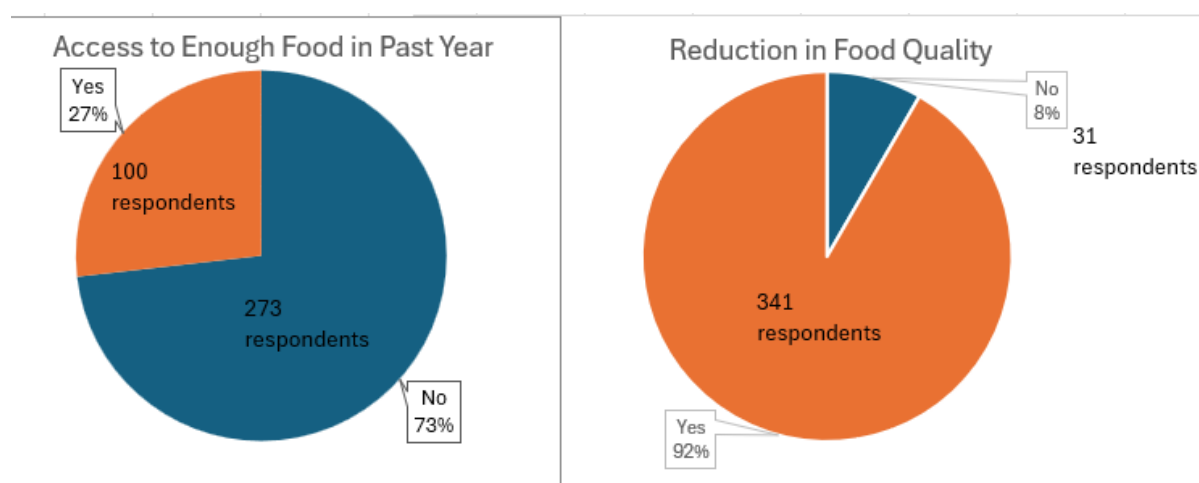


Figure 11: Food Status of Respondents

In terms of food security, the project not only met its targets with 100% achievement score but exceeded in some other indicators. For example, under indicator 1.1, 20% of the HHs must have an “acceptable” level FSC. The original end of the project results indicate that this indicator was achieved with over 300% success rate showing that for one beneficiary planned, 3 were reached. Moreover, under indicator 1.2, the reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) of HHs had to show at least a 10% increase at the endline stage. The achievement percentage of this indicator was 18% showing that this indicator was achieved with 180% success rate. In addition, it is expected that appropriate nutritional practices and respect for children's rights will be further promoted in the region by implementing the knowledge gained by the beneficiaries of this project through nutrition and child protection awareness activities and by communicating knowledge within the community.

Therefore, the cash transfer activities undertaken in this project not only improved access to food for vulnerable HHs, but also suggested improved relationships within HHs and communities. Cash transfers are considered to have a positive impact on human relationships within beneficiary HHs by improving access to food and reducing the burden on HHs. On top of that, the cash transfers allowed HHs to pay the money they had borrowed in the community. They could repay their debts at any time as a result of the affordability of cash transfers to their HHs, leading to a recovery of trust in the community.

5.6 Sustainability

Despite the ephemeral nature of the cash transfers which reduced negative coping strategies, the project maintained a certain level of sustainability by providing awareness-raising and contributing to the social and behavioral change at the community level.

According to a community leader,

they need help (cash for food) once again as the benefits of cash are short-term. According to our survey, nearly two-thirds (over 246 respondents) of the respondents said they did not have access to enough food in the past year (2023). On top of that, over 90% (over 336 respondents) of the respondents had to reduce the quality of their food as a result of food inadequacy. However, the benefits of the awareness raising sessions will last forever, the community leader said. The leader also keenly suggested alternative support mechanisms which included the provision of livelihoods for regular incomes as a sustainability measure.

Concerns: Out of the survey respondents, 75% (over 280 respondents) expressed doubts regarding the project's sustainable impact. The remaining 25% (94 respondents), who acknowledged some sustainability, suggested that the distributed cash could be invested in a startup business. For the sake of this evaluation report and future programming efforts, despite the increase in awareness, the project's main focus, the cash for food component, was not sustainable beyond a short time frame. The beneficiaries only moved away from negative coping strategies if they could afford to buy food. After their money was spent, it is likely that they will revert to the negative coping strategies. The children of the beneficiary HHs, despite having a short window to go to school and seek education, must work on the street and earn an income to feed their families. This may not be the case for all the beneficiaries, but it is likely that they might be reverting. Depending on how much they can earn and how big their HH size is, some of them may balance between education and work on the street and some others might entirely dropout due to the volume of work they have to do. In either case, the children may be deprived of the social life and the enjoyment of their lives as a child.

However, SCJ's project was complementary to the other projects being implemented by SC Afghanistan for that specific vulnerable group. From a holistic approach, the weakness on the sustainability part mentioned above could be covered by these projects such as the project providing livelihood opportunities for these beneficiaries. Having said that, JPF funded project being complementary to other SC Afghanistan projects was only mentioned very lightly at the approved project plan but not mentioned later on at the monthly reports or during the evaluation until the debriefing meeting. It is recommended that this important collaboration and contribution of JPF funded project to the overall impact of the SC Afghanistan, should have been reflected at the monthly reports.

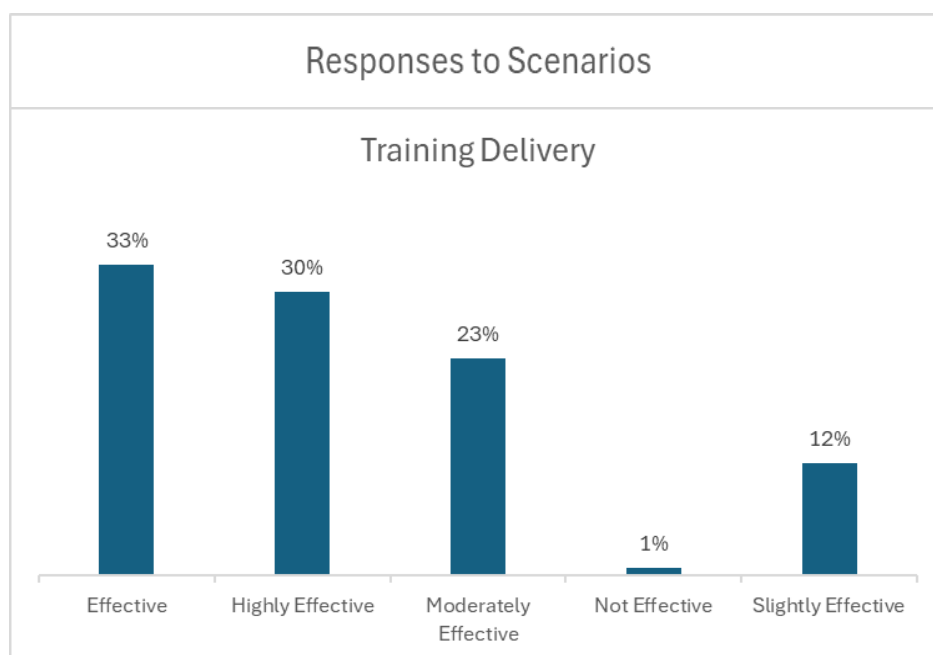


Figure 13: Effectiveness in Training Delivery

Having said the above, contextually, the project was well designed as it was under JPF's humanitarian crises program.

The awareness raising sessions left a long-term mark on the perception and understanding of the community members vis-à-vis child protection. Approximately 40% (over 150 respondents) of the beneficiaries said that they would confront the parent directly if they saw that a cousin (child) often seems to be alone with one of their parents and frequently tries to avoid interaction with them. More than 20% (over 75 respondents) said they would ignore it, and over 35% (over 130 respondents) said they would talk privately with the child and offer support. Additionally, over 85% (over 318) responded that they would intervene discreetly and try to calm the situation if they overhear a heated argument between a parent and their child, with the parent using threatening language and gestures. 7% (Over 26 respondents) said they would pretend not to notice it and 5% (over 19 respondents) said they would take it to the authorities.

They responded to another scenario where they would have to take action after observing a child with unexplained bruises and cuts on their arms and legs. Over 95% (Over 355 respondents) of them would take action by either discussing the issue with the parents or with the child directly, while 3% (over 11 respondents) would ignore the situation. In another similar question, respondents answered to a scenario where they would observe a fearful scenario while visiting a friend. They find out that a younger sibling of their frequently seems withdrawn and fearful around their parents. 37% (over 138 respondents) would confront the parents directly while 29% (over 109 respondents) would talk with their friend. Over 30% (over 112 respondents) would ignore the situation. These statistical numbers demonstrate that the effects have persisted for nearly a year since the closure of the project. This was mainly because almost 90% (over 336 respondents) of the respondents believed in the effectivity of the training program (33% effective (124 respondents), 30% highly effective (112 respondents), 23% Moderately Effective (over 86 respondents)). Moreover, almost all the respondents believed they are now aware of child protection and send their kids to schools – an opinion evident by their vigilant and appropriate responses and courses of action to the above scenarios.

6 Summary and Conclusion

This project aimed to help people in Nangarhar, Afghanistan who were struggling with not having enough food to eat and to make sure that children were safe and protected, especially during difficult times like humanitarian crises, wars, and disasters. SCA wanted to do 2 main things: provide food to those who needed it most and make sure that children were safe from harm.

1. Helping People Get Food: The main focus was on making sure that families had enough food to eat, especially when things like political changes, wars, and the COVID-19 pandemic made it hard for them to get food and enough nutrition. SCA wanted to stop families from doing things that could hurt them, like skipping meals or not eating enough nutritious food.

2. Protecting Children: Another important goal was to keep children safe. SCA wanted to teach families, especially parents, how to keep children safe and protected from things like violence and abuse. They also wanted to make sure that children had what they needed to grow up healthy and happy.

3. Working with Communities: Instead of just doing things for the communities, SCA wanted to work together with them. SCA asked local leaders and people what they needed and listened to their ideas. This way, they could help in ways that made sense to the people who lived there.

4. Being Efficient and Honest: SCA also wanted to make sure that they used money and resources wisely. They wanted to be clear about how they chose who got help and make sure that everything they did was open and fair.

The evaluation looked at how well the project matched the needs of the people it aimed to help and how involved those people were in the project. The project was found to be closely aligned with the needs of the communities it served, particularly in addressing food insecurity and child protection concerns. By consulting with local leaders and conducting thorough assessments, SCA ensured that its interventions were tailored to the specific challenges faced by each community. This relevance helped ensure that the assistance provided was meaningful and impactful.

SCA actively engaged local communities throughout the project to seek their input and participation at every stage. From initial consultations to beneficiary selection and implementation, communities were involved in decision-making processes, helping to ensure that interventions were culturally appropriate, effective, and sustainable. This high level of community engagement fostered a sense of ownership and empowerment among beneficiaries, strengthening their resilience and capacity to address challenges independently. SCA also equally engaged community women and provided them with decision-making roles.

SCA demonstrated efficient use of resources throughout the project. Despite facing financial challenges and fluctuations in exchange rates, the project maintained effective resource allocation, ensuring that funds were maximized to reach the greatest number of beneficiaries possible. The ratio between direct and indirect cost is 7:3 and cost per beneficiary is 11,418 Japanese Yen and cash modality implemented indicates that the project was efficient. There were families who had already borrowed money for food before and used the money to repay their debts according to our survey. If they received food packages, they would not have been able to repay them. By merging activities and prioritizing support costs, the project adapted to funding limitations without compromising its objectives. Additionally, meticulous documentation and reporting practices helped to track expenditures and maintain transparency.

The project exhibited strong coordination among stakeholders, both internally within the organization and externally with partner agencies and local authorities. Regular coordination meetings facilitated communication and collaboration, ensuring that all parties were aligned with project objectives and activities. By sharing project updates and reports with SCJ team and local authorities, SCA upheld accountability and transparency in its operations. This coordinated approach enhanced the project's effectiveness and contributed to its overall success.

The project had a significant positive impact on food security, with a high percentage of HHs reporting improved access to food. Through cash transfers and awareness-raising activities, SCA helped vulnerable families meet their immediate food needs. The project exceeded its targets in terms of the number of HHs with acceptable levels of food security, indicating tangible but temporary improvements in food access and availability.

The project made notable strides in enhancing child protection measures within communities. Through targeted awareness sessions and capacity-building activities, SCA empowered caregivers with knowledge and resources to better protect children from harm. Beneficiaries reported increased awareness of child protection issues and improved confidence in responding to situations of risk or abuse.

The project demonstrated significant short-term impact, particularly in mitigating food insecurity and improving long-term child protection measures. SCA successfully addressed immediate needs and vulnerabilities within the targeted communities. However, sustaining these gains over the long term presented challenges, particularly in the context of ongoing humanitarian crises and economic

instability where livelihoods are difficult to thrive and cash to food initiatives are consumable in essence.

SCA's emphasis on community engagement and localization strategies contributed to the sustainability of project interventions to some extent. By involving local leaders, stakeholders, and beneficiaries in decision-making processes, the project fostered a sense of ownership and empowerment within communities. This participatory approach enhanced the likelihood that interventions would be sustained beyond the project's lifespan, as communities were better equipped to continue and adapt initiatives to changing circumstances.

Despite these efforts, sustaining project interventions remained a concern for many community members. However, community leaders expressed a willingness to explore alternative support mechanisms, such as livelihood opportunities, to ensure continued resilience and self-reliance. Moving forward, efforts to promote sustainability should focus on building on existing community capacities, strengthening local institutions, and fostering partnerships for continued support and development.

The project demonstrated commendable success in meeting its predetermined targets and objectives, reflecting the efficacy of its interventions and the dedication of its implementation team. Several key achievements highlight the project's success in fulfilling its intended outcomes. First of all, SCA effectively addressed food insecurity within targeted communities, surpassing set targets for the number of HHs with improved food security. Through timely cash transfers and targeted assistance, the project ensured that vulnerable families had access to adequate and nutritious food, thereby alleviating immediate hunger and reducing reliance on negative coping strategies.

The success of the project was greatly facilitated by the implementation of effective strategies in beneficiary selection, distribution processes, and community involvement. SCA implemented a transparent and inclusive process for selecting beneficiaries, consulting with local leaders and conducting needs assessments to ensure assistance reached those most in need. Clear selection criteria and community consultations enhanced transparency and accountability that built trust among beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Throughout the project lifecycle, SCA prioritized active community engagement. From project design to implementation and evaluation (as respondent), communities were involved in decision-making processes and provided with opportunities to voice their needs and concerns. Regular community meetings, focus group discussions, and feedback mechanisms ensured that interventions were responsive to community priorities and preferences.

SCA exhibited commendable efficiency in resource allocation and adaptation to challenges throughout the project implementation. Despite facing financial constraints and fluctuating exchange rates, the project maintained effective resource management practices to make it a success. By strategically merging activities and prioritizing support costs, the project maximized the utilization of available funds. Additionally, meticulous documentation and reporting practices enabled transparent tracking of expenditures and facilitated informed and timely decision-making. The project still had to adapt its activities and streamline expenses to maximize the impact within the available budget. These financial constraints underscored the importance of effective resource management and the need for strategic planning to mitigate risks and optimize outcomes.

One of the primary challenges identified was the sustainability of food security efforts beyond the project duration. While the project made significant short-term gains in addressing immediate food needs, long-term sustainability remained a concern. Moving forward, efforts to promote sustainability should, vocalized in the community voices, focus on building local capacities, fostering income-generating activities.

7 Recommendations

1. Addressing Disparities in Education and Employment:

To distribute cash for food is merely a temporary solution to alleviate hunger, but to safeguard children's growth, it is essential to address the underlying issue of food insecurity through women's skill enhancement and education. Considering these factors, it is recommended to combine short-term interventions like raising awareness and distribution with more long-term effective measures when providing temporary support such as cash for food.

Because the Taliban are sidelining women, humanitarian support should prioritize programs for women to:

- Recognize the existing gender gap in education levels and occupational profiles, with a focus on empowering females.
- Develop targeted initiatives aimed at encouraging and supporting females in pursuing education and entering various professions.
- Implement vocational training programs tailored to the needs and interests of females, providing them with skills and knowledge for sustainable employment opportunities.
- Establish mentorship programs that pair females with successful female professionals in their desired fields to provide guidance, support, and networking opportunities.

The above recommendations can have a significant effect on the female-headed HHs. If a mother has a skill that can earn her some money, she can use it to run the house and keep her children away from negative coping strategies. If she is educated, she can earn money by delivering certain services in the market. If she is a part of a wider female network through a mentorship program, she will be able to establish herself in the community as a professional or skilled worker and open doors of income. The above points will directly enable the women to put food on the table. Her children will likely seek education and enjoy their childhoods in the society.

2. Economic Empowerment for Vulnerable Groups:

Because the Taliban are sidelining women, humanitarian support should prioritize programs for women to:

- Design and implement programs specifically tailored to economically empower widows and single women, recognizing their vulnerability and need for support.
- Provide access to vocational training, entrepreneurship opportunities, and microfinance initiatives to enable widows and single women to generate sustainable income and improve their livelihoods.
- Foster a supportive environment that promotes financial independence and social well-being among these vulnerable groups, empowering them to contribute positively to their communities.

3. Sustaining Community Engagement:

Since humanitarian support is based on humanitarian standards, NGOs should try to:

- Continue the inclusive approach to community engagement, ensuring active participation in all stages of project planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- Continue the facilitation of regular consultations and dialogue sessions with community members to gather feedback, address concerns, and foster ownership of project initiatives.
- Further empower community leaders and local stakeholders to take on leadership roles in decision-making processes, promoting a sense of ownership and accountability.

4. Enhancing Project Sustainability:

Since humanitarian support is not always available, project designing should:

- Integrate long-term sustainability measures into project design and implementation to extend the impact beyond the project lifespan.
- Explore opportunities to diversify project activities by incorporating livelihood support or skills development components alongside cash transfer activities. SCA has been supporting the same beneficiaries by pooling donor funds.
- Develop strategies to mitigate financial challenges, such as exchange rate fluctuations, through proactive monitoring, risk management, and contingency planning.
- Optimize resource allocation by identifying synergies between project activities, streamlining operational processes, and minimizing wastage to maximize efficiency and impact.

5. Building Sustainable Partnerships:

- Foster partnerships with local organizations, public agencies, and other stakeholders to leverage resources, expertise, and support for project interventions.

6. Providing Multi-purpose or unconditional cash:

- Provide cash to communities without specifying the specific sections to spend it on. This is because the HH have a better understanding of their situation and may use the cash to spend it according to their needs.

7. Sharing Lessons Learned and Best Practices:

To provide a roadmap and guidance to future humanitarian initiatives implemented by other actors, NGOs should continue to:

- Document and disseminate lessons learned, best practices, and successful interventions to contribute to evidence-based decision-making and inform future programming efforts.
- Engage in knowledge sharing activities, such as workshops, conferences, and publications, to exchange insights and experiences with stakeholders and practitioners.
- Continue prioritizing transparency and accountability in reporting project outcomes, challenges, and successes to ensure credibility and trust among stakeholders.

8. Active Beneficiary Involvement

- Engage beneficiaries throughout the project planning and implementation. If the beneficiaries are illiterate, it is possible that they may not involve themselves with the project. Despite that, the implementing organization should be creative with their methods to include and involve the beneficiaries in the project implementation and planning.



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Location: Nangarhar Province

**Third-party Evaluation of JPF Funded
Projects in Afghanistan**

Strategic Partner for Development

info@askariaconsulting.com

0093 785 081 430

0093 790 636 960

Kart-e-Chahar, Kabul Afghanistan