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Helping where help is needed most

Recovery assistance in crisis-affected regions



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Laying the foundations for rural recovery in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somaliland

The impact of open conflict and natural disasters in many parts of the world has become a major concern for national governments and international policy-makers. In an environment of turmoil and deprivation, the rapid deterioration of human security in general and a marked increase in the vulnerability of the weakest are inevitable. The social and economic fabric of communities and families is damaged and productive capabilities are diminished. Frequently, these pressures lead to the dislocation of large numbers of people.

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is assisting its national partners in mobilizing and applying the means necessary to meet this challenge. By engaging crisis-affected communities in the development and application of custom-tailored solutions, UNIDO plays a significant role in the endeavour to improve living standards and economic opportunities.



In Afghanistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Uganda and elsewhere, the Organization's Agribusiness Development Branch has been a valued participant in the overall recovery process. Since early 2011, the Branch has brought this experience to bear upon new initiatives in specific rural regions of Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somaliland where support for livelihood recovery and peace building was most urgently needed. Financed by the Government of Japan through a special funding facility, the Japanese Supplementary Budget, these initiatives assist local reconstruction programmes in areas where armed conflict or natural disasters – or both – had such devastating effects that recovery became a ground-zero effort. The widespread threat of famine, the destruction of basic rural infrastructure and means of production, and acute demographic turmoil in these regions required interventions designed to help rebuild the very foundations of rural life in ways that ensure sustainable development through increased productivity and employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. A key aspect of the overall assistance provided by UNIDO was to target primarily the most vulnerable population groups: women and youth, refugees and returnees, ex-combatants, and poor farmers.

The following pages outline three Japan-sponsored projects carried out by the Agribusiness Development Branch of UNIDO in these fragile post-crisis environments.

Afghanistan: Reviving the potential of human resources



© Andrés Vanegas Canosa

After more than a quarter-century of war and civil strife, rural communities in Afghanistan are returning to their villages and people are eager to rebuild their lives. Among the daunting adversities they face is a widespread lack of tools and skills needed to resume or initiate sustainable livelihoods. The devastation caused by heavy rainfalls and floods in the second half of 2010 further hamper the recovery effort in several provinces.

Parts of Nangarhar Province in eastern Afghanistan were critically affected by the floods, and the large refugee movements across Nangarhar's border with Pakistan have put additional pressure on its struggle to achieve stability and economic self-sufficiency. Launched in the spring of 2011, the project *"Social reintegration of vulnerable groups in flood-affected areas in Nangarhar Province through skill development and income generation"* focused primarily on the 52 villages in the Kama District in the vicinity of the provincial capital of Jalalabad. In close cooperation with relevant ministries and other national partners, UNIDO selected the direct beneficiaries of an ambitious training programme for farmers, food processors, garment makers and such rural service providers as carpenters, masons and blacksmiths. Reflecting a key project objective, many of the participants were internally displaced persons, returnees, former anti-government elements and, most significantly, women, a population group whose productive capabilities have been largely neglected and often suppressed in Afghanistan's traditional society. The Organization also trained dozens of local trainers and developed business advisory services at various support institutions.

Skill development reflected local needs and capabilities and was supported by a generous amount of technology transfers. To improve farm productivity, the project provided eleven small tractors with various associated implements, and over 150 men, most of them small-plot farmers, learned how to operate them and received training in farm machinery maintenance and repair. The project also provided carpenter's, mason's and blacksmith's toolkits, sewing machines, solar dehydrators and other equipment for home-based food processing.



Thirty-year old Gul Cheena was one of about 200 women in the Kama District who acquired new skills in food processing and kitchen gardening. At the training centre in her village of Meta Khail, she learned more efficient ways of making pickles, jam and tomato paste. "With the solar dehydrator," she says, "we now avoid a lot of waste (caused by spoilage) that we had when we were drying our fruit and vegetables the traditional way."

Some 1,800 villagers have participated in the project to date, and it is estimated that a further 3,700 will draw benefits as relatives of the direct recipients of assistance. Among the indirect beneficiaries of the project are also small rural businesses, which can now resort to a fresh supply of skilled workers. Many of the participants in the various skill development courses have also received basic counseling in micro-enterprise management and some are about to become themselves small-business owners and employers.

The fate of recovery efforts in post-crisis environments is largely determined by the degree of success in making the transition from the initial emergency and relief stage to rehabilitation and reconstruction and ultimately to development. Several years ago, a similar UNIDO project in the war-devastated Afghan provinces of Ghazni and Herat contributed to such a transition. In Nangarhar, the Japan-sponsored intervention has helped revive the potential of human resources and the province is reaping its first harvest of rural recovery.

DRC: A fresh supply of local food products



In the wake of a long and fierce civil conflict, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a country marred by devastation and the plight of more than a million refugees and internally displaced persons. Since 2009, the Government has been striving to improve socio-economic conditions by creating employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

The project *“Bringing support to the National Reconstruction Programme of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for livelihood recovery and peace building”* is UNIDO’s contribution to this effort. It is being carried out in Bas-Congo, the country’s westernmost province, and its immediate goal is to help restore food security in a post-conflict environment in the grip of a humanitarian crisis. In addition to the effects of armed conflict, the region’s agro-food sector was greatly affected by an agricultural policy mainly focused on such cash crops as coffee, cocoa and palm oil while leaving the local population to bear the burden of expensive imported products to cover their basic nutrition needs.

Most project activities have been hosted by a training complex at Kimpese, the result of a sizeable expansion under the UNIDO project of the existing Centre d’Information et de Vulgarisation Agroalimentaire de Kimpese (CIVAK). The expansion entailed building additional workshops, classrooms, laboratories as well as dormitories and sanitary facilities.

Technical advisors have upgraded the expertise of CIVAK training personnel, and the range of services provided by the centre has been expanded to include marketing-related facilities (storage, packaging/labeling). To ensure compliance with food safety and quality standards, the project has provided laboratory equipment and conducted training in quality control techniques.

Several hundred villagers, most of them women and young people, have received training in processing mainly manioc and fruits to obtain such local staples as manioc flour and chikwangue as well as fruit juices and jam. At the same time, some 200 manioc and fruit producers have benefited from counseling on best cultivation practices, a project initiative which helps ensure the success of value-addition activities. Moreover, a number of villagers are now planning to work together as farmer-processor groups. Most participants in the food-processing programme have continued to use the equipment available at the centre, and dozens of them have attended courses on small-business initiation and management.

The centre has become a true nursery of micro-enterprises and many of the former trainees continue to receive support in their efforts to improve the performance of their businesses. Samy Nsega, aged 27, has a small brewery business in Kimpese. His maize beer sells well locally, but he knew he could improve the cost efficiency of his enterprise.

„The raw material is easy to find,“ he explains, „but there are problems with packaging supplies; the bottles, for example, come from Kinshasa. So I went to CIVAK for counseling and that helped indeed. All the youngsters who received training there keep going back for advice.“

Beyond the individual success stories, the larger picture of project impact is also encouraging. By improving local food security and by creating much needed skilled labour and income generation capabilities, the UNIDO intervention is contributing to stability and economic recovery in rural Bas-Congo.



Somaliland: Skills and tools against natural and conflict-related adversities



The recent abatement of the violent territorial disputes that have long plagued Somaliland has led to the return of increasing numbers of its residents who had fled in search of safety and a better life. A degree of stability has emerged and the Government has charted an ambitious course aimed at reviving a largely rural economy based on small-scale agro-pastoral and processing activities. Since the spring of 2011, a fast-impact project carried out by UNIDO in partnership with local authorities and such non-governmental organizations as HAVOYOKO and SOOYAAL has been an important source of support.

“Market integration and progress through skills and employment in rural Somaliland” targeted specific districts in the arid Awdal and Woqooyi regions with the main objective of fostering local economic recovery by harnessing the growing pool of human resources represented by such disadvantaged population groups as semi-skilled unemployed workers, poor farmers, women and youth. By providing adequate vocational training, toolkits and technology packages, the project has created employment and micro-entrepreneurial opportunities for hundreds of direct beneficiaries.

Behind their vividly decorated fronts, the workshops and classrooms of the HAVOYOCO Skills Training Centre in Hargeisa have been the main stage on which

many of them acquired marketable skills in key trades of the rural service sector: metalworking, maintenance and repair of vehicles and farming equipment, masonry, carpentry and garment making. Skill training has also been conducted at two other similar facilities in Hargeisa (run by SOOYAAL) and Borama as well as at the Mandhera Prison where dozens of inmates are participating in a special woodworking programme. At the Hargeisa and Borama centres, masonry, carpentry and metalworking trainees were involved in facility rehabilitation and expansion work sponsored by the UNIDO project.



In addition to the devastation caused by recent armed conflicts, agricultural and husbandry activities have to cope with the frequent periods of severe drought for which the Horn of Africa is notorious. The project has introduced improved farming implements and methods, efficient post-harvest practices and, most notably, food processing technologies that can both add value and avoid waste (when produce supply outstrips demand) in addition to improving the food security of rural households. Livestock is a major component of Somaliland's economy; however, while livestock exports generate substantial income and are the main source of foreign currency, value chain building in the meat and hides-and-skins sectors is rudimentary at best. The adoption of good slaughter and meat storage practices and improvements in the production of hides and skins are project contributions that have significantly enhanced income generation capabilities.

Over the past year, approximately 700 villagers in the Awdal and Woqooyi regions have improved their performance in farming and vocational occupations, and many of them are beginning to capitalize on the growing small-scale entrepreneurial opportunities in their communities. The UNIDO project is providing counseling on business management and is encouraging its trainees to establish small-scale and micro-enterprises in order to achieve better incomes and take advantage of market opportunities. It is all meant to increase people's resilience to natural and conflict-related adversities and thus ensure sustainable livelihood recovery in these rural communities.



The ancient paintings in the Laas Geel caves (opposite) near Hargeisa are among the earliest known African artworks and the oldest evidence of Somaliland's pastoral traditions. Photograph by Ivan Kral.

Cover photographs (from left): Andrés Vanegas Canosa, Ivan Kral.

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