



## Process case study

# Community-managed water points following drought in Afghanistan

During emergencies that impact livestock, the establishment of locally based and agreed management systems for the sustainable use of water resources help to prevent conflict and ensure equitable access. In this case study from Afghanistan, community based micro-water harvesting techniques were introduced as part of an integrated intervention for protecting key livestock assets during drought. Improved water availability and capacity strengthening activities were designed to lead to a sustainable water management system.

## Background

The 2017-18 El Nino-induced drought in Balkh and Samangan provinces followed a succession of poor wet seasons. With water availability in decline in both provinces, livestock keepers were forced to seek costly and less accessible alternative water sources for their livestock, negatively affecting their household economy, livelihoods and food security. As part of an integrated livestock support intervention, a total of 21 water points were constructed or improved across 20 villages in the two provinces. Overall, 6,831 households across 69 villages benefited from the water points. The water points were water reservoirs and ponds, including spring catchments.

## Process

FAO and its implementing partner the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) began by holding consultations with the communities to identify the needs, sites and potential designs for the water points. In order to address the intra-community conflicts that arose in Samangan Province, ACTED contacted *Shuras* (village elders), religious parties and community development councils (CDCs). Following the community consultations, it was agreed to strategically select the sites for the water points so that neighbouring villages would also benefit from their use.

Twenty Water User Groups (WUGs) were established, one per targeted village where the water points were to be constructed. The WUGs comprised three to six members selected through community consultations, and were constituted as subcommittees within local farmers' or water users' associations. The WUGs became part of the larger CDC structure, performing a vital role within their communities.

## Activities

The water points were constructed from locally available materials. Within their respective villages the WUGs were trained in water point operational/maintenance management so they would become responsible for the on-going maintenance of the water points. The training they received in institutional capacity building also enabled them to develop a system of fee collection. This ensured that a minimum amount of money was saved for maintenance, and encouraged the ownership of the water infrastructure by each community.

## Outcome

The water points that were constructed during the project were designed to be refilled by rain and snowfall during winter and spring. The amount of water collected would provide sufficient water for the summer, ensuring communities could spend their available money on other essential livelihood needs. Having acquired the right skills and knowledge during the project, and supported by the well-established CDC structure, the established WUGs are likely to remain in place to respond to the water situation of the community and to coordinate future water management interventions to ensure that all interventions remain sustainable in the future.

**Source:** FAO (2020) Integrated emergency livestock protection in support to drought-affected pastoralists in Balkh and Samangan provinces, Afghanistan <https://www.fao.org/3/cb1300en/CB1300EN.pdf>

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