



The Welfare Association for the
Development of Afghanistan
(WADAN)

Annual Report for 2023

Prepared by
WADAN



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Organizational Background

Established in August 2002, The Welfare Association for the Development of Afghanistan (WADAN) was registered as an NGO with the Afghan Ministry of Economy in 2005 and received License No.150. WADAN envisions a peaceful, educated, drug free, democratic, developed and prosperous Afghanistan. Our mission is to advance the spread of democratic principles, development, social justice, human rights, and freedom; and to strengthen communities and local governance by promoting effective community and institutional development practices and drug control initiatives.

We are a grassroots humanitarian and development organization working directly with communities and local institutions. We involve communities in all project phases from initiation through implementation, which leads to ownership and sustainability. WADAN prioritizes and supports marginalized communities where needs are greatest. Our development activities have included education, healthcare, drug demand reduction, alternative livelihoods, protection, and networking and promotion of traditional leadership.

Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with line ministries are a government requirement for the successful implementation of projects. WADAN is a member of The Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau (ANCB), Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR), and Afghanistan CSO Collation for Anti-Corruption (AFCAC). WADAN is legally authorized to implement projects within sectors including health, education, economic development, protection, counter narcotics, civic education, community and institutional development, gender issues, human rights with emphasis on the rights of women and children, good governance, anti-corruption, and other areas included in our strategic plan and mandate.

In 2023, WADAN received funding from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (UNOCHA-AHF), the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) through the Colombo Plan, and the Central Asia Institute (CAI.) Through this work we have continued and continue to seek additional opportunities and would welcome further partnership opportunities with relevant stakeholders and international organizations.

Executive Summary

In 2023, WADAN worked in rural communities providing education and healthcare services as well as protection and humanitarian assistance; we were engaged in programming designed to enhance the skills, capabilities, health and livelihoods of all residents in participating communities. Many of our efforts had a special focus on woman-headed households in 2023.

We are pleased to present our annual report, written to outline the strides we have taken in advancing our strategic objectives and to record the impacts achieved and challenges encountered in 2023. WADAN spearheaded 17 initiatives throughout the year: in education, health, and protection, which included livelihoods development.

These projects, some of which were extended into 2024, were supported by funding from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (UN-OCHA-AHF), the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) through the Colombo Plan, and the Central Asia Institute (CAI.) In 2023, dedicated project teams drawn from 3,718 staff members were deployed to operational zones in Kabul, Nangarhar, Kandahar, Helmand, Nimroz, Zabul, Farah, Herat, Urozgan, Laghman, Kunar, Nuristan, Badakhshan, Balkh, and Takhar Provinces.

Furthermore, we ensured the provision of clean water and furnished the classrooms, supported teacher capacity-building with teacher kits, and provided learning kits to all students, fostering a safe and conducive learning environment.

In the drug demand reduction (DDR) sector, a total of 1,552 clients received treatment services in drug treatment centers (DTCs) in Badakhshan, Farah, Nangarhar, and Kabul Provinces (749 were women, 443 girls, and 360 boys). Additionally, our outreach and awareness campaigns on substance use and prevention engaged a diverse audience of 9,107 individuals, including Mullahs, community elders, youth, and women. Our endeavors in the protection sector in 2023 were conducted in Kandahar, Zabul, Nimroz, Helmand, Urozgan, Nangarhar, Kunar, Nuristan, Herat, and Laghman Provinces. Through collaborative efforts with UNHCR, we implemented several projects addressing critical needs including Persons with Specific Needs, Cash-Based Intervention, border monitoring, Empowering Visually Impaired Women, and livelihood support programs. In Herat, we had a special focus on empowering women artisans. By providing home-based training in marketing and design skills, mentoring, and facilitating access to national and international markets, these artisans learned to establish and manage their businesses effectively. A total of 120 participants benefited from these protection services.

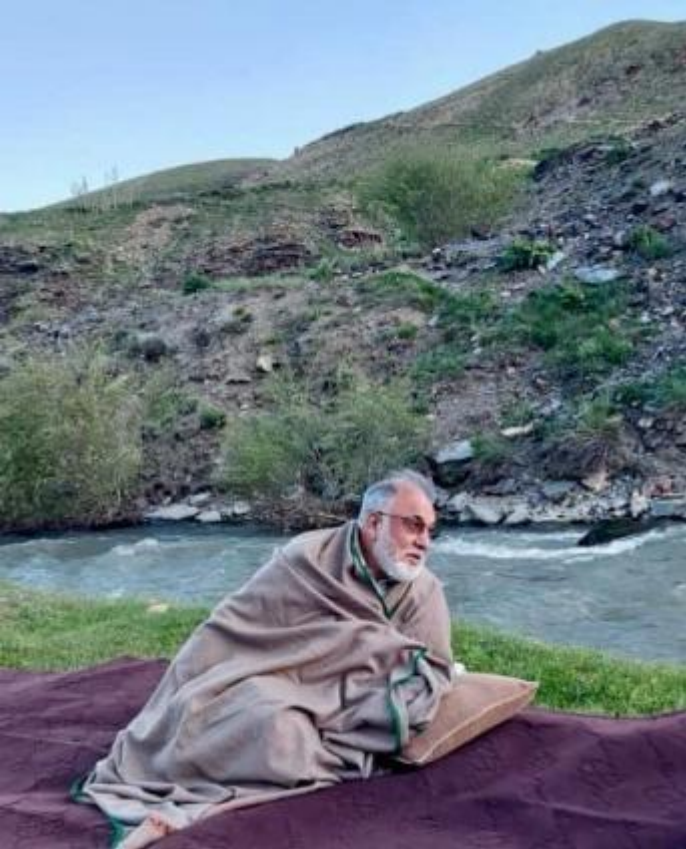


In the education sector, WADAN established and/or managed 1,187 Community-Based Education (CBE) and Accelerated Learning Center (ALC) classes in Takhar, Helmand, Farah, Nangarhar, and Badakhshan Provinces, benefiting over 35,610 students, with girls constituting 60% of the enrolment. Collaborating with the Central Asia Institute, UNICEF, and UN-OCHA-AHF, we provided essential training to 1,025 members of school management shuras on critical aspects of education including school safety, class monitoring, advocacy for education, and child protection measures.

Message from the Founder

The Importance of Local Solutions

Mohammad Nasib Ahmadi



In the face of the current challenges confronting Afghans and those striving for our nation's development, WADAN remains unwavering in its commitment to grassroots efforts and the belief that the key to solving our problems lies in local solutions. Throughout history, both in Afghanistan and globally, communities have effectively addressed their challenges through localized approaches.

Local solutions foster cooperation and consensus, which, in turn, lead to longer, healthier, and more prosperous lives. By leveraging local knowledge and traditional practices, we can build an educated, multi-skilled population that drives constructive change. Effective governance that is thoughtful and inclusive ensures these benefits are sustainable and far-reaching. WADAN is dedicated to nurturing and implementing these local solutions, as they are fundamental to achieving lasting development and progress for our people.

Local Solutions: village shura meeting, Badakhshan Province 2023



Education

UNICEF Community Based Education

Supported by UNICEF, this project commenced in January 2023 to provide quality education in marginalized communities in six districts of Farah Province: Bakwa, Balabuluk, Farah City, Khak-e-Safed, Purchaman, and Pushtrod, and six districts in Nangarhar Province: Sherzad, Haska Mena, Pachir Agam, Momandara, Hisarak and Ghani Khail.

Despite the ban on girls' education, Community-Based Education (CBE) made great strides in 2023, a total of 850 CBE and Accelerated Learning Center (ALC) classes were in session in Farah and Nangarhar. A total of 26,831 children studied in these classes; there were 8,737 students in Nangarhar and 18,094 in Farah and of these 13,598 were girls. In addition to supporting CBE and ALC classes, the project extended its support to public schools. Back-school campaigns were conducted throughout Farah and Nangarhar to encourage community support for education. WADAN also implemented a school improvement plan for 20 war-affected schools in Nangarhar.

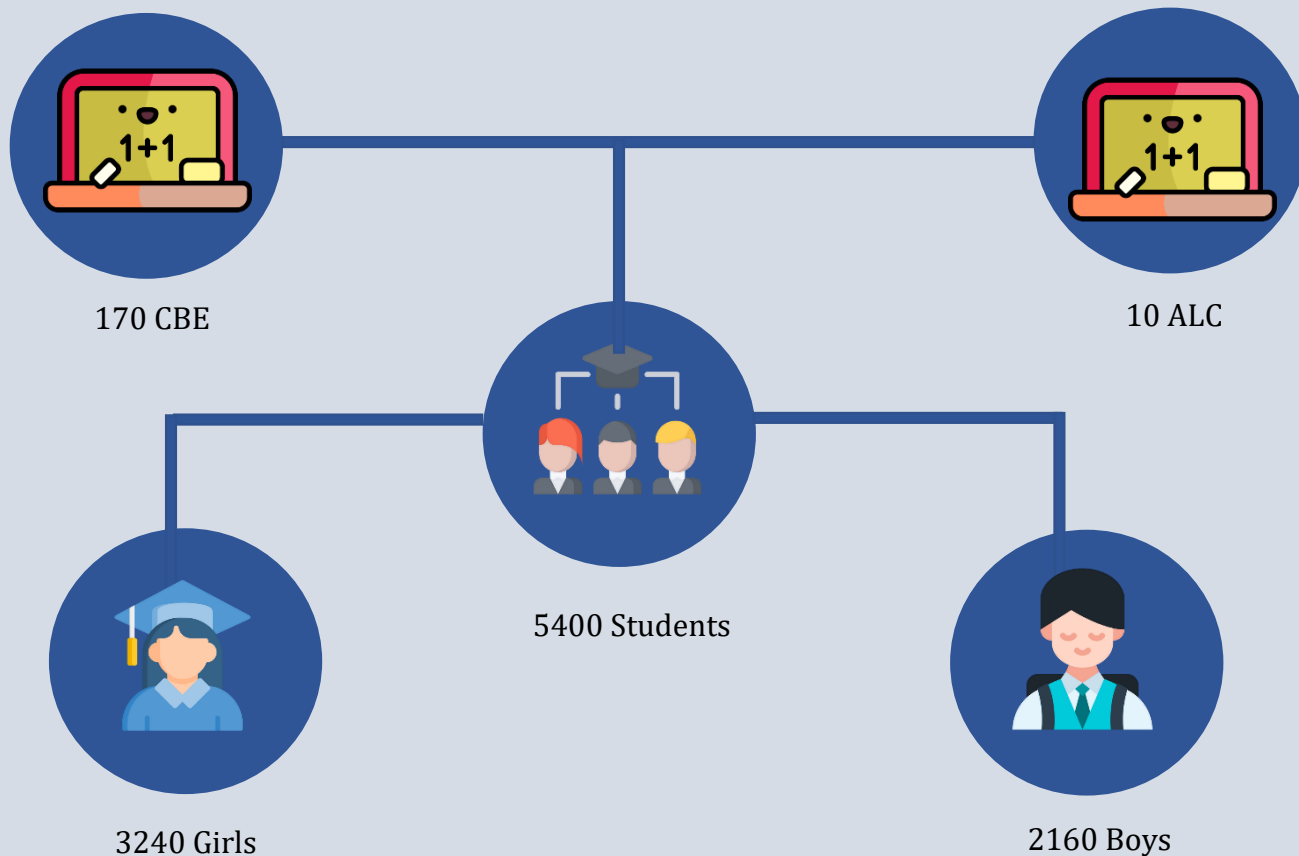
Support was extended to teachers; training programming was offered in pedagogy, teaching methodology, child protection measures, and psychosocial topics. The project hired 850 teachers, of which 241 were women. WADAN also mobilized and trained 1,139 members of School Management Shuras (SMS), including 195 women, on the importance of education, class monitoring, and child protection measures.

Education in Emergencies for Afghan Children



Lack of schools and school supplies has severely limited access to education in the remote areas of Afghanistan, and this is particularly apparent in areas that experienced insecurity and ongoing warfare throughout the past twenty years. The children of Helmand and Farah Provinces have long suffered from the lack of education facilities. WADAN, in partnership with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) through the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF), started an Education in Emergencies (EiE) project on October 1, 2022, and continued supporting this initiative throughout 2023. During 2023, WADAN provided the means to deliver community-based education (CBE) primary school lessons to 5,400 school-aged children (60% girls and 40% boys) in Khak-e-Safed and Qala-e-Kah Districts of Farah and Lashkargah and Nahr-e-Saraj Districts of Helmand.

In 2023, WADAN accomplished all the planned activities for this project within the specified timeline. The comprehensive training sessions for all teachers, School Management Shuras (SMSs), representatives of District Education Departments (DEDs), and Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) were meticulously carried out without delays, ensuring adherence to schedules and timely transfer of knowledge. Also, WADAN procured, delivered, and punctually distributed all items essential to making the schools functional including student kits, classroom seven kits, teacher kits, and hygiene kits, thereby contributing to the creation of effective learning environments.



All the project activities were closely coordinated with the SMSs that effectively addressed the challenges regarding the establishment of accelerated learning center (ALC) classes in Helmand Province by engaging in constructive dialogue with the Helmand PED. Through collaborative efforts, 10 ALC classes were successfully initiated, overcoming initial resistance and providing encouragement for inclusive education initiatives.

WADAN assigned 180 teachers to 180 CBE and ALC classes in Farah and Helmand (126 schools in Helmand and 54 schools in Farah.) To accomplish the goal of this project to provide the best possible education to children, teachers received training on pedagogy, child protection measures, and teaching methodologies. In addition to this, Maliks and communities were closely involved in the process. People were mobilized and became dedicated to promoting the importance of EiE in their villages through engagement with their school management shuras, with one shura working in each participating village. We have trained and mobilized 300 members of SMSs in 100 Shuras to support these approaches for comprehensive, inclusive community-based education.

Afghanistan Girls Education

The overall objective of this community-based education (CBE) program is to increase access to high quality basic education for out-of-school internally displaced, returnee, and host community children. The recipient students had no prior access to basic education in their villages and could not go to public schools in other villages primarily due to long, difficult routes through geographic barriers. WADAN addressed girls' education using several approaches including the establishment of CBE and accelerated learning center (ALC) classes, supporting public schools, and mobilizing communities to support girls' education. Our Afghanistan Girls Education (AGE) project funded by the Central Asia Institute (CAI) started in Badakhshan in April 2022 to specifically focus on girls' education in hard-to-reach villages.



Considering additional needs beyond the project in Badakhshan, in 2023, a project with the same objectives and goal was expanded to Takhar Province where WADAN established 65 new CBE and ALC classes that covered 2,000 more students, 60% of them were girls. Working to achieve the program's goal, WADAN served 2,000 girls and boys in CBE and ALC classes in Versaj and Darqad Districts of Takhar Province and 2,760 girls and boys through establishing the CBE and ALC classes in Baharak, Khash, Argo and Tagab Districts of Badakhshan Province.

WADAN assigned a total of 157 teachers for the classes in Badakhshan and Takhar (117 women and 40 men.) Each teacher received capacity building training in teaching methodology, pedagogy and psychology, as well as child protection (CP) training under this project. We mobilized 715 School Management Shura (SMS) members in 118 SMSs (113 women and 602 men) and trained them to monitor and support these classes. During 2023, all SMS members closely monitored the classes and provided them with any needed support. On-going training sessions on advocacy, class monitoring, and the importance of education were provided to all SMS members and teachers.

Newly hired teachers in Takhar, students, and their classrooms were equipped with kits that included books, notebooks, pens and pencils, as well as with winterization kits and recreation kits. In addition, we have trained 120 government hub-school teachers on teaching methodology, pedagogy, child protection (CP), psychosocial support, disaster risk reduction, the risks of child marriage, and the importance of education.

During this project, WADAN, in close coordination with all stakeholders, disseminated messages throughout the target communities about the environment and climate change. WADAN then mobilized members of SMSs, provincial education departments (PEDs), district education departments (DEDs), teachers at public hub-schools and students to launch tree planting campaigns in both participating provinces. They planted more than 1,400 trees and contributed to creating a healthier environment.

Badakhshan Year Two: Hope and Enthusiasm

As of April 2023, WADAN had established 92 classes, 82 community-based education (CBE) and 10 accelerated learning center (ALC) classes and enrolled 2,760 students (60% girls.) Also, capacity-building trainings on teaching methodology, pedagogy, child protection, and psychology were delivered to 120 teachers at public hub-schools and 92 ALC and CBE teachers. In addition to this, we have trained 434 school management shura members (336 men and 98 women) and mobilized them to monitor and support these classes in Badakhshan Province.

The mountainous villages, impassible routes, insecurity, and cultural restrictions had been major hindrances limiting education for girls in Badakhshan. The Central Asia Institute (CAI) in partnership with WADAN through the Afghanistan Girls Education (AGE) project was the key to providing primary schooling in villages in Argo, Tagab, Baharak, and Khash Districts starting in April 2022. Parents, students, community elders, members of shuras, and schoolteachers have participated in this exciting intervention since then.

People from Kuzer Village, Argo commented when the new school year started in spring 2023, Roshan Gul, the CBE teacher said, “Students attend class with great passion and joy. After the winter break, they were enthusiastic about starting Grade Two. They were ready for the second year! Also, speaking as a schoolteacher in a remote location, this project has significantly improved my financial situation.

School management shuras were mobilized and supported throughout the past year. Shura members grew into their positions, “It is of course the community elders’ responsibility to extend helping hands to their communities. Regarding schooling, we learned important lessons on child protection and the importance of girls’ education, and we helped to provide a safe environment for our children,” said Abdul Hamid Mobarez, a member of the school management shura in Kuzer Village.

“I was very excited to complete the first grade; I was so very happy when I learned I was promoted to second grade. In the past year, we girls were motivated to study and so we learned a lot!” exclaimed Gul Naz.

“Before April 2022, the walls of our house were dark, but now they are bright and colorful with drawings, paintings, and calligraphies hanging on the walls. It cheers us and gives us hope for a bright future,” said Mohammad Sharif, Gul Naz’s father

**Enhanced
Awareness
Regarding
Environmental
Protection in the
Community**



Students at Angiza Shinwari Girls High School in Nangarhar Province took part in an environmental awareness campaign where they learned about threats endangering the environment and recognized the crucial need to educate other students about environmental protection, so the Green Campus Association was established on June 10, 2023.

Members of the Green Campus Association gained and then spread essential knowledge about the significance of environmental conservation through awareness efforts. They learned about the harmful effects of pollution on human health and the environment, as well as the importance of trees in providing clean air. These students played a vital role in spreading the message of environmental responsibility throughout the school and the wider community. Engaging in awareness campaigns, along with essay writing and drawing competitions helped encourage a sense of ownership and promoted a sense of responsibility among these students.

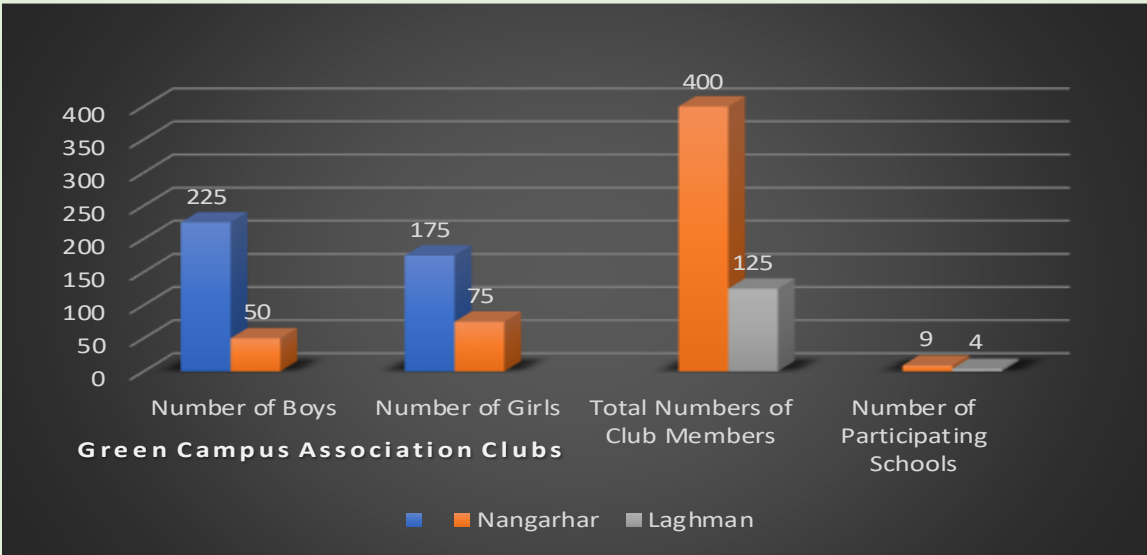
Under the guidance of principals and teachers, students participated in practical initiatives such as planting trees and creating green spaces within the school premises. The involvement of the community, including parents and local leaders, further strengthened the impact of these initiatives. The school is now surrounded by a green environment covered with colorful flowers and the environmentally friendly activities that created such beauty have inspired similar activities in other schools.

Greening our community

Under this initiative, WADAN established Green Campus Association Clubs for students in thirteen UNHCR-built schools in Nangarhar and Laghman Provinces. Fifty-six sets of three decorated metal trash bins, were installed at these schools. Encouraging awareness of the importance of environmental protection was an important part of this project.

On October 1, 2023, WADAN conducted a Zero Emission Day event in Nangarhar at the UNHCR-funded Saracha Ali Khan High School that aimed at raising awareness about environmental protection among students and the community. WADAN provided training on environmental issues to the members, and students then had the chance to write supportive essays and participate in art activities.

A cleaning campaign was organized in the schoolyard. This activity served as a powerful reminder of everyone's responsibility to preserve the environment for future generations. Students took part in biking events, painted messages, and planted trees. Activities were well-organized to educate and inspire everyone about the importance of environmental protection.



The Biking Event



Health Care

Drug Demand Reduction DDR

In 2023, WADAN continued its mission running drug treatment centers (DTCs) and out-patient treatment centers (OPTCs) to reduce drug dependency in Afghanistan by managing centers for women, children, and female adolescents in Kabul, Nangarhar, Farah, and Badakhshan Provinces. These centers exist to offer a safe space for treatment and healing from the physical, mental, and emotional effects of drug use and focus on holistic rehabilitation from dependency on drugs. Our DDR projects are administered by the Colombo Plan Drug Advisory Program (CPDAP) with the financial support of the U.S. Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL.)

In Kabul, WADAN has 60 beds for women, adolescent girls and children, and serves outpatients as well. Similar centers operate elsewhere in the country with 60 beds in Jalalabad, 35 in Farah, and 70 beds in Badakhshan. In 2023, a total of 1,552 clients received treatment services in these centers, 749 were women, 443 girls, and 360 boys. WADAN monitored the successful integration of those who were discharged and who had returned to their communities. Based on information gained from follow-up visits and outreach awareness activities, 56 of those discharged in 2023 were self-employed, operating businesses that supported their families while those who were not gainfully employed had not suffered relapses.



In addition to treatment and rehabilitation work, WADAN community mobilizers and outreach teams disseminated key anti-narcotic messages to 9,107 people in designated provinces including community elders, Mullahs, women, and children to educate members of the communities, to follow up on those who were discharged after successful treatment and to mobilize communities on anti-narcotic activities.

UNODC's Children's Program, GLOK42

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) website states that “GLOK42 was developed to promote a worldwide coordinated response to children and adolescents at risk of using drugs, and youth affected by drug use dependence.”

The WADAN Management Information System (MIS) Department facilitates data management, analysis, and reporting for the GLOK42 project which has amassed a total of 10,751 data points in its database. Throughout 2023, in collaboration with designated drug demand reduction organizations including ARC, ASP, OHSS and SSAWO, in addition to WADAN, our team diligently collected and entered 1,098 data points into the GLOK42 database. This data included vital information about clients receiving treatment services at drug treatment centers (DTCs) across five provinces in Afghanistan: Kabul, Nangarhar, Balkh, Badakhshan, and Herat.

We have meticulously managed the database, ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the stored information by verifying data, resolving discrepancies, and updating records as needed. By maintaining a comprehensive and reliable database, we provided a solid foundation for evidence based decision-making and program planning. Additionally, our MIS department conducted thorough data analysis to derive actionable insights from the GLOK42 database. We generated reports tailored to the specific requirements of stakeholders, including the Colombo Plan, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and other implementing partners.

By generating tailored reports, we have provided stakeholders with the information needed to drive positive outcomes and effective efforts against drug abuse and addiction in Afghanistan. Overall, the impactful work of the MIS department has contributed to the success and effectiveness of GLOK42 in Afghanistan, one of the ten countries where the Children's Program works to advance the fight against drug abuse and promote health and well-being in communities across the developing world.

Aysha's Story



WADAN opened a 60-bed drug treatment center in Jalalabad in 2010; at this location women and children receive treatment, vocational training and basic education services. The center also provides specialized home-based treatment, and maintains records of substance users, conducts drug awareness activities, and provides treatment motivation counseling. Many people have benefitted from the years of dedicated work by the treatment center's staff; here we learn the story of Aysha and her family. Aysha is from Bargino, a village located on the outskirts of Jalalabad. Her husband is a fruit vender in Jalalabad, and they are the parents of six children. Years ago, Aysha fulfilled her lifelong dream of becoming a professional tailor after studying at a women's training center in Jalalabad and had opened a home-based business sewing for women and children.

She was famous for her fine work, her business grew so rapidly it was hard for her to keep up, so she trained her then 17-year-old daughter, Fawzya, and one of her neighbors to work for her; she was a successful businesswoman. All was well, but then things changed.

Aysha stated, "Our lives were ruined when my brother-in-law asked for Fawzya's hand in marriage for his son in exchange for a dowry of 400,000 afghanis (around USD 5,500.) My husband accepted the proposal without the consent of either Fawzya or myself."

Fawzya openly opposed her father's decision as she loved another man in her village. In Afghanistan, as is the norm in other Islamic countries, it is customary that the groom's family provides a dowry to the bride's family, and so Fawzya's fiancé went to Iran to earn the money. After a while a rumor went around that the young man had started using drugs. This rumor had a devastating effect on Fawzya and Aysha. Fawzya eloped with her lover. As a result, her family was shunned by many of their relatives. Aysha felt humiliated but missed Fawzya so badly that she lost sleep and suffered from seemingly incurable insomnia. No medicine worked.

One day Aysha's brother, an opium user, gave her some opium to try and she felt some comfort; that comfort gradually led to her habitual and detrimental use of the drug. She tried to keep her opium use a secret but after three months she could no longer hide it from her family, so she told them the truth. Her husband was sympathetic; he told her he did not blame her, but he encouraged her to be strong and face reality. Nonetheless, Aysha continued to use opium for the next four years until the WADAN outreach team found her in June 2023.

They convinced Aysha to seek treatment and gained the support of her family. She started the 45 days of residential treatment in July 2023 and was discharged in August. Aysha's self-confidence had returned. She re-opened her business in September 2023. Fawzya and her husband came home and now the young couple works in the tailor shop. Aysha said, "We regained our social status because I am healthy now; my entire family is grateful for the services I received."

Protection

Border Monitoring

Border Monitoring is a critical component of UNHCR-funded initiatives in the eastern and southern regions; the process is used to systematically collect protection-related data from Afghan returnees/deportees and those Afghans migrating between Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. Through extensive efforts, WADAN conducted 75,463 border interviews at the official crossings, Spin Boldak and Milak in the south, and 70,216 interviews at the Torkham border in the east. Additionally, 430 key informant interviews were conducted at unofficial border points. WADAN staff also registered 129,719 returnees at the Milak border control reception area in Nimroz, while deportation cases were reported to UNHCR by WADAN's protection monitoring team at the Torkham border crossing.

Cash Based Intervention

WADAN implemented Cash-based Intervention (CBI) in the southern region in 2023, targeting hard-to-reach areas. Through rapid household assessments, WADAN identified 7,028 households containing Persons of Concern (PoCs) and provided these families with cash or vouchers for various necessities. This assistance encompassed multipurpose cash grants, reintegration support, supplementary CARE cash packages, and cash tokens for transportation and winterization. Numerous households benefited, including 2,811 that received multipurpose cash grants, 1,443 qualified for cash for reintegration, 263 got supplementary CARE cash packages, and 178 households received cash tokens.

Cash for Work (CFW) in Nangarhar and Kunar Provinces

The Cash for Work (CFW) initiative commenced in July 2023 across 20 sites in Kunar and 19 sites in Nangarhar, engaging 2,000 laborers. This project aimed to provide vulnerable individuals with one-month of employment that was focused on two local projects, road repair and canal cleaning. Each of the 2,000 laborers received AFN 13,250 as compensation. These direct beneficiaries earned enough to support their families with essentials including food, winter clothing, shoes, and medical expenses, thus serving 20,153 indirect beneficiaries. Notably, this was a diverse group of employees, that included 381 returned Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), 189 current IDPs, 237 returnees, and 1,193 individuals from the host community. The impacts of CFW were significant, not only providing immediate financial support to participants but also contributing to community development and resilience in Nangarhar and Kunar.

Persons with Specific Needs

In response to the very specific needs of vulnerable individuals designated as "persons of concern," WADAN conducted the UNHCR funded Persons with Specific Needs (PSN) project across the southern and eastern regions. The beneficiaries of this project were people who had faced barriers insurmountable by them for access to essential services and they also lacked adequate support from existing community mechanisms. Throughout 2023, WADAN diligently assessed 6,428 individuals, with 2,000 assessments conducted in the southern region and 4,428 in the eastern region. This inclusive assessment encompassed diverse demographics, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), IDP returnees, members of host communities, and refugee returnees from neighboring Pakistan and Iran. Following this comprehensive assessment process, WADAN disbursed PSN cash packages that were tailored to address each recipient's unique needs and priorities to 2,835 beneficiaries, with 1,609 recipients in the east and 1,226 in the south.

EMPOWER: Empowerment of Visually Impaired Women through Income-generating

WADAN started work on EMPOWER in October 10, 2022 and continued implementing the UNHCR funded EMPOWER project in Nangarhar, Laghman, and Kunar Provinces, where a total of 90 participants benefited from this project (30 in each province.) Training and encouraging self-sufficiency were the key activities in 2023, while the overall goal of the project was to improve livelihood opportunities for these visually impaired women and to protect and promote their mental health and psychosocial wellness and activities continued into 2024. WADAN worked to introduce or improve participants' skills in using Braille; as well as mobility training, psychosocial counseling and the introduction of the subject of gender-based violence (GBV). Looking ahead, we taught the basics of operating a small business, and other life enhancing skills as needs were identified.

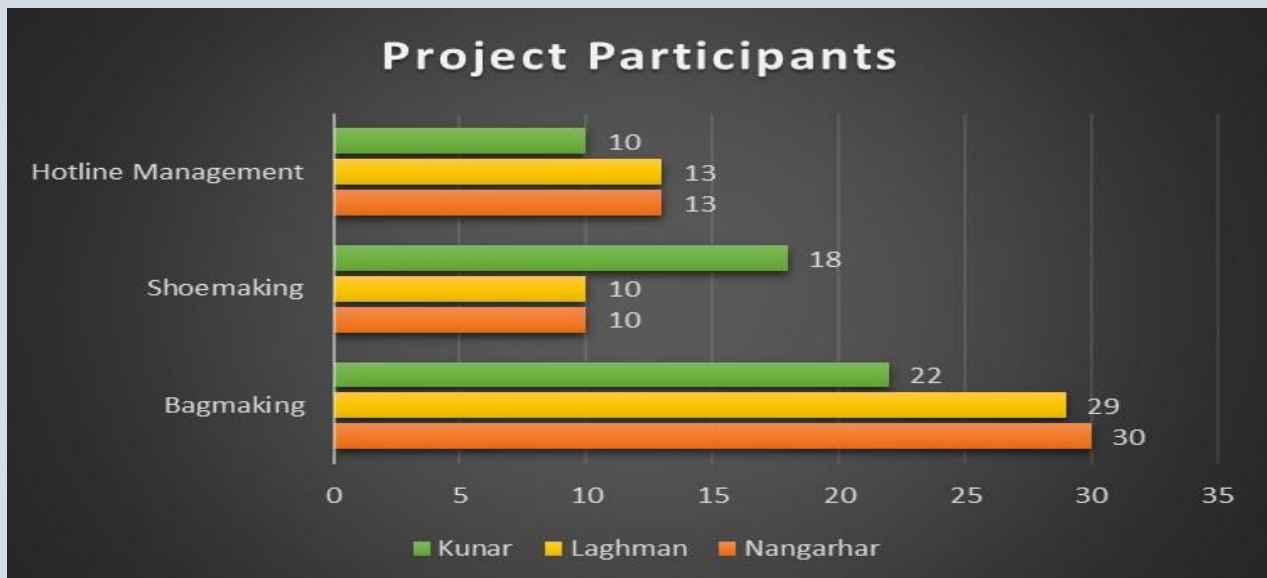
During 2023, WADAN focused on offering training that would encourage and enable independence and sustainability in participants' daily lives and exploration of livelihood opportunities. Items including walking sticks, watches with portable audio devices, and MP3 players were distributed to the beneficiaries. Since the women can read and write using Braille devices, and they also have attained income-generating skills and have been equipped with the tools and supplies appropriate for their chosen vocations, they are prepared to start their own businesses. They have studied to attain financial literacy, topics included savings, business development, market demand, and market linkages. In addition, several workshops were held at the community level to promote prevention and ensure appropriate response to gender-based disturbances.

Based on an assessment, 36 of the EMPOWER participants were selected, transferred and admitted into a hotline management vocational training course. These included thirteen participants from Nangarhar and Laghman each and ten from Kunar. The hotline management course was designed to run from October 2023 through to the end of March 2024 and included customized training in psychosocial aspects and the type of communication skills necessary to work on a telephone hotline with organizations involved in hotline management.

Vocational Training

Knowing the importance of vocational education, WADAN implemented the Technical, Vocational and Educational Training project, funded by UNHCR, which started on October 1, 2023, and continued to the end of the calendar year. There was a total of 156 participants in Nangarhar, Kunar and Laghman Provinces. The project aimed at building the capacities of project participants, to increase their market awareness, and to provide them with the means to attain sustainable livelihoods through mastering vocational skills and starting businesses.

Thirty-six students participated in training in bag making and shoemaking. They became familiar with the names and functions of equipment, machinery and learned about selecting materials. They learned sewing techniques, designs, and finishing, the steps required to produce standard quality products. In addition to this, the trainers provided marketing information to equip students with knowledge about market demand. They learned about the availability of different types of materials and how their choices of sewing, design, and finishing techniques would affect the quality and thus the final pricing of their products. The overall goal was to educate project participants and familiarize them with sustainable livelihood improvement techniques.



From Destitution to Successful Entrepreneurship

In the remote village of Marko in Ghani Khil District of Nangarhar Province a story of resilience and enterprise unfolded through the UNHCR funded Livelihood Support Program implemented by WADAN in the eastern region.

Before the inception of the Livelihood Support Program, Hamid was the sole breadwinner for his family of eight. He was a student and a part-time mechanic, earning only AFN 60 per day, just three quarters of a U.S. dollar. This income was insufficient to sustain even his family's most basic needs, forcing them to rely on external assistance for survival. Their social status suffered and invitations to community events became rare. The situation reached a critical point when Hamid's ailing father had a heart attack, and they lacked the funds to take him to a hospital in Jalalabad. Desperation led Hamid to seek help from their neighbor, Bathin Shah, who lent the family a substantial amount of money, which saved their father's life.

The turning point for Hamid occurred when WADAN's team arrived in Ghani Khil to identify and assist potential beneficiaries and Bathin Shah introduced Hamid as well as his business partner, Zahid, to them. Following the careful selection process both men were selected as direct beneficiaries. Zahid, like Hamid, was the primary provider for his nine-member family. His father's paralysis had left him incapable of taking care of his family or himself. Zahid's job as a mechanic specializing in the repair of solar washing machines and solar cooler fans was the family's sole income.

Zahid and Hamid opened a store in the Marko bazaar, offering washing machines, solar cooler fans, spare parts for water pumps, and on-call repair services. The Livelihood Support Program provided them with start-up cash and technical assistance. From the program's marketing skills staff, they learned valuable marketing and communications skills, excellent customer service skills, market research techniques, and how to judge product quality. The business flourished, and Hamid and Zahid currently earn a net profit of approximately AFN 15,000 per month, almost USD 200. They supply spare parts to other stores and have hired an assistant.

Hamid said, "Positive changes in our lives showcase the positive impact of this program. I could repay loans and I now have a sustainable livelihood." Both Hamid's and Zahid's lives have changed for the better.

Made in Afghanistan

WADAN completed implementation of the Made in Afghanistan (MaA) project in 2023. This project was funded by UNHCR in Herat Province where 123 artisans from among Persons of Concern (PoC) including returnees, internally displaced people, refugees, and vulnerable members from the host community created fine art and handicrafts. The overall goal of this approach was to increase the socioeconomic empowerment of artisans by providing them with training and supplies to enhance their existing skills and capacities and to inspire them to produce higher quality work, improve their marketing skills, as well as to establish market linkages for both domestic and international sales. Project participants were also briefed on protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (PSEAH) measures.

WADAN engaged these artisans under four different groupings: Art, Embroidery, Carpets, and Bags. After the Taliban banned girls' education and attendance in workplaces, WADAN, in coordination with UNHCR, asked women to work from their homes. In Herat City, working from home throughout 2023, each participating female artisan demonstrated proficiency in their work and business skills development. Project personnel, comprising designers, marketing officers, and the outreach team, conducted frequent visits to the artisans' homes to ensure the quality and advancement of their work. Moreover, they received training on online advertising techniques to promote their products effectively. Through multiple sessions on online platforms, WADAN effectively transformed this crisis into opportunity.

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Shakila Faizi, Master Embroiderer



Shakila Faizi's life story is one of resilience and determination. Despite facing numerous challenges early in her life, including the loss of her father and being forced into marriage at a young age, she managed to find solace in her children and the art of embroidery. Her talent in Shaba Qaleen (pulled thread embroidery) became an asset toward meeting her family's expenses, but she did not stop there.

In December 2020, when she heard about the opportunity provided by the UNHCR funded Made in Afghanistan project for skilled Afghan artisans, Shakila applied and was selected to join this initiative. Throughout her participation in the project, she learned new design skills as well as marketing techniques and how to communicate to best promote her business. She created a wide range of items and participated in local and international exhibitions. Shakila was happy when her work was shipped to the United States in 2022 and sold well there.

Also, she earned money participating in the Palladium Exhibition in Herat on March 13, 2023, where she sold her beautiful embroidery work, utilizing the marketing skills she had learned from the Made in Afghanistan programming. At that exhibit, in addition to financial profit, she received recognition for her talent and that praise boosted her confidence and inspired her to dream big. Shakila's success is inspiring to others as well and highlights the importance of investing in women and continuing to offer opportunities for gifted and skilled artisans to develop and showcase their talents. Shakila and her goal of opening her own studio with space to teach young women the art of embroidery is testimonial to the transformative power of such initiatives.

Through her experiences in the Made in Afghanistan project, Shakila has expanded her worldview and was prepared to take further action to provide a brighter future for herself and her family. She said, "Now I feel confident to go forward. I am saving to invest in my dream to open my own studio and to teach the art and skills of Guldozi (flower themed embroidery), Roban Dozi (embroidery using ribbon in place of thread), Shaba Qaleen and macramé."

Self-empowerment through Volunteering

This UNHCR funded project was designed for women and children in UNHCR-constructed schools and was initiated by WADAN in 2022 in Surkhrod and Behsud Districts of Nangarhar Province. The coordination and management of tutoring sessions and mentorships by volunteers in these schools, the primary activities of the project, are planned to continue through December 31, 2024. The overall objective of this project is to empower girls in to achieve their academic potential in high school; through 2023 the aim was to empower girls by enhancing their access to high quality education and to address gender-based violence (GBV) as well as to reduce instances of early marriage by supporting female teachers in these participating schools.

In 2023, the project participants took part in tree planting campaigns, English language and computer learning programs, greening initiatives, World Refugees Day activities, internet trainings and other events. Participants received stationery and learning kits, and were introduced to public libraries available in the participating districts, and they were provided with tablets, mobile SIMs, and internet facilities.



An Upgraded Road: Community Development through Community Participation



The Ambar Khana area in Batikot District, Nangarhar Province, has four densely populated villages: Thakia, Grab Awah, Ghari and Ghar Kalay. It used to be that the poor condition of the road connecting these villages to the highway was an uncomfortable, time consuming, and expensive impediment; traveling to and from Marko and Batikot bazaars adversely impacted the livelihoods and daily lives of the locals. Taxi driver Imran Khan said, “The bumps and potholes led to increased vehicle maintenance costs, excess fuel consumption, and passenger dissatisfaction about delays. Patients on the way to the hospital suffered from bouncing around in my car.”

WADAN implemented the UNHCR project that fixed these problems by designing the way to repair the road. Ninety-six workers were hired; they toiled daily, from eight o'clock in the morning until four o'clock in the afternoon, for three months from June 1 through August 30, 2023. In addition to leveling the bumpy road, workers hired to participate in this project also cleaned a canal in Ambar Khana. Using lessons learned through more than 20 years of experience, WADAN coordinated the project activities and closely supervised progress, emphasizing community participation by requesting residents with houses along the road to make a community contribution by reinforcing with cement and covering the drains that carried away the waste and rainwater from their homes to the main canal. A community elder stated,

"Waste and rainwater were blocked in these channels before they were reinforced and covered, now, the water can flow smoothly, and we enjoy a clean environment."

In response to WADAN's community mobilization efforts, residents demonstrated notable cooperation and made substantial contributions, even sharing the financial burden for materials. "We mobilized community elders who contributed 40 bags of cement and 35 loads of sand which resulted in high quality results. The community's collaborative effort significantly eased the project's implementation," said the project's manager, Engineer Sulaiman. Residents praised the initiative, and emphasized its positive impact on travel as well as health, there were noticeably fewer mosquitos and that resulted in the prevention of malaria. Malang Jan, a local farmer, was pleased by the end of the high fares charged by taxi drivers who had charged more to traverse the terrible old road, and Nadir Khan, an elder, expressed gratitude for WADAN's consistent service and successful project implementation that resulted in a fine road and a healthier environment.

Operations

Throughout 2023, WADAN had an average total number of 3,718 staff members working in different sectors. Employment, recruitment processes, filing, annual performance appraisals, and trainings were undertaken in line with WADAN Human Resources Department policies. Based in Kabul, we maintained offices in Nangarhar, Kandahar, Helmand, Nimroz, Zabul, Farah, Herat, Urozgan, Laghman, Kunar, Nuristan, Badakhshan, Balkh, and Takhar Provinces. WADAN staff members worked in villages and districts in these thirteen provinces. Our human resources department managed the staff recruitment and maintained employee relations in all these offices.

Management Information System (MIS)

The Management Information System (MIS) Department at WADAN serves as a crucial hub for the development, maintenance, and updating of databases, dashboards, visual reports, insights, user portals, and spreadsheet databases. This department plays a vital role in supporting education, community development, livelihood, and health projects by ensuring efficient data management and facilitating informed decision-making processes. Specializing in designing, developing, and maintaining databases tailored to the unique needs of each project, our team ensures the integrity, security, and accessibility of stored data. We create dynamic dashboards and visual reports that provide stakeholders with real-time insights into project performance, progress, and outcomes. Additionally, we manage various spreadsheet databases used for tracking, organizing, and analyzing project data.