

# Livelihoods and Integrated Health Strengthening in Afghanistan and Pakistan

Afghanistan and Pakistan | Duration: June 2022 - December 2024 | Implementing partners: CARE Afghanistan & Pakistan, Afghan Women's Resource Center (AWRC), Sarhad Rural Support Program (SRSP)

## The Challenge

Displacement-affected communities along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border face multiple, interconnected challenges. Many refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Pakistan lack access to essential services and income-generating opportunities, while those in Afghanistan face additional challenges due to the political transition following the 2021 regime change. In both countries, women and children are particularly vulnerable, with limited access to healthcare and economic opportunities. Climate-related hazards and natural disasters further exacerbate these vulnerabilities, while traditional status-based approaches to assistance often exclude some of the most vulnerable population groups.

## The Solution

This project adopted a holistic, needs-based approach to provide assistance aimed at increasing community access to services and supporting income generation among displacement-affected persons in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The objectives included boosting household income, addressing food insecurity, and bolstering local supply chains and economies, thereby creating further job opportunities. The goal was also to increase displacement-affected persons' access to health, nutrition, and WASH services.

A unique aspect of the project was its cross-border approach, with activities designed to build complementary skills and assistance. On the Pakistan side, activities were developed considering what would be most impactful to support Afghan refugees should they decide to return to Afghanistan, such as providing adaptable resources like Khurasani goats, which are well-suited to Afghanistan, and seeds that could thrive in both countries.

## What Made This a Promising Practice?

The project demonstrated exceptional adaptability in uncertain and volatile contexts. Despite challenges following the regime change in Afghanistan, it successfully pivoted by adjusting its focus on HDP nexus components, expanding health sector activities while maintaining some livelihood support through community-based approaches.

The practice employed context-specific and culturally appropriate skills training expected to benefit Afghan refugee communities in both short-term and long-term scenarios, whether in Pakistan or upon return to Afghanistan. Projects were adapted to local contexts, ensuring cultural and social acceptability, especially in regions like Nangarhar, with focus areas such as poultry, pickle, and jam production aligning with traditional skills.

Following a needs-based approach rather than status-based targeting allowed the project to include undocumented refugees, internally displaced people, and Afghanistan Citizen Card holders in Pakistan, reaching more vulnerable

## The Response

- **Regime change in Afghanistan:** The 2021 regime change led to authorities banning humanitarian initiatives, women-led NGOs, and public-private partnerships. The project adapted by expanding health activities, which remained permitted, and found ways to continue limited support to women's economic empowerment despite restrictions.
- **Insecurity and political instability:** Changes to project locations and activities in Pakistan were necessary due to security concerns. The project navigated differences between its needs-based approach and the Pakistan government's status-based approach through advocacy among government departments for assistance to highly vulnerable persons.
- **Participant tracking challenges:** A tracing system was established to monitor project participants who returned to Afghanistan after deportation, ensuring continued support. Learning workshops among project partners facilitated exchange of good practices and timely programming revisions.

## Lessons Learned

This project used a holistic, needs-based approach to increase community access to services and support income generation for displacement-affected persons in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Objectives included boosting household income, addressing food insecurity, and strengthening local economies to create job opportunities while improving access to health, nutrition, and WASH services.

The project's unique cross-border approach built complementary skills and assistance. Pakistan-side activities considered supporting Afghan refugees' potential return by providing adaptable resources like Khurasani goats (well-suited to Afghanistan) and seeds that thrive in both countries.

## Key Results

### Livelihood Support:

- Provided vulnerable households with poultry, livestock, fodder, and kitchen garden supplies on both sides of the border
- Supported small businesses, offered agricultural management training, and strengthened market linkages
- Conducted vocational training in collaboration with local centers, addressing labor shortages identified through market assessments
- Taught diverse practical skills including food processing, kitchen gardening, livestock management, tailoring, mobile phone and motorbike repair, solar power maintenance, and carpentry

### Health Services:

- Trained 98 local women as community health workers and midwives to serve as frontline healthcare providers
- Collaborated with private sector partners to ensure reliable delivery of low-cost medicines, contraception, first aid supplies, and sanitation items
- Improved access to health services by providing vital medical and non-medical supplies to local health centers
- Offered sexual and reproductive health services to thousands of mothers and children

### WASH Initiatives:

- Rehabilitated and installed sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities
- Implemented solar-powered water systems in healthcare centers and communities across Pakistan
- Improved access to clean drinking water for more than 30,000 refugees/individuals





# **LiD** Lives in Dignity

## GRANT FACILITY

The Lives in Dignity (LiD) Grant Facility was an EU-funded initiative managed by UNOPS that promoted development-oriented approaches in forced displacement settings. With €24 million allocated between 2021–2025, the Facility supported 14 innovative, multi-stakeholder projects across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Its flexible funding model empowered local actors, strengthened partnerships, and fostered integrated programming across five key areas: livelihoods, service delivery, housing and spatial planning, protection, and disaster- and climate-related mobility. The Facility prioritized community-led solutions, localization, and social cohesion, advancing sustainable development for both displaced populations and host communities. **Find out more at** [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/programming/programmes/lives-dignity-grant-facility\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/programming/programmes/lives-dignity-grant-facility_en)