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Impact of Agriculture Projects Implemented by National NGOs on People Lives of Surobi District of Kabul Province in 2022

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to analyze the impacts of projects carried out by National NGOs in Surobi district, understanding the specific requirements of the people, and exploring ways in which humanitarian assistance can be effectively delivered through diverse NGO projects.

The study examined the impact of agriculture projects implemented by national NGOs on the lives of residents in the Surobi district of Kabul province in 2022. The research, based on primary data gathered through questionnaires distributed to respondents, focuses on how national NGOs empower farmers, enhance agricultural productivity, and improve overall welfare in the region. The analysis revealed that empowering agricultural communities through farmer groups, involving various stakeholders such as the Ministry of Agriculture, irrigation and livestock (MAIL), NGOs, and academia, was crucial for sustainable development.

However, challenges faced by farmers in Surobi district include transportation issues, limited market access, and lack of equipment and technical support, low literacy levels, increased labor burden, inadequate financial support, and poor coordination. To address these challenges, the study suggested that creating job opportunities, implementing agricultural schemes, and improving marketing opportunities through collaboration among institutions, government, private sectors, and NGOs.

The research indicated that while national NGOs distributed various resources such as cash, food, gardening supplies, livestock, seeds, and de-worming assistance in 2022, the impact on beneficiaries varied. Some respondents reported minimal impact on their lives, while others experienced significant positive changes.

Moreover, the study identified key issues such as high yearly consumption compared to income, limited employment opportunities, and challenges related to water availability for cultivation. It highlights the agricultural potential in the region, emphasizing the need for water management solutions, such as solar-powered water pumps for cultivating higher lands. To enhance the effectiveness of NGO interventions, the study recommends clear communication with local communities to prevent misunderstandings, and emphasizes the role of Kabul Department of agriculture, irrigation and livestock (DAIL) and Surobi DAIL as bridges between NGOs and the local population. Additionally, the study proposed inclusive project planning, involving people with disabilities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, and host communities, to ensure equitable distribution of benefits and sustainable development in the Surobi district.

Keywords- Agriculture Projects, National NGOs, Sustainable Development, Market Access, Technical Support.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the area: Surobi district

Surobi district, located approximately 69 kilometers from the capital Kabul along the Kabul-Jalalabad highway, houses around 45,000 inhabitants. Surrounded by Bagrami and Deh Sabz to the west, Parwan and Kapisa to the north, Laghman province to the east, and Nangarhar province and Khaki Jabbar district to the south, Surobi is distinct for hosting three significant water dams—Surobi Dam, Naghlo Dam, and Mahipar Dam, making it the sole district in Afghanistan with such hydropower infrastructure. Currently, these dams

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primarily contribute to hydropower generation for Kabul province and Surobi district.

The pressing issue addressed in this study is the impact of drought on Surobi district, as reported by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). The report highlights that drought has become a recurrent and escalating challenge for households in Afghanistan, affecting 64% of the population in 2022, up from 39% in 2021. With 25 out of 34 provinces experiencing severe or catastrophic drought conditions, exacerbated by economic hardships and the enduring effects of prolonged conflict, half the population is in acute hunger, with six million people on the brink of famine.

Furthermore, Surobi district faced the threat of flash floods, despite having two rivers, Kabul River and Panjshir River, and three constructed water dams. Flash floods, triggered by rains or snowfalls, pose risks to both property and human life. While some NGOs provide humanitarian assistance, there remained immense potential for implementing agriculture projects to address the needs of the local population.

The agricultural sector holds a pivotal position in the Afghan economy, serving as its cornerstone (Bolton, 2019; Jamali et al., 2023). This sector contributes significantly, comprising approximately one-third of the country's GDP, and employs nearly 60 percent of the Afghan population (Muradi & Rahmani, 2020). In rural areas, agriculture stands as a major source of employment, with the primary workforce comprising unpaid family members (Siddayya et al., 2016). Beyond meeting the nation's food demands, agriculture plays a crucial role in providing raw materials for agro-based industries (Sharma & Patil, 2018).

However, Afghanistan faces formidable challenges, including escalating issues of food and water insecurity. These challenges arise from a complex interplay of persistent social, political, and economic instability, further compounded by the impacts of climate change (Poole et al., 2022). In this context, understanding the multifaceted role of the agricultural sector is essential for developing effective strategies to address these challenges and foster sustainable development.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The agricultural landscape in Afghanistan is integral to its socio-economic fabric, with approximately 70% of the population residing in rural areas and 61% of households relying on agriculture for income (Leao et al., 2018). The World Bank Agricultural Sector Review for Afghanistan in 2014 revealed that agriculture constituted about one-quarter of the GDP, emphasizing its potential for job creation and its significance in enhancing labor productivity, particularly for marginalized groups such as women (World Bank, 2014).

Rural Afghanistan faces challenges of high unemployment, underemployment, and a growing youth population, contributing to increased competition for limited job opportunities (Leao et al., 2018). Within the agricultural sector, a considerable portion of income is derived from unpaid family workers, leading to concerns about the sector's overall viability (Leao, 2018).

The World Bank Agriculture Review recommended focusing on three economically viable subsectors: irrigated wheat, horticulture (including fruits, nuts, and vegetables), and intensive livestock production (World Bank, 2014). However, challenges such as poor irrigation and limited market participation hinder the profitability of crop agriculture, particularly in wheat, while the potential of horticulture and livestock remains challenging to substantiate due to data limitations (Leao et al., 2018).

A 2015 International Labor Organization (ILO) study investigated grape, wheat, rice, tomato, and potato value chains in Afghanistan, highlighting a loss of competitiveness in these sectors between 2007 and 2012 (ILO Office for Afghanistan, 2015). The study identified grapes and tomatoes as the most profitable crops per land unit, emphasizing the importance of establishing cold chains for the competitive growth of the grape market.

The World Bank Sector Review projected that wheat, livestock, and horticultural production could create an additional 260,200 full-time jobs by 2024, contingent on creating an enabling business environment to attract private investment (World Bank, 2014). The Afghanistan Horticulture and Livestock Productivity Project (2013-2020) aimed to enhance production practices and improve technology uptake for horticultural and animal production, contributing to direct employment and generating indirect jobs (World Bank, 2018).

A 2018 World Bank report assessed agricultural employment and income using national surveys, indicating the need for increased productivity, promotion of commercial production, extension services, and strengthened market linkages to generate employment (Leao et al., 2018). Agro-business, through backward and forward linkages in the economy, adds value to agricultural products, creating economic spillovers and job opportunities (Leao et al., 2018). However, competitiveness erosion due to high production costs requires interventions such as accelerating customs procedures, establishing cold chains, and improving financial literacy for farmers (ILO, 2015).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology employed in this study adheres to rigorous scientific standards, utilizing descriptive methods to gather, analyze, and interpret primary data. Jamali, A et al (2023). The investigation approach focused on addressing key research questions through the systematic use of questionnaires, thereby eliciting responses predominantly on a "what" basis from the participants.

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Data Collection

The primary means of data collection involved the administration of structured questionnaires to 26 respondents in various villages, employing a carefully designed sampling method to ensure representativeness. Lalzai, F. et al (2023). Complementing the questionnaire-based approach, three focused group discussions were conducted to obtain a nuanced understanding of the subject matter. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were held with representatives from NGOs and the DAILs in both Kabul and Surobi district.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Upon the acquisition of data from beneficiaries, a meticulous analysis was conducted using descriptive methods. The data was systematically entered into MS Excel for further processing, statistical analysis, and the creation of graphs and charts. The descriptive analysis facilitated a comprehensive interpretation and presentation of findings, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the research outcomes.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Challenges for the Agriculture Sector in Surobi District of Kabul Province

Challenges	Number of Respondents (Out of 26)
Lack of transport	16
Lack of technical support	16
Low literacy level	16
Gender performance	16
Lack of finance	16
Poor coordination	16
Low impact NGOs projects	16
Conflict of interest	16

Table-1 indicated that out of the 26 respondents surveyed, 16 identified various challenges faced by the agriculture sector in Surobi district of Kabul province. These challenges include a lack of transport facilities, making it difficult to transport agricultural products to local or national markets. Additionally, respondents highlighted issues such as limited access to the market, insufficient equipment, absence of technical support to enhance the quality of agricultural products, low literacy levels of farmers, increased labor burden on farmers, lack of financial support from institutions, poor coordination, and the perceived low impact of projects implemented by NGOs. Weather fluctuations, ginger seed unavailability, land scarcity, and price fluctuations were also mentioned as constraints affecting ginger production. Access to formal microcredit was identified as a challenge, with credit facilitators favoring educated and young farmers, while older and small-sized farm owners faced difficulties in obtaining credit.

Table 2: Social Impact of National NGOs on Agriculture Empowerment

Social Impact Indicators	Number of Respondents (Out of 26)
Increase in business activity	26
Job creation	26
Increase of income	26
Welfare of the society	26
Positive social impact	26

Table-2 showed the survey revealed that, according to the majority of the 26 respondents, national NGOs have a significant impact on the agriculture sector in Surobi district of Kabul province. The implementation of projects by these organizations contributes to several positive social impacts, including a noticeable increase in business activity, job creation, income growth, and overall enhancement of societal welfare. This positive trend has attracted substantial investor interest, emphasizing the considerable potential and rapid expansion of this business model. The findings suggest that the interventions of national NGOs play a crucial role in empowering the agriculture sector and fostering positive social outcomes in the region.

Table 3: Impact of National NGOs on Agriculture Sector

Factors Influencing Agriculture Sector	Number of Respondents (Out of 26)
Direct impact of national NGOs	26
Technology	26
Education of the head	26

Table-3 indicated that, according to the responses of the 26 participants, national NGOs have a direct impact on the agriculture sector in Surobi district of Kabul province. For instance, in 2022, the Rupani Foundation invested USD 425,000 in a gardening project in Surobi district, benefitting 2,000 direct and 14,000 indirect beneficiaries. The respondents highlighted two significant factors influencing the agriculture sector: technology and the education level of the head. Technology adoption was associated with increased production levels, reduced costs, minimized waste, and improved productivity, effectiveness, and product quality. Additionally, education of the head played a crucial role in influencing farmers' income. This suggests that

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national NGOs contribute to the economic benefits of the agriculture sector by implementing impactful projects and addressing key influencing factors.

Table 4: Factors Affecting Viability of Agriculture Projects

Factors Categories	Issues Identified
Economic	Low profit, high operational cost, absence of funds
Social	Work burden, security of tenure, education level
Environmental	Production site, access road network
Biological	Farmer's experience, operational time, past record
Other Issues	Terms of payment, market access

Table- 4 showed the respondents highlighted various factors affecting the viability of agriculture projects implemented by national NGOs. These factors were categorized into economic, social, environmental, and biological aspects.

Economic Factors:

- Low profit due to high operational costs.
- Absence of funds from financial institutions and banking industry.
- Issues related to terms of payment and market for the products.

Social Factors:

- Work burden on agricultures.
- Security of tenure for farmers.
- Education level of the employees.
- Impact of low-impact projects implemented by NGOs.

Environmental Factors:

- Characteristics of the production site.
- The importance of an accessible road network.
- Biological Factors:
- Farmers' experience and past records.
- Operational time by the farmers.

Other Issues:

- Terms of payment.
- Market access for agricultural products.

Understanding and addressing these multifaceted issues was crucial for making informed decisions to enhance the viability of agriculture projects implemented by national NGOs. Consideration of factors such as the farmer's scale, years of experience, availability of inputs, crop grown, production area, and access to finances is essential for the success of contract farming initiatives. (Reference similar factors analyzed by: Lalzai, F. et al (2023)

V. CONCLUSION

In summary, the culmination of this study was rooted in the comprehensive analysis of primary data gathered through questionnaires distributed to respondents, aimed at determining the impact of agriculture projects implemented by national NGOs on the lives of the residents of Surobi district in Kabul province during 2022. National NGOs play a pivotal role in empowering the farming industries through various initiatives. These projects enable farmers to actively participate in markets, enhance product delivery, and significantly amplify rural production, thereby elevating the overall welfare of rural communities. Furthermore, these projects contribute to strengthening the agriculture sector, overcoming market imperfections, facilitating convenient market access, and minimizing transaction costs. Empowering agricultural communities was a crucial endeavor, executed through farmer groups as organizing institutions. Farmer empowerment through such groups proves to be an effective strategy for enhancing their quality of life. This empowerment relies on collaboration with entities such as the MAIL, NGOs, and academic institutions. In the contemporary competitive market, the MAIL serves as a key player in empowering farmers in economic and financial sectors, fostering financial stability and independence. Categorizing farmers based on awareness and expertise, such as beginner, advanced, and main classes, ensures targeted and effective empowerment strategies. Despite the potential benefits, farmers in the Surobi district face multifaceted challenges, including transportation limitations, restricted market access, inadequate equipment, insufficient technical support, low literacy levels, gender disparities, heightened labor burdens, financial constraints, and a lack of coordinated policies. Overcoming these challenges requires concerted efforts from institutions, governmental sectors, private enterprises, and NGOs. NGOs have extended assistance in the form of cash, food, gardening supplies, livestock, modified seeds, and de-worming aid to beneficiaries in Surobi districts throughout 2022. The impact of this assistance varied among respondents, with a significant portion expressing positive effects on their lives. In light of the study's findings, addressing the prevalent issues of unemployment, limited land for cultivation, and imbalances in yearly consumption and income ratios is paramount. The presence of three hydropower dams in Surobi districts holds immense agricultural potential, albeit hindered by geographical constraints. Innovative solutions, such as utilizing water pumps powered by solar panels for upper land cultivation and implementing a land scheme for cultivation, emerge as viable strategies to further boost the local economy of Surobi district.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhancing Farmer Participation: It is crucial for various agencies to actively motivate and involve impoverished farmers in project implementations. Establishing cooperatives that are more purposeful, stimulating, and sustainable can be achieved by fostering emotional bonds among farmers. This interpersonal aspect is identified as a critical element for the success of support programs.
2. Promoting Sustainable Cooperatives: NGOs should play a pivotal role in encouraging farmers to establish or join sustainable cooperatives. This can be facilitated through informal education, capacity-building programs such as seminars, presentations, and financial incentives to empower farmers economically.
3. Creating Employment Opportunities: Collaboration among the government sector, private sector, and NGOs is essential to provide employment opportunities, alleviating the challenges of unemployment in the region. Additionally, implementing a land scheme for cultivation can contribute significantly to boosting the local economy in the Surobi district.
4. Innovative Water Management: To address geographical constraints, it is recommended to explore innovative solutions, such as utilizing solar-powered water pumps to bring water from dams to higher lands for cultivation. This approach can optimize agricultural potential and overcome limitations related to water accessibility.

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