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REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFGHANISTAN**

**Strengthening the Resilience of the Poorest Communities' Food Security
Mechanisms and Coping Strategies in Takhar and Badakhshan Provinces,
Afghanistan**

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All opinions and any errors are the responsibility of the author.

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1.2 List of Acronyms

Afgs	Afghanistan Unit of Currency
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ANGO	Afghanistan Nursery Growers' Organization
CA	Conservation Agriculture
CBO	Community Based Organization
CDC	Community Development Council
CDFs	Community Development Facilitators
CSA	Climate Smart Agriculture
DAIL	Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock development
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FFS	Farmer Field School
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAM	Global Acute Malnutrition
GBC	Grain Bank Committee
Jerib	Area of land equal to 2000m ²
KII	Key Informant Interview
IYCF	Infant and Young Child Feeding
LRRD	Linking Relief to Rehabilitation and Development
NGA	Nursery Growers' Association
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock development
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MIS	Management Information System
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MSRP	Multi Sector Resilience Programme
NPP	National Priority Project Plan
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NRMC	Natural Resource Management Committee
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
Ser	Local unit of measurement equal to 7 kgs
SHG	Self Help Group
SWI	System for Wheat Intensification

2 Executive Summary

The “Strengthening the Resilience of the Poorest Communities’ Food Security Mechanisms and Coping Strategies in Takhar and Badakhshan Provinces, Afghanistan” hereafter referred to as the Linking Relief to Rehabilitation and Development LRRD project was implemented between March 2014 and end of February 2017. It was 90% funded by the EU which contributed €1,124,630 to the project and Concern funded the remaining 10%. It was implemented in a time of increased insecurity which led to the project team having to completely withdraw from 5 communities in Raghistan district in Badakhshan during 2015 and they have not been able to return since. The project was implemented in 27 of the initial 32 communities. The initial planned beneficiary target was 2,400 households (HH). The final number of beneficiaries reached was 19,611 individuals (9,030 male/10,581 female). This included a total number of direct beneficiaries of 1,630 HHs comprising of approximately 10,595 individuals (3,965 male/6,360 female).

Generally the programme reached the **overall objective** of strengthening the resilience of food and nutrition security systems of the most food insecure communities in the target districts and improved the lives of target beneficiaries although there were some areas for improvement and lessons to be learned.

The **Specific objective was**: To improve food, nutrition and asset security, strengthen communities’ productive and resilience capacities and, facilitate responsive food security policies and practices at targeted households, communities and district levels in Takhar and Badakhshan. To achieve this, the following 4 Expected Results (ERs) were planned:

ER 1) Increased production of food through better use of agricultural resources at target household, community and district levels and improved nutrition behavioural practices.

ER 2) Opportunities for income generating and food security measures have been improved for vulnerable households (50% of families headed by women).

ER 3) Increased access to value chain and improved market linkages between targeted producer groups (especially women) and reputed traders in the targeted communities and districts.

ER 4) The productive capacities of local institutions and local authorities strengthened.

The project was **highly relevant** given the high poverty levels and food and nutrition insecurity in the project areas. The nutrition survey carried out under the project in Raghistan in 2014, found high GAM and SAM rates of 11.4% and 4.2% respectively and a global stunting rate of 62%, which is considered critical according to the WHO classification¹, while the prevalence of severe stunting was found to be 28.9%. Takhar province shows a similar poverty rate to the national average (36.6%), but has the second highest rate of inequality in income distribution. The project was relevant and appropriate to the National Priority Project Plan (NPP) and the Agriculture and Rural Development Cluster Plan’s broader objectives which are aligned to the NPP. The project contributes to Concern Afghanistan’s Strategic Plan and is also aligned to Concern’s Food, Income and Markets (FIM) Strategy (2012-15). As there are a very limited number of other NGOs working in the same operational areas, this made the LRRD project even more relevant.

The overall project **efficiency** could have been improved as the direct costs for the main expected results were underspent while not all the activities were fully completed. A high staff turnover at senior management level created a lack of consistency in implementation which adversely affected efficiency. Value for money (VFM) was achieved with most activities however VFM was less obvious with the wheat seed distribution, grain banks and sheep distribution. However the project was overly ambitious with a high number of activities given

¹ WHO Classification of Malnutrition: <5% - Normal, 5 - <10% - Poor, 10 - <15% - Serious, >=15% - Critical/Emergency

the very challenging operating environment compounded by insecurity issues and a number of major emergencies in Northern Afghanistan that had to be responded to by staff and therefore it was not possible for all activities to be fully completed.

Regarding **effectiveness** for improved food production. The project established 32 Farmer Field Schools (FFSs) which trained 931 farmers. The new agricultural technologies introduced included; land management/cultivation, introduction to the use of machinery, fertilizer application, pesticide/herbicides application, land preparation, seed selection, planting time and methods, irrigation, system for wheat intensification, soil and water conservation, integrated pest management, composting and harvesting and use of greenhouses/plastic tunnels. The often found challenge that farmers are more interested in receiving physical agricultural inputs than in receiving training was mentioned as an issue during discussions with staff and the farmer field schools (FFS). This finding is supported by the low uptake of these new technologies by the farmers in practice, which was only 13.4%. The project supplied a considerable amount of improved seeds, including wheat, pea, lentil and flax and potatoes. The results from the pea, lentil and flax and potatoes was good with improved yields reported. But the improved wheat seed had disappointing results at farm level despite the results in the demonstration plots been reported as 25% higher than the local varieties.

The vegetable production through utilization of plastic tunnels and greenhouse was effective and produced a wide range of vegetables including; okra, squash, tomato, spinach, onion, carrot, turnip, coriander, pumpkin, cucumber, cabbage and radish. For longer term impact, 198 fruit orchards were established in the communities and supplied with a range of saplings; apricot, apple, almond, pear, grapes, cherry, persimmon and walnuts and are doing well so far and will start coming into production this year.

To mitigate the effects of variable rainfall, 6 irrigation canals were renovated which irrigated a total of 1,030 jireb (206ha) and resulted in improved yields for the beneficiaries with access to this water. The LRRD project continued support to the central nursery in Faizabad as a training resource centre for providing training to farmers and government staff from the Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock development (DAIL). It also served as a valuable demonstration site for farmers attending training under the LRRD project.

The food production activities had positive impacts including reducing the hunger gap from 3.3 to 2.3 months which is a significant reduction, but most beneficiaries still can't meet their basic food requirement and most of their home produced food is used for Household (HH) consumption. Dietary diversity has improved from 4.1 to 5.6 with a greater improvement for women, increasing from 3.3 to 5.8 which indicates improved nutrition security for the women with associated improvements for their children. Nutrition & hygiene training has shown improved knowledge attitudes and practices which have impacted on reduced child morbidity and mortality². The women reported easier access to vegetables compared to before the project as they now grow their own. They now have better Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices and some reported that they can now identify signs of malnutrition in the children and know how to care for their children better than before. On hygiene, they reported that some diseases are reduced including skin diseases and diarrhoea, and malaria due to awareness by Concern and mosquito nets supplied by the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH). Latrine usage has increased where they are available and they're practicing regular hand washing using soap, and are keeping the environment around the HHs cleaner than before

For effective income generation, a market analysis was carried out and based on that, the project supported vulnerable HHs with Income Generating Activities (IGAs) these included distribution of sheep and poultry and establishing small scale shop keeping. Due to some issues with the sheep distributions, Concern reviewed the sheep distribution process and switched to a cash and voucher system for the final distribution in 2016. With this approach, the beneficiaries selected their own sheep in the local area and this appears to have been

² From beneficiaries and the MoPH clinic in Namakab

more successful according to feedback from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) during the evaluation.

Adult literacy training was planned using the REFLECT methodology for Self Help Groups (SHGs) to help them manage their IGAs. Unfortunately this activity was seriously delayed and did not take off during the programme due to the lack of approval by the Ministry of Education (MoE) which was beyond the control of the programme. In 2016 it was agreed to use the MoE's adult literacy project to train the SHGs. Beneficiaries were identified during 2016 and stationary/books purchased. The training will now be provided through a new Irish Aid funded project called Multi Sector Resilience Programme (MSRP) in 2017.

Vocational training was provided to 46 youths (18 female & 28 male) from poor and vulnerable houses. The vocations selected were, tailoring, carpentry and tin smiting/metal work.

During the project, a total of 32 grain banks were constructed at community level for the purpose of acting as resource centres for poor farmers to access improved seed in their own community to support increased harvest yields. Concern supplied improved wheat seed to the grain banks which are managed by community elected Grain Bank Committees (GBCs) who then loan out the seed to poor farmers at planting time and it's reimbursed at harvest time with an agreed extra amount to the GBC. The extra quantity collected is used to help other farmers receive improved seeds or to help the extreme poor in the community with food if required and also acts as a contingency stock to mitigate risks.

Regarding the impact of the IGAs, during the evaluation, the poultry were doing well and some were already laying eggs for HH consumption. The results of the initial sheep distributions were disappointing, mortality³ was higher than expected and lambing rates low with no reported case of any lambs being passed on to other extreme poor beneficiaries as was the agreed modality. The last distribution in 2016 is expected to have more positive results. The 12 small shops in Raghistan were not evaluated as they are in the communities that fell under the control of the Taliban in 2015. There is no impact from adult literacy as it was not implemented during the project time period. As the vocational training only commenced at the end of 2016, none of those spoken with had actually started earning any income from their newly acquired skills as they had just recently finished training. However it is expected that they will be able to utilise these new skills in the future to generate income. The women who trained in tailoring said they can now save money by making their own clothes, and some of the trainees received a daily allowance during training which had a positive impact on their income.

Utilisation of the grain banks at 22.6% is disappointing but the FGDs highlighted issues including poor yields of the initially supplied improved varieties, lack of understanding by the communities on how GBCs should actually function and in some instances, a lack of trust regarding the security of the grain bank for their seed in case it gets stolen. Overall low yields and limited or no surplus is contributing to reducing the impact of the grain banks.

For **effective market linkages and value chains**, a "Market Feasibility and Value Chain Study" was carried out in 2014 by an external consultant who also provided training to Concern staff on markets and the value chain approach. Ten producer groups with a total membership of 105 male community members were formed in Namakab in 2015. The project identified 16 market facilitators in Takhar province in 2015 following the market & value change survey and training was provided to them. Lead-Farmers, producer groups, gardeners and Natural Resource Management Committee (NRMCM) members attended Agriculture Festivals and Fairs to help build on their marketing skills, as well as to form market linkages which should help them in the future when they have surpluses to sell. A total of 27 SHGs for women were established and now serve as the main focal point for female related activities.

Impact under value chain and market linkages, was weak due the low levels of production by the beneficiaries, they had no real surpluses to sell through the producer groups as most

³ Mortality reasons given included that some sheep were old and weak when received, some were not adapted to the cold mountain conditions in Namakab, some got sick despite been checked by the DAIL veterinary surgeon beforehand and some were reported as killed by wolves while at pasture.

of their production was consumed at household level, hence the producer groups are no longer active. During the evaluation field visits, staff reported that the market facilitators were also no longer active with the project beneficiaries.. The end line survey did show an increase in the percentage of males and females who sell their products in the market (disaggregated by gender) 54.5% male & 30.7% females, sold their product in the market which is a significant increase over the baseline especially for the females. While the end line data is positive, it must be noted that most of the products⁴ mentioned were not directly attributable to the LRRD activities. The 27 SHGs are established, and working well. They meet regularly and are involved in the IGAs and have a good sense of ownership, have empowered the women and are helping themselves work together for positive change for their families and communities. They can discuss social and economic issues and help solve conflicts within the community. Each SHG is saving a small amount of money each month and using this as loans to members and sometimes non-members for help with family expenses and also to set up small IGAs.

Capacity building of local NGOs and authorities was **effective** in that the project helped establish and train 32 Community Development Committees (CDCs), 10 producer groups, 32 grain banks committees, 21 NRMCS⁵ and 27 SHGs.

The impact of capacity building local authorities and community institutions is that the percentage of women involved in decision making has improved from 16% to 54.9% and women participating in community organisations is 65.58% which is a significant improvement over year one when most community institutions were 100% male. Comments from FGDs and KIs suggest that women's capacity and empowerment has been increased significantly during the project period which is a positive impact. KIs also indicated significant improvements in the participation of women in the community decision making forums given the very conservative nature of these communities.

More community members (from 30% to 51.6%) now share their opinions with the local authorities and 74.3% feel that some action is taken on this. However it was noted that MoPH and DAIL face a number of serious challenges including a shortage of staff and resources which limits their ability to respond to communities' needs. The capacity of DAIL was built through a series of trainings and the development of Faizabad nursery is a good asset for DAIL and the farmers as a resource centre.

Sustainability. The main activities under ER1 appear to be sustainable with the farmers reporting improved production levels albeit highly dependent on rainfall amounts. The vegetable gardens and greenhouses and plastic tunnels have some issues with water and seed supply but overall the beneficiaries plan to continue these in the future. The irrigation canals are well constructed and they have a local system (*Mirab*) to collect money for ongoing maintenance. The orchards seem sustainable and can earn good income in the future. Faizabad nursery will get some further support from Concern under a different programme and will be handed over to DAIL as a valuable asset for their farmer training and Natural Resource Management into the future. The improved nutrition practices should be sustainable but the hygiene practices may have some sustainability issues regarding access to soap and lack of latrines in the communities.

The sustainability of the IGAs is mixed. The small shops in Raghistan were functioning quite well before the security worsened so Concern cannot confirm if they are still functioning. The early sheep distributions had disappointing results and may not be sustainable in the long run. The last distribution at the end of 2016 should be better as it used a cash and voucher approach allowing beneficiaries select their own sheep from the local district which should perform better as they are adapted to the local conditions. The poultry distribution at the end of 2016 should be sustainable as they supply eggs for both consumption and sale. Sustainability of the grain banks is unsure with some communities more interested than others

⁴ Foodstuffs, wood, cloth, tools, livestock, handicraft & other

⁵ Only for Chahab and Namakab, does not include Raghistan.

and it depends on the understanding of the individual GBC on the concept and also on the level of ownership. As production levels are still very low and below HH requirements, they are not generating sufficient surpluses to maintain them in the short to medium term. Vocational training should be sustainable in the future as they can either earn income from providing a service or save money by making their own clothes.

The activities on value chain and markets was very limited and needs to be strengthened in the future under other programmes or it will not sustain. The SHGs should be sustainable as they have a good sense of ownership as do not see themselves as “Concern SHGs” but their own SHGs, which is a good sign for sustainability.

Capacity building with the local CBOs should be sustainable at micro level as they see the benefits and are using the knowledge gained to help themselves. At the meso and macro level, the government and socio-political factors remains weak and DAIL have very limited resources to sustain or improve their services to the farmers. Similarly, the MoPH have limited capacity to carry out nutrition and hygiene activities and are very dependent on support from UN agencies and NGOs.

Recommendations include: to keep future projects more focused with fewer but achievable activities given the challenging implementation context in Takhar and Badakshan rural districts, in reality there are probably only 7 months for proper field activity given severe winter weather, landslides and floods; have more staff contact hours in the communities as it's time intensive to get quality behaviour change in these isolated communities and also need to have more female staff in the field to ensure priority is maintained on the female focused activities; revise the logframe and the indicators⁶ if necessary to ensure project effectiveness as this is what the donor is more concerned about;⁷ M&E needs to carry out more analysis and give feedback to the project team to enable timely corrections if necessary; each district is quite different so need tailored responses to address their specific needs, a one size fits all approach is not suitable; consider adopting a Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) approach given the fragile environment and reliance on rain fed agriculture in the target areas and continue building on the positive achievements for empowering women gained under LRRD.

It's recommended to consider linking with DAIL and if possible with reputable Afghan Universities for research on solutions for Sloping Land Management (SLM) such as Conservation Agriculture (CA) and System for Wheat Intensification (SWI), Agro forestry etc. These can link with the LRRD FFSs and the demonstration plots.

A review of the justification for improved wheat seeds is also recommended. Improved crop husbandry with locally adapted seeds and soil and water conservation techniques may have a bigger impact in the long term. Likewise, the seed banks are not functioning well in practice due to issues of ownership, fear of theft and security, lack of trust, poor results from improved seeds and doubts over their ability to replace the improved seed every 3-4 years themselves. As current yields are very low, it may be better to consider support at house hold level for grain and seed storage which would be much more cost effective.

More emphasis needs to be focused on economic sustainability and cost benefit analysis for all agricultural activities and IGAs as this was not obvious under LRRD.

SHGs are working reasonably well under the cultural constraints but need more support with viable IGAs, to generate much needed income to sustain other activities such as nutrition and hygiene. A Value chain approach can be justified, but Concern needs to support the communities more to get production levels up in the short term to actually have marketable surpluses.

Overall, the project has achieved many positive results despite the context-specific challenges faced in implementation and been overly ambitious to start with.

⁶ Some LRRD indicators were not SMART and had 2-3 variables in one indicator which made it difficult to measure them.

⁷ Comment from the EU Attache Health and LRRD in Kabul

3 Introduction

3.1 Brief description of the project

The “Strengthening the Resilience of the Poorest Communities’ Food Security Mechanisms and Coping Strategies in Takhar and Badakhshan Provinces, Afghanistan” project hereafter referred to as the LRRD project was implemented between March 2014 and end of February 2017. It was 90% funded by the EU which contributed €1,124,630 to the project and Concern funded the remaining 10%. The LRRD project was designed in line with the European Union’s (EU) overall support to development in Afghanistan and especially the European Union 2012 food security project for linking relief to rehabilitation and development in Afghanistan. Concern has been implementing a range of projects in Takhar and Badakhshan since 1998, with a focus on emergency, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), food security, environmental health, community development, and education.

In the project target areas, key problems affecting food and nutrition security were identified as: decreasing farm size, low soil fertility, severe land degradation, fragile ecosystems, recurrent weather-related shocks, limited access to inputs, soil erosion, deforestation, a lack of appropriate agriculture technologies, unsustainable water practices and weak infrastructure. Market access in both provinces is hampered by lack of all-weather road networks. Droughts and decades of conflict have depleted small farmers’ livestock holdings and modern irrigation systems have been damaged. Gender inequality is high and this inhibits women’s development, including limited ownership, access and control of income and productive assets, and high illiteracy rates. Fears of insecurity further exacerbate the situation and during the project, high levels of insecurity led to the team having to withdraw from 5 of the project sites in Raghistan.

The target communities are chronically food insecure and vulnerable and were supported by Concern through emergency interventions during the drought, avalanches, landslides and floods of 2011/2012. This project reinforced existing interventions by increasing and diversifying food, nutrition and livelihood options. The project was framed within Concern Afghanistan’s Strategic Plan and was aligned to Concern’s FIM Strategy (2012-15). The project targeted 2,400 households including; marginal farmers, female headed families, poor and landless families and disabled headed households.

The project had the **overall objective**: Strengthen the resilience of food and nutrition security systems of the most food insecure communities in the target districts. The **Specific objective**: To improve food, nutrition and asset security, strengthen communities’ productive and resilience capacities and, facilitate responsive food security policies and practices at targeted households, communities and district levels in Takhar and Badakhshan.

Based on the needs identified and to achieve the project’s specific objective and contribute to improved overall food security of the target groups, the expected results (**ER**) for the project were as follows:

ER 1) Increased production of food through better use of agricultural resources at target household, community and district levels and improved nutrition behavioural practices.

ER 2) Opportunities for income generating and food security measures have been improved for vulnerable households (50% of families headed by women).

ER 3) Increased access to value chain and improved market linkages between targeted producer groups (especially women) and reputed traders in the targeted communities and districts.

ER 4) The productive capacities of local institutions and local authorities strengthened.

The main activities carried out under each result were as below:

ER 1: Undertake a nutrition survey, provide training in nutrition and hygiene, support kitchen gardens for dietary diversity, support improved farming practices via FFSs extension approach and agricultural inputs, sunshine greenhouses, vegetable production, small fruit and nut tree orchards, support Faizabad central nursery and rehabilitation of irrigation canals.

ER 2: Training on IGAs, supply of sheep and poultry to families, support to small community shops, adult literacy training, vocational training for youths, support to grain banks and improved wheat seed distribution.

ER 3: Establish producer groups, SHGs including saving and credit facilities, NRMCS, identify and capacity build market facilitators, develop linkages to markets, develop value chain strategies and attend Agriculture Festivals and Fairs.

ER 4: Strengthen community institutions; CDCs and NRMCS. Provide capacity building support to the DAIL, and facilitate awareness/orientation sessions on Women's Rights, Equality and Gender.

The project was planned to be implemented in 32 Communities – Takhar Province (11 Chahab and 10 Namakab Districts) and Badakhshan Provinces (11 Raghistan District). Due to insecurity, Concern had to suspend operations in five out of the 11 villages in Raghistan District from September 2015. The intended target beneficiaries were 2,400 households: Marginal Farmers (550 HH), Landless Poor (400 HHs), Poor and Vulnerable Households (850), Poor women and women headed households (450), and Disabled headed households (150).

Key partners included the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock development (MAIL), the Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock development (DAIL), the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Ministry of Education (MoE), CDCs, NRMCS, Self Help Groups (SHGs), producers groups and federations, and local institutions.

See Summary of key activities in Annex 6.2

3.2 Evaluation objectives

The overall aim of this evaluation was to assess the LRRD project. Specifically the evaluation was to assess the degree to which the project had achieved its intended outcomes. This was to be assessed by looking at project relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability and other criteria as determined relevant.

The Specific Objectives for the evaluation were:

1. To assess if the project has targeted the extreme poor and vulnerable people effectively as per Concern's understanding of extreme poverty.
2. To assess the degree to which the project outcomes have been achieved as indicated in the results framework.
3. To validate the achievements made as stated by project data (including baseline, annual surveys, end-line, monitoring and secondary data).
4. To capture any lessons learned and make practical targeted recommendations to guide any future programming
5. To assess to what extent project intended and unintended outputs and outcomes can be sustained beyond the existing project.

3.3 Evaluation methodology and limitations

The evaluation was carried out by an external independent evaluation consultant using a qualitative approach to verify the quantitative data collected during the end line survey by the Concern team.

A project documentation review was carried out based on the key project documents prior to arriving in Afghanistan. Both qualitative and quantitative primary and secondary information was collected during discussions with the project staff in Takhar and with beneficiaries and key stakeholders during field visits to 6 project sites at Namakab and Chahab districts in Takhar province. This information was gathered through participatory qualitative tools, including 20 Focus Group Discussions and 12 Key Informant Interviews, meetings and observations. Where necessary, quantitative analysis was carried out to verify quantitative data generated by the project. The evaluator had good access to the project communities during the field visits. However project communities in Raghistan were not visited due to insecurity in the area.

Limitations.

As the project concluded at the end of February 2017, some of the key staff involved had moved to new projects or left Concern entirely and were not all available for interview. However the last ex-programme manager was interviewed in Kabul as the evaluator was leaving. Many of the staff were newly appointed to the LRRD project during 2016 so it was difficult to get any senior staff with a full 3 year overview of the project. Heavy snow made it difficult to visit more communities in Namakab and in the end only 2 were reached there. Project communities in Raghistan could not be reached due to insecurity in the area. The final project budget with full expenditure was not available during the evaluation as it's not due till June, so therefore only the direct expenditure under the main expected results was analysed. Some key up-to-date M&E data was not readily available at the time of the evaluation, in these cases older data was referenced. As the baseline survey was carried out in August when there are more income generating opportunities especially as labour for harvesting, and the end line in February when there are very few opportunities for providing labour, this affected some of the comparisons that could be made especially on income. For FGDs and KIIs with female beneficiaries, these were carried out by a female Community Development Facilitators (CDF) in Chahab and the female nutritionist in Namakab using the questions prepared by the evaluator. The male external evaluator was not allowed to meet female beneficiaries inside the communities⁸ due to cultural reasons.

3.4 Composition and profile of the Evaluation team

The evaluation team was composed of one external evaluator with experience in livelihoods, agriculture, WASH, health and nutrition and in conducting end of project evaluations. The external evaluator had previous work experience in North East Afghanistan and was familiar with EU supported community based development projects. The evaluator was assisted in the field by the respective project staff including the M&E and Management Information System (MIS) officer, nutritionist, district managers, CDFs and agricultural extension officers who worked directly with the project implementation

4 Evaluation Findings (Discussion and Analysis)

4.1 Project relevance

Were the outcomes and associated project relevant, appropriate and strategic to national goals and Concern policies and guidelines?

From the original proposal analysis the project was highly relevant given the high poverty levels and food and nutrition insecurity in the project areas. Badakshan exhibited almost twice the national average for poverty and over three times the national average of calorie and

⁸ It should be noted that this can be possible when a group of women are outside the community such as working on the mountains planting trees. However in April they were not outside and hence FGDs happened indoors.

protein deficiency⁹, with >60% of the population food insecure (NRVA 2010/11). Takhar province shows a similar poverty rate to the national average (36.6%), but has the second highest rate of inequality in income distribution.¹⁰ These issues were compounded by drought in 2011, with rain-fed wheat production declining by over 80% in both provinces.

The main outputs of: 1) increased production of food and improved nutritional behavioural practices; 2) Income generating activities; 3) value chains and markets linkages; and 4) capacity building of local institutions and authorities; were relevant and appropriate to the National Priority Project Plan (NPP); and the Agriculture and Rural Development Cluster Plan's broader objectives which are aligned to the NPP. The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) initiated in 2003 as the major Government vehicle of supporting development at a community level within Afghanistan, to which Concern is a facilitating partner, aimed to develop CDCs for local governance and social-economic development at community level. The LRRD project linked into this with outputs 2&4. The project contributed to Concern Afghanistan's Strategic Plan and was also aligned to Concern's FIM strategy (2012-15). As there are a very limited number of other NGOs working in the same operational areas, this made the LRRD project even more relevant.

Was there an appropriate contextual analysis carried out to inform project design, which was based on Concerns Understanding of Extreme Poverty?

This project was based on an analysis of the root causes of the problems in Takhar and Badakshan identified through a high quality participatory contextual analysis carried out in 2012. The actions, outcomes and beneficiary selection are in line with Concern's Understanding of Extreme Poverty and aims to achieve a better return on assets, reduce vulnerability and address issues of inequality.

How appropriate were the chosen interventions and project design to the situation of different stakeholders at different levels (micro, meso and macro, and considering the needs of men, women and others identified as vulnerable to hazards in the project area)?

The main activities such as improving production of food and nutrition and hygiene and IGAs were very appropriate to the needs of men and women and people living with disabilities at micro level. The value chain and market activity may not have been so appropriate at micro level as the crop and vegetable production is still at a low level with little surplus to sell or add value to at this stage. Capacity building for local CBOs at Micro level was appropriate as they need considerable support, especially for women to have their voice heard and to be empowered. Capacity building at meso/district level was appropriate as the district level capacity needs strengthening. At the macro (in Afghanistan context this refers to provincial rather than national level), the aim of strengthening productive capacity is appropriate but possibly ineffective as they have very limited ability to respond to the needs of the community as they have severe resource limitations. DAIL commented that they would like to have 10 extension staff per district but due to budget constraints, only have 3-5 and in Namakab only 2.

What was the level of participation of project beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the project? Was there awareness and active use of the Complaints Response Mechanism (CRM) guidelines?

The level of participation of project beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the project was good based on feedback from the staff. As Concern was the main NGO working in these communities, they were enthusiastic to become involved in the project especially as it offered activities for both men and women. The CRM was set up by the M&E staff in the 3 districts and there is a structure in the communities including at the NRMC offices with contact details and

9 Afghanistan Provincial Briefs, June 2011, Ministry of Economy (Afghanistan) and the World Bank, p.1

10 Contextual Analysis For Concern Worldwide in North East Afghanistan, in the Provinces of Badakshan, and Takhar, Liz Kiff, 2012, p7

process to be followed and CRM was highlighted at workshops and meetings. In the field a KII reported one example of the implementation of the CRM. A beneficiary complained that one of the sheep they recently received from Concern was sick. Concern staff investigated this matter and then arranged for the DAIL veterinary surgeon to provide the appropriate treatment and the issue was satisfactorily resolved.

4.2 Project Efficiency

Were resources used well? Could things have been done differently and how?

An analysis of the budget as in table 1 below shows that the direct project costs for all the activities was underspent as direct expenditure achieved was only 89%. ER1 was 14% overspent, ER2 was 85% spent, ER3 was 47% spent and ER4 was 23% spent. Agricultural inputs under ER1 were overspent by 76% and nutrition and hygiene kits were overspent by 178%. The final overall LRRD expenditure was €1,249,589 or 100% of the original budget.

Farmers utilizing new agricultural technologies in the end line was only 13.4%, however only 14% of the budget for training at the FFS was used which is a poor use of resources as this was a main approach to achieving increased production. More resources should have been spent on training the farmers and getting actual changes in farming practice. Likewise, given the importance of empowering women and promoting gender equality in the communities, much more should have been done on this as the expenditure was a very disappointing 0%. The budget indicated a planned 18 trainings over the 3 years but from the documents reviewed, only 4 gender training sessions were specifically held. Training on IGAs and CDCs was also disappointingly low and more needed to have been done on these activities to get more impact. The project was overly ambitious given the very challenging operating environment and therefore not all the activities were fully completed as is clear from the expenditure lines below. The lack of continuity at programme manager level and subsequent focus by project staff on delivering activities primarily, with little reference to the logframe ERs/outputs seems to have resulted in the resources not been used to optimum efficiency. Given the fact that the project had too many activities in the first instance, it was likely from the outset that some results especially ER3 were not going to be fully achieved. It would have been preferable to discuss this with the donor and solutions sought so that more emphasis and resources was put on those ERs and activities that would be effective and show impact. Budget management of the individual budget lines should also have been improved as shown by the range of variance in the below table.

Table 1 Budget analysis

	Original budget €	Final cost €	Percentage spent
ER1	222,600	253,499	114%
ER2	188,960	159,739	85%
ER3	48,900	22,815	47%
ER4	43,100	9,973	23%
Total	503,560	446,025	89%
Agricultural inputs	60,000	105,646	176%
Irrigation canals	60,000	73,697	123%
Nutrition & Hygiene training kits	1,600	4,450	278%

Hygiene for vulnerable HH	8,000	5,817	73%
Support for IGA HHs	78,000	44,312	57%
Grain banks	32,000	47,362	148%
Support to Faizabad Nursery	15,000	18,014	120%
Training at the FFS	14,400	2,068	14%
Training for female farmers	4,000	2,847	71%
Training on IGA	9,000	980	11%
Seed support to Seed banks	32,000	29,891	93%
Vocational training	19,200	19,084	99%
Capacity building CBOs	10,500	12,807	122%
Training market facilitators	4,500	1,512	34%
Training for the CDCs	20,000	4,742	24%
Awareness on women rights equality & gender	4,500	-	0%

Was the project M&E system fit for purpose?

Concern Afghanistan uses a Results-Based Approach and has been further developing its systems over the last year. However there remains room for improvement. There is a lot of useful information gathered at field level but it is not all collected at central M&E level. Senior staff reported that in 2014 and 2015 that M&E focused largely on the annual reports and surveys with no regular monthly system in place or been used. In 2016, the new dashboard¹¹ system was introduced which looks effective, however to easily access information from 2014 and 2015 was difficult as the new dash board system does not link directly with the previous system. The evaluator had to get most data directly from the district managers and agricultural extension staff especially in the field as it was not available in Taloqan. Project staff also mentioned that there was little feedback from M&E to the project team to inform them of issues that needed correction. This is not surprising as there seems to be a lack of good analysis on the existing data such as overall crop and vegetable yields, benefit of the grain banks, mortality on livestock etc. For a food security project with IGAs, marketing and value chain analysis, there was no programme activity to monitor and evaluate market prices over the project period which seems unusual.

How was Value for Money (VFM) achieved through delivery of results? How well did the project apply VFM principles in relation to delivery of outcome?

The greenhouse and plastic tunnels seem to provide good value for money at €155 and €50 each respectively. They should have a long lifespan and the plastic can be replaced locally. They produce a diversity of fresh vegetables especially in late autumn and early spring and

¹¹ An excel based system with all the project data in one easy to access location based and updated monthly based on the activities list in the project logframe.

some over the winter months. This saves the families having to buy vegetables at these times when market prices tend to be high. The orchards which cost €310 are good VFM in the long term as they can potentially earn high income annually (up to €507¹²) from the sale of almonds, apricots, apples, walnuts and pears. They take time to come into production but they will start getting a small amount of production in the third year. All those visited were in good condition with all the sapling growing well. In the meantime they are intercropping fodder and vegetables such as Alfalfa and water melon between the saplings and one farm reported earning €42, from this in one year. The chickens are good VFM as cost a total of €195 to distribute per HH in the first year but can potentially make a profit of €174 per year¹³ subsequently for the HH. They can also be reproduced locally as the project supplied 2 roosters per HH as they need a replacement policy.

The irrigation canals cost €74,268 but irrigate 1,030 jirebs (206 ha) or €72/jireb (€360.5/ha) so make economic sense over time through increased yields (can be more than tripled with good irrigation) and mitigating the risk of droughts on crop production and as such represent good value for money.

Vocational training was around €415 each so is VFM as they will be able to earn income in the long term.

The improved wheat seed especially in 2014 and 2015 was perhaps not good VFM as many farmers reported poor yields. Farmers reported that the improved varieties were not adapted to their specific locations. Field staff reported that some farmers planted them at the wrong time. Discussions with the FFSs indicated some poor crop husbandry practices especially regarding weeding. Soil analysis in 2015 showed high PH which would contribute to low yields therefore one could conclude that a combination of the above factors and poor rainfall reduced the impact of the improved varieties. However yields for the improved varieties were reported as better than traditional varieties on the demonstration plots so more analysis needs to be done why they performed poorly in the farmers' fields. A 2004¹⁴ Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) report on the use of improved wheat seeds questions the assumptions on the supply of improved wheat varieties and mentions the same issues of adaption to local conditions, the need for high standards of crop husbandry including expensive inputs including fertiliser and pesticides etc. and that they are more suitable to rich farmers who can afford the expensive inputs needed to get results with improved varieties.

The grain banks cost an average of €1,480 but the initial budget was €1,000 each so they cost an extra 48%¹⁵ which does not appear to be good value for money. In practice they store very little seeds and are underutilised. Kabakhan community in Namakab reported that they stored only 1,100kgs in 2016 which could be stored much cheaper at HH level. For example by using insect proof hermetically¹⁶ sealed bags costing €3 per 50 kgs bag, this 1,100 kgs could be stored for €66 euro for one year.

Sheep cost €203 for 2 per HH but with the low performance reported, they may not represent VFM or be appropriate for the extreme poor as they have high feed costs¹⁷ over the winter months and the pasture¹⁸ also costs money as the shepherd has to be paid. The recipients mentioned feed cost over winter as a major issue as many are very poor and do not have surplus cash for ongoing expenses.

¹² Based on discussion with beneficiaries with orchards and estimated yield per tree and price per kg

¹³ Based on average of 200 eggs/hen /year and feed costs of 2cents/day and sell eggs at 8 cent/egg

¹⁴ Wheat Seed And Agriculture Programming In Afghanistan: Its Potential To Impact On Livelihoods. Coke, A. AREU 2004

¹⁵ The communities requested larger Grain stores than planned hence the price increased compared to the budget

¹⁶ African Post Harvest Losses Information System (APHLIS) 2017. Part 2. Reducing on-farm post harvest losses.

¹⁷ Winter feed cost reported at €24 per sheep

¹⁸ Standard rate is 100afgs (€1.4) per month per sheep.

From speaking with senior project staff, more consideration could have been given to value for money especially as some key activities were done at the end of project in 2016 when some budget lines were over spent significantly while others were underspent.

What would have been the situation if this project funding had not been spent?

Concern is the main NGO working in Namakab and Chahab and Raghistan districts and the situation would be much worse for the extreme poor had they been deprived of this external support. The project has contributed through sheep and chicken distributions, food for work, cash for work, cash while on vocational training, vegetable production, distributions of seed wheat, peas, lentil and flax and potatoes, construction of community grain banks, irrigation canals and capacity building including FFSs and nutrition and hygiene training. If the project funding was not spent, the food security situation would not have improved, the nutrition and hygiene situation would still be poor, there would have been reduced incomes due to no IGAs, or cash or food for work and gender equality would not have been addressed by having the SHGs and associated trainings.

What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?

Staffing was a problem throughout the project with delays at the start in recruitment of key staff such as the livelihood adviser and female¹⁹ CDFs. There were 3 project managers during the 3 years implementation phase which led to delays in implementation and lack of a clear overview and understanding of the project by the staff. In 2014, Concern actually had no office in Chahab and staff had to travel from the Rustaq office which was 1.5 hrs drive away. Activities were disrupted and field movement restricted by factors outside the control of the project such as increased insecurity during the prolonged presidential election in 2014. Security concerns interrupted the project implementation in all districts and especially in Raghistan. In 2015 Concern had to exit from 5 communities in Raghistan altogether due to insecurity in the area and have been unable to return since.

There were a number of major emergencies during the project period including 2 major Armed Opposition Groups attacks on neighbouring Kunduz which led to an influx of Internally Displaced People into Takhar province and LRRD staff had to be temporarily reassigned to help with these emergencies. There was a major earthquake in 2015 in Badakshan which also led to an emergency response and an interruption to the programme implementation. There were more minor but still distributive issues such as landslides and flooding cutting off access to the project sites.

Did the monitoring system used capture the correct information at the appropriate times throughout the project?

It appears that the M&E system was mainly used for end of year data collection. It was also based on the logframe activities, which while good did not capture key data such as crop yields and livestock performance which are more seasonal. Some indicators were confusing with more than one indicator in the same statement and some were not captured in the M&E system such as numbers of NRMCs established. A lot of data exists but in different formats and at different levels such as field and district but it was hard to get a good overview at one location of all the key data pertaining to the project.

The system was changed in 2016 with the introduction of the new dashboard system which is a good improvement but still needs some fine-tuning and more work on the analysis aspect.

To what extent has the project used monitoring information as learning towards course correction?

There was little evidence that monitoring information was used for course correction. A lot of information was gathered but analysis seems to have been weak with no obvious clear

¹⁹ Women showed little interest shown in working in the remote project districts. This may be due to cultural barriers for women working away from their family homes and the need to have a male relative as a chaperone.

feedback mechanism. The main change observed was in the approach to purchasing the sheep for IGA. In 2016 the approach changed to a cash and voucher system for the beneficiaries to procure their own sheep as opposed to the earlier direct supply of sheep by Concern. The wheat seed distribution was also changed to a cash and voucher system for the beneficiaries to purchase their own wheat seed in 2016.

4.3 Project effectiveness/effect

Were the outputs and outcomes achieved and to what degree (assessed through a baseline/end line indicator data comparison against results framework/logical framework targets, monitoring data, and data collected in the evaluation)?

According to the project log frame the following main expected results or outcomes were planned:

ER 1) Increased production of food through better use of agricultural resources at target household, community and district levels and improved nutrition behavioural practices.

ER 2) Opportunities for income generating and food security measures have been improved for vulnerable households (50% of families headed by women).

ER 3) Increased access to value chain and improved market linkages between targeted producer groups (especially women) and reputed traders in the targeted communities and districts.

ER 4) The productive capacities of local institutions and local authorities strengthened

Please see annex 6.1 for the evaluation matrix for baseline/end line indicator comparison.

Under outcome ER1: The main outcome indicators were:

- % of targeted HHs utilizing new agricultural technologies
- % targeted HHs have adequate food and able to sell surplus for income
- Improved knowledge and behaviour for appropriate nutrition practices

Actual achievement of outcomes.

For HHs utilizing new agricultural technologies introduced through the FFS extension approach, the percentage increased from 4% in the baseline to 13.4% in end line. The project established 32 FFS which trained 931 farmers (F629, M302)²⁰. The new agricultural technologies introduced included; land management/cultivation, introduction to the use of machinery, fertilizer application, pesticide/herbicides application, land preparation, seed selection, planting time and methods, irrigation, system for wheat intensification, soil and water conservation, integrated pest management, composting and harvesting and use of greenhouses/plastic tunnels.

FFS FGDs mainly mentioned improved seeds, fertiliser and pesticide/herbicides as the key technologies they utilised. The often found challenge that farmers are more interested in receiving physical agricultural inputs than in receiving training was mentioned as an issue during discussions with staff and the farmer field schools (FFS). This finding is supported by the low uptake of these new technologies by the farmers in practice, which was only 13.4% in the end line. It needs a lot of time to convince these farmers to change their practices.

The project supplied a considerable amount of improved seeds especially wheat seed at 37,628²¹ kgs to 758 farmers on 1,354 jirebs (270ha). Seed recipients had to sign agreements to reimburse the seeds after the harvest. However in 2014 and 2015 the yields were disappointing. In 2015, there was a drought in the project area and all wheat varieties yields

²⁰ Based on 2015 annual report

²¹ Estimated at 50 kgs per HH

were down. Despite technical training on crop husbandry, the FFS FGDs reported not getting good results from the project supplied improved wheat seeds despite the results in the demonstration plots been reported as 25% higher than the local varieties. In 2016, locally sourced wheat seeds were supplied which are more adapted to the specific agro ecological areas especially for Namakab. The FFS FGDs reported good yields from the other project supplied seeds such as pea, lentil and flax. Improved flax variety yields 10% more than local variety and gives better quality oil. The project also distributed a medicinal plant called Ferula (*Ferula asafoetida*) which has a high market value but it was only distributed end of 2016 so there is no evidence of impact yet. The vegetable production through utilization of plastic tunnels and greenhouse was effective and produced a range of vegetables including; okra, squash, tomato, spinach, onion, carrot, turnip, coriander, pumpkin, cucumber, cabbage and radish. This helped improve the dietary diversity at HH level.

To improve food production in the longer term, 198 fruit orchards were established in the communities and supplied with range of saplings, apricot, apple, almond, pear, grapes, cherry, persimmon and walnuts. These have not come into production yet but some will produce fruits during 2017. KIs found that in the meantime orchard farmers are using the space between the trees to grow vegetables, water melon and also fodder such as alfalfa.

To increase crop and vegetable production and mitigate the effects of variable rainfall, 6 irrigation canals were renovated which irrigated a total of 1,030 jirebs (206ha) and resulted in improved yields for the beneficiaries with access to this water.

The LRRD project continued support to the central nursery in Faizabad as a training resource centre for providing training to farmers and government staff from DAIL. It also served as a valuable demonstration site for farmers attending the FFSs. It has produced large quantities of various saplings to support communities to establish orchards and demonstrated that a wide range of vegetables including onions, cucumber, tomatoes, radish, and squash can be grown in greenhouses during the wintertime.

Under the indicator percentage targeted HHs have adequate food and able to sell surplus for income. This increased from 9.1% in the baseline to 90.5% in the end line. However it should be noted that the actual number of HHs reporting adequate food (only 21) and able to sell a surplus in the end line is very small at 19 respondents out of a total survey respondents of 337. But 19 selling a surplus out of 21 is 90.5%. Therefore the majority (316) still do not have adequate food and are not generating any surplus for sale. This was supported during the FGDs with the majority mentioning not having a surplus to sell and all food being used for household consumption. There is still a hunger gap of 2.3 months (down from 3.3 months in baseline) based on the end line survey so most beneficiaries can't meet their basic food requirement from own production let alone have a surplus to sell for income. During the FGDs some mentioned they might have a small surplus of vegetables at times, which they sell to their neighbours or give to other extreme poor people in their community.

Under the indicator improved knowledge and behaviour for appropriate nutrition practices a range of activities were implemented. The first activity was carrying out a comprehensive nutrition survey in Raghistan district by an expert from the Concern Kenya Country Programme supported by the Concern's senior nutrition advisor based in Dublin in 2014.

The survey results showed that the Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) was 12.7%, which is categorised by WHO as serious²². This was higher than the National GAM Rates²³ of 2004 and 2013, which were 9.5% and 9.0% respectively.

²² WHO Classification of Malnutrition: <5% - Normal, 5 - <10% - Poor, 10 - <15% - Serious, >=15% - Critical/Emergency

²³ Afghanistan – National Nutrition Survey, UNICEF (2013)

The prevalence of chronic malnutrition (stunting) was found to be 62.0%, which is considered very critical according to the WHO classification, while the prevalence of severe stunting was found to be 28.9%. The stunting level in the survey area was found to be significantly higher than the national average of 40.9%. Dietary diversity was low and Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices were below the recommended standards. The study clearly indicated that the low awareness on proper hygiene and sanitation practices and poor IYCF all contributed towards a high prevalence of malnutrition²⁴.

In response to this, IEC Material for training and awareness raising on nutrition and hygiene was developed by the Concern nutrition officer who sourced nutrition education materials from UNICEF, Save the Children and MEDAIR who specialize in this field.

To facilitate training at community level, community-based nutrition facilitators (one male and one female per community) were selected to carry out nutrition and hygiene sessions at community level. To assist them in carrying out this training, hygiene and kitchen kits²⁵ were distributed to them. The training sessions included topics such as personal and environmental health, positive sanitation practices, child-care and child protection education for mothers, dietary diversity, preparation of food, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and complementary feeding for infants from 6-23 months. Hygiene kits were also distributed to selected vulnerable households. However, due to serious levels of insecurity in Raghistan, hygiene kits were not distributed there. Nutrition and hygiene training was also provided to the SHG groups.

Information on this indicator was not collected in the end line but the FGDs during the evaluation found that beneficiaries had improved knowledge on nutrition and hygiene practices especially in regard to IYCF and hand washing. This was also verified in the end line with improvements in dietary diversity. The CDFs also reported positive changes at community level, e.g. improved breast feeding practices, better dietary diversity due to a more varied use of vegetables and healthier children with lower levels of diarrhoea etc.

Under outcome ER2: Opportunities for income generating and food security measures have been improved for vulnerable households (50% of families headed by women).

The main outcome indicators were:

- % of HHs operating an IGA who are able to generate a profit (disaggregated by gender)
- % of HH trained in vocational skills utilizing these for income generation
- % of target HH utilizing grain banks

Actual achievement of outcome

Under the indicator **percentage of HHs operating an IGA who are able to generate a profit (disaggregated by gender)**, the baseline was 8% (3.6% for male and 12.4% for female and end line was significantly higher at 93.2% for both male and female. In the end line, 133 out of 335 or 39.7% indicated that they operated an IGA²⁶ and out of that group, 124 or 93.2% claimed to have made a profit. It should be noted that while this is a very significant improvement, most of the IGAs referred to were not part of the LRRD project activities.

In 2014, a market analysis was conducted to identify feasible IGAs and capacity build Concern staff to support this activity. In response to the market analysis two types of IGAs were selected. Sheep distributions for targeted vulnerable households and small scale shop keeping (food, non-food and hardware items) was suggested by the female members of the SHGs. In 2016, poultry was added in Namakab in response to feedback from the communities.

²⁴ Badakshan Raghistan Nutrition Survey Report November 2014

²⁵ Hygiene kit items include: towel, toothpaste, tooth brush, soap and box, shampoo, hand washing liquid and nail clipper. Kitchen items include: gas, pots, plate, bowls, cutlery and dish washing liquid.

²⁶ IGAs were: Poultry, Bee keeping, Weaving, Handicraft, Gabion weaving, Small Business, Shop keeping and other

In Raghistan District, 12 households (8FHH, 4MHH) were selected to establish small community shops. For IGA with sheep, 292 sheep were distributed to 146 HH at 2 per HH along with 3 months' supply of fodder and animal husbandry training and training on how to run an IGA. A total of 1,628 chickens, were distributed to 74 families at 20 hens and 2 roosters each along with an initial supply of chicken food and related items. During the evaluation, the chickens were doing well and some were laying eggs for HH consumption. The 12 small shops in Raghistan were not evaluated as they are in the communities that fell under the control of the Taliban in 2015.

During the FGDs and KII with livestock recipients, the results were disappointing with many reporting that the sheep received were not of high quality or in some cases not in lamb despite being checked by a DAIL veterinary surgeon before distribution. Mortality²⁷ was high²⁸ and lambing rates low with no reported case of any lambs being passed on to other extreme poor beneficiaries as was the agreed modality. Based on this feedback, Concern reviewed the sheep distribution process and switched to a cash and voucher system for the final distribution in 2016. With this approach, the beneficiaries selected their own sheep in the local area and this appears to have been more successful according to feedback from the FGDs and KIIs during the evaluation. Fodder was not supplied in Takhar district (it was in Raghistan) by Concern this time which was reported as an issue by some of the recipients due to its high cost over the winter period. Data from this last batch of sheep has not been analysed as they were only distributed at the end of December 2016.

For the indicator **percentage of HH trained in vocational skills utilizing these for income generation**, in the baseline, the percentage of HHs trained in vocational skills was 17.3% and of those, 59% were utilizing those skills for income generation. In the end line this had dropped to 13.4% trained in vocational skills but with 88.9% of those utilizing those skills for income generation. Based on their interest in and willingness to undertake vocational training, 46 youths (18 female and 28 male) from poor and vulnerable houses were selected for practical vocational training with the objective that they would use this for income generation in the future. This could be self-employed or employed in small businesses. The vocations finally selected were, tailoring, carpentry and tin smithing/metal work. Training was provided by local skilled artisans and the trainees received financial support if the training occurred outside their home village. They received no financial support if trained within their home community. They all received a package of appropriate tools and equipment and some raw materials at the end of training to help them get established. The trainers received financial support for providing the training services. However, the training only commenced at the end of 2016 and during the end line evaluation, none of those spoken with had actually started earning any income from their newly acquired skills as they had just recently finished training. However it is expected that they will be able to utilise these new skill in the future to generate income. The women who trained in tailoring said they can now save money by making their own clothes.

Under the indicator **percentage of target HH utilizing grain banks**, the baseline figure was zero %, the end line figure was 22.6%. During the project, a total of 32 grain banks were constructed at community level for the purpose of acting as resource centres for poor farmers to access improved seeds (wheat, peas, flax and lentils) in their own community to support increased harvest yields. Concern supplied improved seed to the grain banks which are managed by community elected GBC who then loan out the seed to poor farmers at planting time. After the harvest, the farmers then agree to reimburse the same quantity of seed plus an agreed extra amount to the GBC. This is then stored under good conditions in the grain bank for distribution at the next planting season. The extra quantity collected is used to help other farmers receive improved seeds or to help the extreme poor in the community with food

²⁷ Reasons given included that some sheep were old and weak when received, some were not adapted to the cold mountain conditions in Namakab, some got sick despite been checked by the DAIL veterinary surgeon beforehand and some were reported as killed by wolves while at pasture.

²⁸ Mortality of 12% and lambing rate of 38% average for both Namakab and Chahab

if required and also acts as a contingency stock to mitigate risks. Training in the management of the grain bank was provided to the GBC members. The farmers utilising the grain banks were also in the FFSs where they received technical support on crop production. During FGDs with the GBC members, the grain reimbursement system was based on returning an extra 10kgs seed for every 70kgs borrowed. Utilisation of the grain banks at 22.6% is disappointing but the FGDs highlighted issues including poor yields of the initially supplied improved varieties, lack of understanding by the communities on how GBCs should actually function and in some instances a lack of trust regarding the security of the grain bank for their seed in case it gets stolen.

In the project proposal, it was planned to provide adult literacy training using the REFLECT methodology for SHG beneficiaries to help them manage their IGAs. Unfortunately this activity was seriously delayed and did not take off during the programme due to the lack of approval by the Ministry of Education which was beyond the control of the programme. In 2016 it was agreed to use the Ministry of Education's adult literacy project to train 20 out of 27 SHGs. However it took longer than expected to get the MoU signed with the ministry for this activity and also finding educated women to conduct these literacy classes in remote communities was very difficult and to date no actual adult literacy training has occurred. Beneficiaries were identified during 2016 and stationary/books purchased. The training will now be provided through a new Irish Aid funded project called Multi Sector Resilience project (MSRP) in 2017.

Under outcome ER3: Increased access to value chain and improved market linkages between targeted producer groups (especially women) and reputed traders in the targeted communities and districts.

The main outcome indicators were:

- Number of producer groups established and linked to market facilities (especially female producer groups)
- % of males and females who sell their product in the market (disaggregated by gender)
- % of target beneficiaries with access to and utilizing value chain facilities

Actual achievement of outcome

For the indicator, **number of producer groups established and linked to market facilities (especially female producer groups)**. The first activity for this was a detailed "Market Feasibility and Value Chain Study" which was carried out in 2014 by an external consultant who also provided training to Concern staff on markets and the value chain approach. The study outlined marketing challenges linked to the unproductive winter season, the remoteness and inaccessibility of the target areas, logistical challenges, limited capacity of community members, lack of markets and infrastructure and a persistent hunger gap causing a critical shortage of food availability. Ten (10) producer groups with a total membership of 105 community members (all males) were formed in Namakab in 2015. Due the very low levels of production on their farms, they had no surplus to sell as all production was consumed at household level, hence they are no longer active.

For the indicator, **percentage of males and females who sell their product in the market (disaggregated by gender)** the baseline was 25% male and 0% females. In the end line survey it was reported that 77.5% had access to a market and out of that group, 54.5% male and 30.7% females, sold their product in the market which is a significant increase over the baseline especially for the females. The majority accessed the market by car, walking or donkey/horse and the average time to get there was over 1 hour. The main items sold at the markets were livestock, foodstuff, wood and handicraft. Of those who physically go to the market, 35% go once a month, 30% once a week and only 10% every day. While the end line data is positive, it must be noted that the products mentioned are not directly attributable to the

LRRD activities. The project identified 16 market facilitators in Takhar province in 2015 following the market and value change survey who were already involved in trading eggs, skin and yogurt to local markets. Training was provided on the collective selling approach, cost benefit analysis, on-time supply of the product, value addition, post-harvest storage, establishing market linkages and running their existing IGAs. In 2015 groups of Lead-Farmers, Local Producer Groups, gardeners and NRM committee members attended Agriculture Festivals and Fairs to help build on their marketing skills, as well as form market linkages.

During the evaluation field visits, staff reported that the market facilitators were no longer active with the project beneficiaries. Many farmers in the villages stated that their production levels were very low and as such were mainly used for household consumption, with very little produce remaining for sale. Few beneficiaries spoken to during the evaluation mentioned selling in the market with some of the kitchen garden women reporting that they sell to their neighbours but not in the market.

For the indicator percentage of target beneficiaries with access to and utilizing value chain facilities

This was zero in the baseline and was not asked for in the end line as the project did not carry out specific added value activities such as food processing and packaging etc. In the field staff reported that as the producer groups were not active due to low production levels of raw materials, very little was done under this activity. One of the FFS FGDs did report that the project gave them flax seed and that they were processing this into oil by themselves for HH consumption. They also reported a good market demand for lentils which were also distributed by the project. The project also distributed a medicinal plant called Ferula which has a high market value but it was only distributed end of 2016 so has no impact yet. During a FGD in Chakaran community in Chahab with the kitchen garden beneficiaries, some of the women said they now have a surplus of tomatoes and are able to preserve some of the tomatoes as a paste for use in the winter months. They sell some to their neighbours as well as selling squash.

Under outcome ER4. The productive capacities of local institutions and local authorities strengthened.

The main outcome indicators were:

- Number of community institutions (producer groups, SHGs, FFAs, NRMCs, federations) established & functional (conducting regular meetings and implementing actions agreed)
- % of community institutions (CDCs, NRMCS, etc.) with adequate women's representation (i.e. women regularly attend meetings and input into discussions and decision making)
- % of women participating in community institutions who feel able to actively contribute to decision making in community forums
- Number of actions taken by district/provincial authorities/ food security cluster as a result of issues highlighted through community institutions

Actual achievement of outcome

For the indicator **Number of community institutions (producer groups, SHGs, FFAs, NRMCs, federations) established & functional (conducting regular meetings and implementing actions agreed)** the baseline survey has 32 CDC, 1 producer group, 1 grain bank, 1 NRM and 1 SHG. At the end of the project, this has risen to 32 CDCs, 10 producer groups, 32 grain banks, 21 NRMCs²⁹ and 27 SHGs.

²⁹ Only for Chahab and Namakab, does not include Raghistan.

The two project locations in Takhar province, Chahab and Namakab were new to Concern and therefore this made it more challenging for Concern staff to be accepted and trusted by the communities at the start. The project staff held several coordination meeting at the start with community members to encourage communities to mobilize and form Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to support natural resource management and project implementation. Initially, project staff faced resistance from community members when trying to encourage female participation in CBOs due to the conservative culture in which they work. After successful dialogue with male community members (including mullahs and shuras), the communities agreed to the idea of supporting women through female SHGs and to ensure that the voice of women was heard within the community. Staff observed notable behaviour changes in some of these communities where men and women are attending trainings and meetings together, without segregation. During the evaluation, one CDC male member who was also a mullah³⁰, said that " *women's participation is essential for the success of any project and the women on the CDC are actually in charge of the money*", so attitudes are changing.

The NRMCS were established to manage natural resource conservation and to mobilize community members during NRM activities, they also play an important role in reducing conflict between and within communities.

A total of 27 SHGs with 610 female members were formed to support the extreme poor women and to help them solve their own problems. Concern supported each SHG to establish saving and loan schemes. They received training in book keeping, financial management, background to SHGs, leadership and management, gender and human rights, conflict management, nutrition and hygiene awareness and also in running IGAs. Each of these groups are saving a small amount (from 20 to 50 AFGs per member) of money each month. The savings made are used to provide loans to members and non-members based on specific criteria for repayment and for various purposes such as medical costs, weddings, IGAs, etc. However to date very few loans have actually been made. Reasons for this are unclear as the women report clear lending guidelines despite cultural issues around charging interest and repayment rates but perhaps a lack of suitable feasible IGA opportunities in these very poor communities discourage women from borrowing money to set up small IGAs as they tend to be risk adverse. During the evaluation with the SHG FGDs, members reported been happy with the groups but say it can be a challenge to have the monthly 20-50 Afg as they are extremely poor with no income, jobs or skills. SHG members received support for IGAs and vocational training and kitchen gardens etc. and served as the main focal point for female related activities.

Ten producer groups with a total membership of 105 community members (all males) were formed during the project in Namakab district, they received support to establish offices (within NRMCS office). There was a plan to link them to Farmers Federations at District or Provincial level. However at this stage farmers are only producing enough for their own families. The producer groups were also to link with farmers with orchards but they are not in production yet but in the future it is hoped that the producer groups can be renewed to help the orchard farmers sell their products and link with markets.

During the project, a total of 32 grain banks were constructed at community level. For each Grain bank a community elected Grain Bank Committees (GBC) was set up to manage the grain bank. Training in the management of the grain banks was provided to the GBC members including storage, disbursement and collecting of seeds with the farmers.

For the **indicator percentage of community institutions (CDCs, NRMCS, etc.) with adequate women's representation (i.e. women regularly attend meetings and input into discussions and decision making)**. The baseline data on this refers to 1 SHG. The end line figure for women participating in community organisations was 65.58% which is a significant

³⁰ Mullah Ghias in Khishmai Khurshid community in Chahab

improvement over the year one when most community institutions were 100% male. The end line data also shows that women attend regularly with 72.9% attending monthly. The FGDs indicate that it's mainly the NRMCS that have women (11.9%) members as the CDCs and GBCs are all male while the SHGs are 100% female. The below table indicates that women's representation is still quite low apart from the SHGs which may explain the high end line figure.

Table 2: Break down of gender in the NRMCS

#	Districts	# Communities	NRMCS formed	Members		Total	% female
				#Male	#Female		
1	Namakab	10	10	54	8	62	12.9
2	Chahab	11	11	72	9	81	11.1
Total	2	21	21	126	17	143	11.9

For the indicator **percentage of women participating in community institutions who feel able to actively contribute to decision making in community forums** the baseline figure was 16% (of which 50% was through a male relative). The end line figure was 54.9% which is a significant increase over the baseline, however 30% said they are not allowed to attend meetings. Speaking to KIIs indicated significant improvements in the participation of women in the community decision making forums given the very conservative nature of these communities. Women are now able to work outside of the home in these communities which is a positive development and they can partake in the cash for work schemes. However it was mentioned that they get paid less than their male counterparts.

For the indicator **Number of actions taken by district/provincial authorities/ food security cluster as a result of issues highlighted through community institutions**, the baseline found that the amongst the members of the community institutions, 30% share opinions and 15% feel authorities take action based on this. In the end line survey this has increased significantly to 51.6% and 74.3%.

Concern played a coordination and facilitation role between community members and with governmental line departments. For example, project staff collected community requests i.e. safe drinking water and school facilities from beneficiaries. Project staff shared this information with sectorial experts within the organisation who in turn communicated this information with respective line ministries at regular sectoral meetings. Project staff attended coordination meetings which were conducted through governmental departments and attended by other NGOs at District and Provincial level. At these meetings, Concern advocated for improved health and educational services. Where possible line ministries incorporated this into their Annual Plans. It was noted during KIIs with the Directorate of Public Health and DAIL at provincial level in Taloqan that they faced a number of serious challenges including a shortage of staff and resources which limits their ability to respond to communities' needs.

Was the project logic well thought through and did the activities lead to the desired outcomes? The project logic was well thought out in addressing the identified needs to be addressed in reducing food and nutrition security. However due to a number of issues most of which were beyond the control of the project, not all the activities were implemented on time or as planned. The outcome of increased production of food and improved nutritional behaviour was achieved. The opportunities for IGAs were not fully realised and the marketing and value chain outcome was also not fully achieved. A good number of community institutions were established and functioning and their capacities were built.

What steps were taken to address issues of inequality and ensure the interests of the most marginalised were taken on board during project planning, implementation and monitoring? How effective was this?

The project used the Livelihoods Enhancement Action Planning (LEAP) methodology from the start to identify in a fully participatory manner the most extreme poor and vulnerable families in each community. The beneficiaries were categorised into 1) very poor, 2) poor, 3) medium and 4) rich. However while most activities targeted groups 1&2, it was observed that some, such as Urea distribution in 2016 targeted 54% from categories 3&4. Likewise lentil distribution in 2016 targeted 46% in category 3&4. Obviously, land ownership even of a small area may categorise a person as not very poor but still be targeted, more attention needs to be given to ensure the most marginalised are targeted and reduce targeting of the rich although this may be unavoidable in some circumstances due to the socio-political context in each community. Targeting of a few rich farmers may be justified if they are proven early adapters of technology as this could serve as farmer to farmer technology transfer and could be connected with the FFS approach. Special emphasis was placed on meeting the needs of women and the SHGs were especially established to target activities to women. In the Afghanistan context, female staff are essential to organise activities at the community level to ensure women's involvement and therefore Concern recruited female CDFs and a female nutritionist. It tried to have female agricultural staff but the applications from women were very limited with little interest shown in working in the remote project districts. This may be due to cultural barriers for women working away from their family homes and the need to have a male relative as a chaperone. Overall effective use was made of the female CDFs and nutritionist as evidenced by the high number of female participants in the project activities. People with disabilities were identified as one of the target groups at the planning stage with 150 disabled HH as a target. Some of the respondents encountered during the evaluation field trips were disabled. However no specific references were found to their specific interests during the evaluation or in the reports read.

Did the project successfully achieve results in each dimension of extreme poverty and what are the potential implications of this? The project built assets at community and HH level and helped HHs get a better return on their assets or placed them in a position to get an improved return in the future such as with the livestock and orchards, vocational training and the irrigation canals and through the established community institutions. Good results were achieved in addressing inequality and a significant number of women benefitted through the activities and the SHGs helped to empower women. Vulnerability to environmental risks were reduced through the irrigation canals and the orchards which will help stabilise the steep slopes they are located on. However Chahab and Namakab still remain highly vulnerable to natural disasters such as flooding and landslides and the road access is constantly affected by either floods or cut off with landslides. There were no specific DRR activities in the LRRD project apart from training. The orchards can play a role in the future in reducing the vulnerability of hill sides by stabilising the soil but as they are quite small (500-1,000m²), this effect will be limited. Some of the project assets are still vulnerable to natural disasters but it is hoped that other projects in the communities will address these risks.

To what extent were the available resources best mobilized and utilized?

The available resources could have been better utilised from the perspective of the outcomes actually achieved. A number of problems were encountered which reduced the impact of the resources supplied such as poor yields from the improved wheat seed and poor performance from the supplied livestock.

Were the risks properly identified in a Risk Management Plan and then, mitigated?

No mention of an official risk management plan for the LRRD was found in the documents or mentioned by the project staff. However the insecurity risks in Raghistan was properly identified and the project withdrew from these highly insecure communities in 2015 and relocated to a new field office in Yawan district.

Extent to which the outcomes were achieved in relation to targets set in the results based framework, through comparison between baseline and end line indicator values (using appropriate statistical test).

The comparison between baseline and end line indicators is explained in the main narrative above under each main expected result. The evaluation matrix is in annex 6.1

4.4 Project impact

What was the project's overall impact and how did this compare with what was expected?

At overall objective level, the project activities have strengthened the resilience of food and nutrition systems for the most food insecure communities in the target districts by building community assets and capacity building to produce food and have more food diversity and IGA opportunities. The end line shows a 27% drop in HH income, but this is due to the seasonality effect as the baseline was carried out in August when there are more income generating opportunities especially as labour for harvesting. The end line was in March when there are very few income generating opportunities and hence HH income for that month is normally low. There was no follow up nutritional survey in Raghistan at the end of the project due to a lack of access so there is no matching end line data on GAM and SAM. However the MoPH in Takhar reported a current GAM of 8.7% and SAM of 2.6% which is classified as poor but not serious. However the communities still remain highly vulnerable to natural disasters especially flooding and landslides which can have disastrous effects on their livelihoods due to the fragile unstable condition of the mountainous areas they inhabit.

At the specific objective level, the project has made impact with an increase in dietary diversity from an overall 4.1 to 5.6 but with a significant improvement for females from 3.3 to 5.8. This proportionally higher increase for females indicates improved food and nutrition security for these women. FGDs report the impact of this as healthier and happier children, money saved on medicine due to less illness and better quality meals at HH level. Agricultural productivity has improved and the average length of the hunger gap has been reduced by one month from 3.3 to 2.3 months.

The impact under ER1 is increased food production through; new agricultural technologies including improved seed for wheat, peas, potatoes, flax and lentils; farmers training at the FFSs, vegetable kitchen gardens, use of plastic tunnels for extended growing season and growing in the winter time and irrigation canals. The cash-for-work project used in the construction of the irrigation canals had a positive impact on the local labour used in their production as it gave them access to cash to purchase food etc. The irrigation canals help to significantly improve yields as yield can be more than tripled with good irrigation³¹ and reduce the previous waste of water through leaks and also to reduce conflict over water, which was a problem beforehand. Poultry distribution has impacted with the availability of eggs for the HHs and the sheep will impact in the longer term with meat, dung for fuel, wool, and income to buy food. Although not an immediate impact, the establishment of orchards will provide fruits and nuts in the near future.

The impact of nutrition and hygiene training and awareness raising has been improved knowledge attitudes and practices which has impacted on reduced child morbidity and mortality. Dietary diversity has improved due to the kitchen gardens and plastic tunnels and greenhouses. The women reported easier access to vegetables as they now grow their own

³¹ Average yields from rainfed land = 35-40 ser/jireb and from irrigated land = 150 sers/jireb as quoted by Muhammad Alim "Alimi" at DAIL in Taloqan.

compared to before the project when they had little money to buy them. They also reported better quality meals at HH level due to the increased diversity available and also from training provided in food preparation. They now have better IYCF practices and all asked know about Exclusive Breast Feeding (EBF) for 6 months and Early Initiation of Breast Feeding (EIBF) etc. One women reported that she is now breast feeding her children as before she put them on cow's milk after 4-5 days. Others reported that they can now identify signs of malnutrition in the children and know how to care for their children better than before.

On hygiene, they reported that some diseases are reduced including skin diseases and diarrhoea, and malaria due to awareness by Concern and mosquito nets supplied by MoPH. They are now using latrines build by Concern on other projects implemented since in the same communities, and also some people have made their own latrines based on Concern ones as they see the benefit. They now are practicing regular hand washing using soap, brushing their teeth every morning and keeping the environment clean and washing dishes with washing up liquid instead of just cold water.

The support to the central nursery in Faizabad as a Training Resource Centre for providing training to farmers and government staff from DAIL has greatly improved DAILs capacity to train farmers and to produce large quantities of saplings to support communities to establish orchards and for tree planting in general. This will have a long term positive impact for Faizabad and Takhar province.

The impact of ER2 is a reported significant increase in those operating IGAs and generating a profit going from 8% at baseline to the end line figure of 39.58% indicating that they operated an IGA³² and out of that group 93.3% claimed to have made a profit. The project distributed sheep and poultry and established small shops to support IGA. From these specific project activities, the evaluation saw little evidence of profit generation as the initial sheep distributions had disappointing results and last distribution in 2016 was too recent to have produced any impact on income. It should however produce income later in 2017 when they start to sell the lambs. The poultry distribution was also towards the end of 2016 and hence production normally decreases over the cold short daylight winter months so this has had little impact on income to date but should increase over the coming warmer and longer daylight months. The small shops established in 2015 were working well at the time with incomes ranging from 250 – 500 Afg (3.5-7 Euro) per week. However they are inaccessible now due to security issues in Raghistan so it's difficult to know their current status.

The impact of the Grain banks is mixed. The poor yields in 2015 had a negative impact on them as there was little wheat seed available for redistribution. The management of them by the GBCs is not very effective partially due to a lack of understanding by the communities on how GBCs should function and issues of ownership and worries about security of the stored grain. Some of them are functioning better and FGDs reported the impact as having seed for distribution to poor farmers and also having seed that can be used to help the very poor during hunger gap if needed. The GBCs also facilitated the distribution of other seeds such as peas, flax, potato, ferula and linseed which has a positive impact. The storage conditions are good and should reduce damage by pests. It is also a useful community asset. One FGD said that before they had to borrow seed from rich farmers and pay back more and also had to agree to supply labour in part payment which was a problem as took up a lot of their time working on the rich farmers land. The GBCs have freed them from this situation. As the majority of farmers consume most of their crops at the HH level and have no surplus, the impact of the GBCs will really depend on getting higher yields in the future and better understanding of the concept. Government policies on who can sell certified seed also has an impact as in 2016, when Concern was not allowed to distribute certified seed to the farmers.

³² IGAs were: Poultry, Bee keeping, Weaving, Handicraft, Gabion weaving, Small Business, Shop keeping and other

A positive impact was the WFP supported food-for-work used in their construction which had a positive impact on food security for the local labour and their families.

The impact of the vocational training was not evident during the evaluation as the training only commenced at the end of 2016 and during the end line evaluation, none of those spoken with had actually started earning any income from their newly acquired skills as they had just recently finished training. Some complained that the training period of 3 months was too short for them to gain the skill level required to make a good livelihood from the skill in the future. Some plan to continue training at their own expense, but one disabled man said he could not afford to continue training and so would have no impact from the vocational training except the allowance he had received during training. However it is expected some of them will be able to utilise these new skills in the future to generate income.

The impact of ER3 was less than expected. Following the value chain study in 2014, selection of market facilitators, establishing producers groups and provision of training, not much was really achieved. Due to the low level of production of raw materials by the communities and very little surplus as mainly used for HH consumption, there was no real surplus to add value too and market. During the evaluation field visits, staff reported that the market facilitators were no longer active with the project beneficiaries. For the same reason the producer groups are also inactive. However groups of Lead-Farmers, Local Producer Groups, gardeners and NRMC committee members attended agriculture festivals and fairs to help build on their marketing skills, as well as form market linkages and also received value chain and marketing training which may enable them to improve their marketing opportunities in the future.

The impact of ER4 was good on establishing community institutions such as SHGs, NRMCs GBCs and producer groups and increasing the number of women participating in community organisations. The percentage of women involved in decision making has improved from the baseline figure of 16% to 54.9% in the end line and women participating in community organisations is 65.58% which is a significant improvement over the year one when most community institutions were 100% male.

SHG members received support for IGAs, vocational training, nutrition & hygiene training, gender equality training, kitchen gardens etc. and now have access to their own saving and loan facilities. This support has a positive impact in empowering the women and helping them work together for positive change for their families and communities. The percentage of women involved in decision making has improved and overall comments from FGDs and KIIs suggest that women's capacity and empowerment has been increased significantly during the project period. The capacity of DAIL was built through a series of technical trainings for their district extension staff facilitated by Concern at the Faizabad Nursery and also in Takhar. The development of the Faizabad nursery is a very useful asset for DAIL and the farmers as a resource and training centre.

What indications are there of significant changes taking place beyond the project - both positive and negative?

There are reports of replication of the greenhouses and orchards by community members outside of the project which is a positive development. There was no reported negative changes.

How have the project interventions impacted differently on men, women and others identified as vulnerable to hazards in the project area.

It has helped the women become involved in IGAs and vocational training and have access to savings and loans and to become more empowered and have increased knowledge and practices on nutrition and hygiene and increased involvement in decision making within the communities. Their capacity has been built in running IGAs and in kitchen gardening and helped them improve dietary diversity in their HHs. Staff observed notable behaviour changes

in some of these communities where men and women are attending trainings and meetings together, without segregation. In such a deeply conservative country this is an important step towards female engagement and their participation during decision making within their respective communities. Men have learned new farming practices such as using improved seeds, fertiliser and pesticides and green houses and orchards. It has helped them share experiences at the FFS and work together on the GBCs and to become aware of gender equality and the need to involve women in community development.

Has the project enhanced the capacity of the community institutions?

It has enhanced the capacity of the SHGs but more needs to be done especially on adult literacy. Their new ability to save and give loans is a big advantage over the previous situation. The NRMCS and CDCs are also enhanced through training but due to limited resources are not able to undertake significant development in their communities.

Who were the direct and indirect or wider beneficiaries of the project? (must provide gender disaggregated data)

The original direct target group consisted of 2,400 households, including; marginal farmers (550 HHs), landless poor (400 HHs), poor and vulnerable households (850 HHs) female-headed households (450HHs) and disabled-headed households (150HHs). Due to insecurity, Concern had to suspend operations in five out of the 11 villages in Raghistan District from September 2015. Therefore the main activities were implemented in 27 out of 32 original targeted communities. The final direct and indirect beneficiaries are in the below tables.

Table 3: Final direct beneficiaries

	HH Type	Male	Female	Totals
1	Marginal farmers	230	282	512
2	Poor and landless	109	125	234
3	Poor and vulnerable HHs	228	257	485
4	Female HH	0	337	337
5	Disabled	43	19	62
Totals		610	1,020	1,630

Indirect are the total populations of the involved communities.

Table 4: Final indirect beneficiaries

District	#	# HHs	Total Population	Males	Females
Chah Ab District	11	1,931	9,867	4,342	5,525
Namakab District	10	1,172	6,323	2,909	3,414
Raghistan District	6	475	3,421	1,779	1,642
Totals	27	3,578	19,611	9,030	10,581

4.5 Sustainability

Are the results sustainable? Will the outputs and outcomes lead to benefits beyond the life of the existing project?

From discussions with the project staff in Taloqan, Chahab and Namakab and the beneficiaries and from observations of the main project interventions, it appears that the sustainability of the results varies considerably between the interventions.

The main activities under ER1 appear to be sustainable with the farmers reporting a keen interest to continue what they learnt at the FFSs as overall they see improved production levels albeit highly dependent on rainfall amounts. However the economic sustainability of using expensive fertilisers and pesticides was unclear from discussions with the farmers and needs to be analysed in more detail. The vegetable gardens and greenhouses and plastic tunnels have some issues with water and seed supply but overall the beneficiaries said they greatly appreciate the benefits from them and plan to continue in the future. It was encouraging to talk with one greenhouse owner who had replaced the original plastic which got damaged, with cheap local plastic that cost around €10. The owner estimated that this was well worth the expense given the benefit to the HH of having fresh vegetables all year round, increased family dietary diversity and also having some to give to the neighbours. The irrigation canals are well constructed and beneficiaries reported that they pay the Mirab³³ 500 Afgs (€7) per year which should contribute to the sustainability of the canals. The orchards seem sustainable as the trees are well established and maintained and the owners are looking forward to having fruit and nuts to consume and also sell in the future. Faizabad nursery will get some further support from Concern under a different programme and will be handed over to DAIL as a valuable asset for their farmer training and NRM into the future.

The improved nutrition practices should be sustainable as the women see the benefits in their children's health and now have access to vegetables from the kitchen gardens. The hygiene practices may have some sustainability issues regarding access to soap and lack of latrines in the communities but the knowledge and awareness levels are good and will be maintained by project trained community facilitators who live in the communities.

The sustainability of the IGAs is more mixed. The evaluation team was unable to collect information on the small shops in Raghistan due to security issues and so cannot confirm if they are still functioning. The early sheep distributions had disappointing results and low lambing rates may not be sustainable. The last distribution in 2016 should be much better as it used a cash and voucher approach so beneficiaries selected their own sheep and as such may have more success and become sustainable. The poultry distribution should be sustainable as they supply eggs for consumption and also possibility to sell eggs and have immediate cashflow. Good disease control will be essential to avoid possible high mortality rates. Sustainability of the grain banks is unsure with some communities more interested than others and it depends on the understanding of the individual GBC on the concept and also on the level of ownership. Access to improved seed which was a major challenge in 2016 may make them less effective as that was one of the main objectives for them in the first instance. As production levels are still very low and below HH requirements, they are not generating sufficient surpluses to maintain them in the long run. The project needs to examine these IGAs from a strong financial and economic perspective as running costs reported by the beneficiaries may be causing cash flow difficulties especially for the extreme poor.

Vocational training should be sustainable in the future as they can either earn income from providing a service or save money by making their own clothes, etc. However many raised issues of not having required the necessary high levels of skills needed in the short 3 months training period and not having access to raw materials or cash to buy them to start up their own business.

The activities on value chain and markets were very limited and need to be strengthened in the future under other programmes or it will not sustain. The SHGs should be sustainable as

³³ Traditional person responsible for management of irrigation in the communities

they have a good sense of ownership and that the SHGs help the women to come together and solve their own problems. The saving and loan component is beneficial for them and they said they will continue with this and the SHGs by themselves as do not see them as “Concern SHGs” but their own SHGs, which is a good sign for sustainability.

Capacity building with the local CBOs should be sustainable at micro level as they see the benefits and are using the knowledge gained to help themselves. At the meso and macro level, the government and socio-political factors remains weak and DAIL have very limited resources to sustain or improve their services to the farmers. Similarly, the MoPH have limited capacity to carry out nutrition and hygiene activities and are very dependent on support from UN agencies.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The project was highly relevant to the vulnerable communities in Chahab, Namakab and Raghistan and contributed to addressing their main needs of food, nutrition and asset security. It has been successful in increasing production of food with the subsequent reduction in the hunger gap and improved dietary diversity through distribution of improved seeds (wheat, lentil, peas, potatoes and flax) and fertiliser, training of farmers on improved technologies and establishment of greenhouses and kitchen gardens for vegetable production.

Nutrition and hygiene awareness has been raised and improved behavioural practices observed in the communities and improved health status reported in the children.

Orchards have been established which will provide food and income in the future and which will also help stabilised some of the steep hillsides. Irrigation canals have been rehabilitated which have greatly improved access to irrigation water and improved crop yields while mitigating the impact of poor or erratic rainfall. The Faizabad nursery has been firmly established and now serves as a valuable farmer resource centre for the communities and DAIL.

IGAs have been established with small shops, sheep and poultry distributed but with mixed results as some were distributed at the end so it's too early to measure the impact. Grain banks were constructed to help support the use of improved seed and to have a contingency stock in case of emergencies or for the extreme poor but overall production levels are still very low with most production consumed at HH level and very little surplus if any. Vocational training was provided to a number of men and women but this was at the very end of the project and so it's too early to see the impact of this but it should help them to earn income in the future. Training was provided on value chain and market linkages but due to low overall production levels, especially for wheat (still have a hunger gap of 2.3 months) and a drought in 2015, very little progress was made on this component as there was no real surpluses to add value to. A number of CBOs such as SHGs for women and CDCs, NRMCS and were established and supported and women's participation and involvement in decision making significantly improved. Overall the project was too ambitious with too many different activities given the very challenging context and constraints including security issues in the field. This was further exacerbated by a number of major emergencies that occurred in Northern Afghanistan during the project implementation period.

5.2 Recommendations

Main recommendations

1. Keep future food security projects more focused with clear specific objectives and expected results/outputs and fewer but achievable realistic activities given the challenging implementation context in Takhar and Badakshan rural districts. LRRD

suffered from physical access difficulties in these remote communities and the subsequent low staff/beneficiaries contact hours further compounded by a lack of qualified female staff. In reality there are probably only 7 months³⁴ for proper field activity given severe winter weather, landslides and floods etc. Likewise, as each district is quite different and even communities within districts are different, they need tailored responses based on local contextual analysis to address their specific needs and therefore have more possibility of being effective and having impact. A one size fits all approach is not suitable here. For example, some activities were not suited to the unique geographical context in each location such as irrigation canals in Raghistan.

2. Needed smarter indicators in the LRRD logframe and not 2-3 variables per indicator, more reference to the logframe by the team would help and also modify and change the logframe if necessary to ensure project effectiveness as this is what the donor is more concerned about.³⁵ M&E needs to ensure data collected can be measured easily and over the full project lifespan, it also needs to undertake more regular analyses of data and provide feedback to the team to enable timely corrections if necessary.
3. Given the fragile environment and reliance on rain fed agriculture in the target areas, future livelihood projects need to incorporate a climate smart agriculture (CSA) approach. Consider linking with DAIL and if possible with reputable Afghan Universities for research on solutions for Sloping Land Management (SLM) such as Conservation Agriculture and System for Wheat Intensification (SWI), Agro forestry etc. These can link with the LRRD FFSs and the demonstration plots.
4. Reconsider the justification for improved wheat seed distribution³⁶ and construction of seed banks given the poor experience on LRRD and the actual reality and capacity of the target farmers. Improved crops husbandry with locally adapted seeds and water conservation techniques such as conservation agriculture and SWI may have a bigger impact in the long term and would contribute to improved soil fertility, sustainability and increased yields. The seed banks are not functioning well in practice due to issues of ownership, fear of theft and security, lack of trust, poor results from improved seeds and doubts over their ability to replace the improved seed every 3-4 years themselves. As current yields are very low, it may be better and much cheaper to consider support at house hold level for grain and seed storage³⁷. More emphasis need to be focused on the key factors farmers mention such as high cost of labour, market prices and rainfall. Economic sustainability and cost benefit analysis for all agricultural activities and IGAs especially fertiliser and herbicides on rainfed land needs more focus as was not very obvious under LRRD.
5. SHGs are working reasonably well given the cultural constraints the women face and have a strong sense of ownership but need more support with income generation activities (IGAs) as this is the main constraint they mentioned. They need both quick impact viable IGAs³⁸ and longer term IGAs to support them with cash income needed to maintain the impact of other key activities. These include nutrition and hygiene training, for example to purchase more diverse and nutrient rich foods, maintain the kitchen gardens and also basic items like soap to have a sustainable impact on their lives.

³⁴ From discussions with Concern staff

³⁵ Strong comment from the EU in Kabul

³⁶ Refer to Coke, A. AREU 2004 report on this

³⁷ See under VFM section under relevance "For example by using insect proof hermetically sealed bags costing €3 per 50 kgs bag, this 1,100 kgs could be stored for €66 euro for one year".

³⁸ Could include high quality weaving or other handicrafts

6. The positive achievements for women under LRRD including higher participation in community organisations and more involvement in decision making needs to be built on in future projects to continue empowering women, increase awareness on gender and women's rights and to recognize women as key contributors to household livelihood and food security.
7. A Value chain approach can be justified, but Concern needs to support the communities more to get production levels up in the short term to actually have marketable surpluses. There's a market for hard yoghurt and crops like saffron, lentil and flax can be expanded provided they do not have negative impact as they need wheat etc. for fodder and not just for grain supply.

6 Annexes

6.1 Evaluation matrix.

Evaluation matrix V1 BN = baseline EN = endline

Final logframe	Indicator	Baseline	Actual achieved	comment
Overall objective Strengthen the resilience of food and nutrition security systems of the most food insecure communities in the target districts.	Household Income/per month in Afgs	M= 9,867 F= 11,189 Overall=10,527	M= 8,911 F =6,464 Overall 7,687	Reason is due to seasonality as BN was in August & EN was in March
	Nutritional status of target population	GAM=11.4% SAM = 4.2% Global stunting = 62% Severe Stunting = 28.9%	Was not measured in EN as no nutritional survey was done	MoPH in Takhar report GAM is 8.7% and Sam is 2.6%
Specific objective To improve food, nutrition and asset security, strengthen communities productive and resilience capacities and, facilitate responsive food security policies and practices at targeted households communities and district levels in Takhar and Badakshan	Household dietary diversity score (disaggregated for female and Male headed HH)	Overall : 4.1 Female :3.3 Male: 4.8	Overall : 5.6 Female :5.8 Male: 5.4	Due to kitchen gardens etc.
	% of targeted HHs with increased agriculture productivity	M=8% 4%	M=11.9% F= 10.7% Avg=11.3%	Based on improved technologies & inputs
	Average length of hunger gap in a year in the targeted HHs	M=2.7 F=3.9 Avg=3.3 months	M=1.9 F=2.8 Avg=2.3	
ER-1: Increased production of food through better use of agricultural resources at target household, community and district levels and improved nutrition behavioural practices	% of targeted HHs utilizing new agricultural technologies	M=8% F=0% Avg 4% of farmers	M=16.7% F=10.1% Avg =13.4%	
	% targeted HHs have adequate food and able to sell surplus for income	M- 0% F=12.5% Avg= 9.1%	M=90.9% F=90% Avg = 90.5%	Is from those with a surplus only (n-19)
	Improved knowledge and behaviour for appropriate nutrition practices	0%	Has improved based on evaluation FGDs	Not asked in end line survey
ER-2: Opportunities for income generating and food	% of HHs operating an IGA who are able to generate a profit	8% with IGA Male=3.6% Female = 12.4%	93.2% with IGA Male=93.2% Female = 93.3%	These IGAs are not directly related to

security measures have been improved for vulnerable households (50% of families headed by women)	(disaggregated by gender)			LRRD but are in the communities
	% of HH trained in vocational skills utilizing these for income generation	M= 17.9 & 50% F= 16.8 & 68.4% AVG 17.3% (59 % for IGA)	M= 12.5% and 95.2 % F= 14.4% and 83.3% AVG 13.4 % (88.9 % for IGA)	Training was too late in project to show any income generation
	% of target HH utilizing grain banks	0%	M=22.9% F=22% Avg=22.6%	
ER-3: Increased access to value chain and improved market linkages between targeted producer groups (especially women) and reputed traders in the targeted communities and districts.	Number of producer groups established and linked to market facilities (especially female producer groups)	Zero	10	Not really active
	% of males and females who sell their product in the market (disaggregated by gender)	Total : =12.4% Male= 25 Female=0	M=54.5% F=30.7% Avg=41.8%	These products are not directly related to LRRD but are in the communities
	% of target beneficiaries with access to and utilizing value chain facilities	Zero	N/A	No value chain activity as little surplus production
ER-4: The productive capacities of local institutions and local authorities strengthened.	Number of community institutions (producer groups, SHGs, FFAs, NRMCS, federations) established & functional (conducting regular meetings and implementing actions agreed)	32 CDCs 1 producer groups 1 grain bank 1 NRMCS 1 SHG	32 CDCs 10 producer groups 32 grain bank 21 NRMCS 27 SHG	
	% of community institutions (CDCs, NRMCS, etc.) with adequate women's representation (i.e. women regularly attend meetings and input into discussions and decision making)	1 SHG	65.58% women participating in community organisations	
	% of women participating in community institutions who feel able to actively contribute to decision making in community forums	15% of which 50% through a male family member	54.9%	
	Number of actions taken by district/provincial authorities/ food security cluster as a result of issues highlighted through	30% share opinions 15% feel authorities take action	51.6% share opinions 74.3% feel authorities take action	

	community institutions			
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6.2 Summary of key activities

Summary of project outputs LRRD 2014-2017. C= Chahab & NK = Namakab

Main physical outputs	Planned	Actual	Takhar	Badakshan
Farmer field schools	32	25	10 in NK 11 in C	4
No of farmers in the FFS				
Demo plots	15	13	5 in C 5 in NK	3
Wheat seeds kgs		37,628	13,100 in C 13328 in NK	11,200
Jirebs this was grown on		1,354		
Orchards		198	126 in C 56 in NK	16 orchards
Tree saplings Number		6,820	5360 in C 1460 in NK	
Plastic tunnels		205	135 in NK 0 in Chahab	70
Greenhouse		21	11 in C 10 in NK	
Household kitchen gardens	500	333	128 in C 135 in NK	70
Fazibad nursery	1	1		1
Irrigation canals	6	6	3 in C 3 in NK	0
Jirebs irrigated		1,030	760 in C 270 in NK	
Hygiene kits	320	270	110 in C 110 in NK	50
Sheep distributed		292	122 in C 80 in NK	90
Chickens		1,628	1628 NK	
Small community shops		12	0	12
Grain banks	32	32	11 in C 10 in NK	11
Grain bank committees	32	32	11 in C 10 in NK	11
People receiving vocational training	64	46	10F in NK 16M in NK 8 F in C 2 M in C	10
Self help groups (SHG)	32	27	12 in C 11 in NK	4
Producer groups	10	10	10 in NK	0
Market facilitators		16		0
WFP food for work Beneficiaries on Grain banks		262	130 in NK 132 in C	0
WFP cash for work Beneficiaries irrigation canals		1,888	1,888 in Chahab	

6.3 List of people consulted or interviewed

	Institution/Organisation	Person
	EU office in Kabul	
1	EU Attache Health and LRRD	Pierre- Yves Lambert
	Concern Worldwide HQ Dublin	
2	Regional Director	Brid Kennedy
3	Desk Officer,	Rosaleen Martin
4	Livelihood manager	Liam Kavanagh
	Concern Worldwide Afghanistan	
5	Country Director	Áine Costigan
6	Acting Programme Director	Yasin Farjad
7	Acting Country Financial Controller (CFC)	Eleanor McBain
8	Assistance CFC	Sikder Nural
9	M&E Manager	Fariduddin Barzgar
10	MIS Manager	Tahir Hassrat
11	M&E Officer for Takhar	Waliullah Mohebi
12	Provincial Coordinator Takhar	Naeem Rasooli
13	Provincial Coordinator Badakshan	Enamullah Qazizadah
14	Ex LRRD Programme Manager	Zimarai Hashimzai
15	Afghanistan DRR Advisor	Gerard Ganaba
16	Afghanistan PQ Advisor	Zena Ni Dhuinn Bhig
17	Senior Engineer	Engineer Wais
18	Nutrition & Hygiene Trainer	Bibi Lea Nuzhat
19	Livelihood Officer	Khatera
20	HR Officer	Shir Ahmad Naseri
21	Directorate of Public Health, Takhar Province	Dr Hafizullah Safi
22	Director of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) Takhar Province	Muhammad Alim "Alimi"
	Field staff	
23	District Manager Namakab	Mohibullah Hamnawa
24	Agricultural Extension Officer	Rahmatullah Frotan
25	Agricultural Extension Officer	Ebrahim
26	Community Development Facilitator	Manocherr
27	District Manager Chahab	Abdul Saboor Raufi
28	Agricultural Extension Officer Chahab	Namullah
29	Community Development Facilitator (Female)	Taza Gul
30	Community Development Facilitator (Female)	Hanifa
31	Community Development Facilitator (Male)	Azibullah
32	Teacher Trainer (Male)	Shabir Ahmed

6.4 More specific Technical recommendations

- Reconsider the justification for improved wheat seed distribution as many reported poor results from the Concern supplied improved wheat varieties. Improved seed is only one aspect of improved yields, most of the farmers cited the issue of poor rainfall

as the biggest determinant of yields. As it's a rain fed area, improved crops husbandry with locally adapted seeds and water conservation techniques such as conservation agriculture and SWI may have a bigger impact in the long term and would contribute to improved soil fertility, sustainability and increased yields. Seed seems to be available under the traditional system albeit with them having to pay in kind through providing some labour in exchange. Improved varieties perform best with high levels of crop husbandry, fertilisers and herbicides etc. which seem unlikely in these rain fed communities. See Coke, A. *AREU 2004 report on this*

- Low prices of wheat on the market place needs to be considered as in some instances this is an disincentive to farmers to plant wheat or to manage it correctly, also it may be more effective to work as labour and buy wheat when market prices are low.
- Labour cost is relatively more important than cost of seed to the farmers hence they justify the use of herbicides as it is cheaper than paying labour to weed the crops.
- Need to review justification of the seed banks structures as do not appear to be functioning in practice, issues of ownership, fear of theft and security, lack of trust, poor results from improved seeds in some cases and not sure if they can completely replace the improved seed every 3-4 years themselves. May be better to convince them of the approach and concept and then let them find or build their own storage space as would give more ownership.
- As current yields are low, it may be better to consider support at house hold level for grain and seed storage. It would be much cheaper to use hermetically³⁹ sealed bags as explained on page 8 under VFM.
- Supply of and cost and effectiveness of fertiliser on rain fed sloping land needs to be examined as doubtful of its sustainability in the absence of improved soil organic matter and high leaching effects on the slopes.
- Need to examine cost benefit and safety of applying herbicides on winter rain fed wheat versus impact of weeds on yields versus cost of labour for weeding.
- Treatment of seeds with an appropriate seed dressing to control loose smut (*Ustilago tritici*) would give a good impact on yield and grain quality and subsequent flour quality.
- Plastic tunnels are good and have been replicated in some communities and they can purchase replacement plastic locally at affordable prices.
- Irrigation water for plastic tunnels and kitchen gardens was mentioned often as a constraint, Concern could consider rain water harvesting to mitigate this where feasible. Suggest Concern test small scale appropriate technology drip (pipe or bottle) irrigation systems to use minimum water on Kitchen gardens. Can be demonstrated to see what system is affordable and appropriate for the local context.
- There's a market for hard yoghurt and crops like saffron, lentil and flax can be expanded provided they do not have negative impact as they need wheat etc. for fodder and not just for grain supply.
- SHGs are working and have a strong sense of ownership but do need literacy training and more support on IGAs to have an impact for on their lives.
- Consider weaving or handicrafts for women as IGAs and not just sheep, poultry and small shops as women report good incomes from this.
- New approach of cash or voucher for livestock distribution or seed purchase are recommended compared to the previous Concern direct distribution.
- Poultry may be more practical for the extreme poor and beneficiaries mentioned they're easier to manage and will help the women directly.

³⁹ African Post Harvest Losses Information System (APHLIS) 2017. Part 2. Reducing on-farm post harvest losses.

6.5 Terms of reference for the evaluation

Concern Worldwide, Afghanistan Terms of Reference for the EU-funded Linking Relief to Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) Final End of Programme External Evaluation

1. Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the outcomes of the programme and its contribution to the achievement of sustainable improvements in the lives of extremely poor people through improving household resilience to food insecurity. Specifically the evaluation will assess the degree to which the programme has achieved its intended outcomes. This will be assessed by looking at programme relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability and other criteria as determined relevant.

2. Background context of the Linking Relief to Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) Programme:

Description of the social, economic and political context:

Specific pre-project situation in the target country, region and sector

Afghanistan ranks amongst the poorest countries in the world in human development and human poverty indices (172 out of 187 HDI ranked countries). Yet, even against these dire figures, the provinces of Badakhshan and Takhar perform badly. Badakhshan exhibits almost twice the national average for poverty and over three times the national average of calorie and protein deficiency, with >60% of the population food insecure (NRVA 2010/11). Takhar province shows a similar poverty rate to the national average (36.6%), but has the second highest rate of inequality in income distribution. These issues were compounded by drought in 2011, with rain-fed wheat production declining by over 80% in both provinces.

Baseline surveys for this programme carried out in 2011 in the proposed target provinces, identified an average of 31.5% of households as extremely poor (23% Takhar and 40% Badakhshan), with 75% living below the poverty line (57% Takhar and 93% Badakhshan); female-headed households comprise 9.8% of the targeted population; and 3.1% are people with disabilities. In these target areas, food production has been affected by decreasing farm size, low soil fertility, severe land degradation, fragile ecosystems and recurrent weather-related shocks. Concern's 2011 Emergency Food Security Assessment identified six of eight districts surveyed as particularly hard-hit by the drought due to a reliance on rain-fed agriculture. Droughts and decades of conflict have depleted small farmers' livestock holdings and modern irrigation systems have been damaged. The target districts have also been identified as particularly vulnerable through the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP 2013), FEWS, and WFP and NGO assessments.

3. Description of the EU LRRD Programme Intervention

Objectives of the action

Overall objective: Strengthen the resilience of food and nutrition security systems of the most food insecure communities in the target districts.

Specific objective: To improve food, nutrition and asset security, strengthen communities' productive and resilience capacities and, facilitate responsive food security policies and practices at targeted households, communities and district levels in Takhar and Badakhshan.

Expected results, activities and outputs:

Result 1. *Increased production of food through better use of agricultural resources at target household, community and district levels.*

2,400 households will be supported through the use of appropriate farming methods, including conservation agriculture. A nutrition study to assess issues of food availability, access, use, and nutritional adequacy (with specific focus on women and children) will be carried out in Raghistan district.

Result 2: *Opportunities for income generating measures have been improved for vulnerable households.*

Promotion of horticulture, training farmers on appropriate technologies, beekeeping, poultry, promotion of vegetable production including sunshine greenhouses for vegetable production in the cold winter season.

Result 3: *Increased access to value chain and improved market linkages between targeted producer groups (especially women) and reputed traders in the targeted communities and districts.*

Producer groups, women's associations and Self Help Groups (SHG) will expand IGAs, supporting the extreme poor in the establishment and management of small enterprises through direct inputs, business start-up kits and trainings; linkage to market, value chains strategies developed, vocational training and develop sustainable livelihood options for landless families while adding value to local agro-produce and markets.

Result 4: *Strengthen community institutions; CDCs and NRMCS. Provide capacity building support to DAIL, DDA, MRRD Government staff.* The project will support farmer organisations/networks, women's groups, producer groups to establish productive links and networks. Training for government will reflect community needs, for example: project management, disaster mitigation, agriculture approaches, livelihoods and vocational skills, conflict resolution (e.g, land tenure) gender and equality, downward accountability, planning, PRA, etc.

Evaluation aim, objectives and scope

The overall aim of this evaluation is to assess the LRRD programme. Specifically the evaluation will assess the degree to which the programme has achieved its intended outcomes. This will be assessed by looking at programme relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability and other criteria as determined relevant.

Specific Objectives:

- 6.** To assess if the programme has targeted the extreme poor and vulnerable people effectively as per Concerns understanding of extreme poverty (*relevance*)
- 7.** To assess the degree to which the programme outcomes have been achieved as indicated in the results framework (*effectiveness*)
- 8.** To validate the achievements made as stated by programme data (including baseline, annual surveys, end-line, monitoring and secondary data) (*effectiveness*)
- 9.** To capture any lessons learned and make practical targeted recommendations to guide any future programming
- 10.** To assess to what extent programme intended and unintended outputs and outcomes can be sustained beyond the existing programme (*sustainability*)

Scope:

The scope of the evaluation will be based on the DAC evaluation criteria highlighted below.

Relevance

- Were the outcomes and associated programme relevant, appropriate and strategic to national goals and Concern policies and guidelines?
- Was there an appropriate contextual analysis carried out to inform programme design, which was based on Concerns Understanding of Extreme Poverty?

- How appropriate were the chosen interventions and programme design to the situation of different stakeholders at different levels (micro, meso and macro, and considering the needs of men, women and others identified as vulnerable to hazards in the programme area)?
- What was the level of participation of programme beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the programme? Was there awareness and active use of the CRM guidelines?

Efficiency

- Were resources used well? Could things have been done differently and how?
- Was the programme M&E system fit for purpose?
- How was Value for Money (VFM) achieved through delivery of results? How well did the programme apply VFM principles in relation to delivery of outcome?
- What would have been the situation if this project funding had not been spent?
- What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?
- Did the monitoring system used capture the correct information at the appropriate times throughout the project?
- To what extent has the project used monitoring information as learning towards course correction?
- Overall to what degree did the project achieve its results at the output level?

Effectiveness

- Were the outputs and outcomes achieved and to what degree (assessed through a baseline/end-line indicator data comparison against results framework/logical framework targets, monitoring data, and data collected in the evaluation)?
- Was the programme logic well thought through and did the activities lead to the desired outcomes?
- What steps were taken to address issues of inequality and ensure the interests of the most marginalised were taken on board during programme planning, implementation and monitoring? How effective was this?
- Did the programme successfully achieve results in each dimension of extreme poverty and what are the potential implications of this?
- To what extent were the available resources best mobilized and utilized?
- Were the risks properly identified in a Risk Management Plan and then, mitigated?
- Extent to which the outcomes were achieved in relation to targets set in the results based framework, through comparison between baseline and end line indicator values (using appropriate statistical test).

Impact

- What was the project's overall impact and how did this compare with what was expected?
- What indications are there of significant changes taking place beyond the programme - both positive and negative?
- How have the programme interventions impacted differently on men, women and others identified as vulnerable to hazards in the programme area.
- Has the project enhanced the capacity of the community institutions?
- Who were the direct and indirect or wider beneficiaries of the project? (must provide gender disaggregated data)
- What difference has been made to the lives of those involved in the project?

Sustainability

- Are the results sustainable? Will the outputs and outcomes lead to benefits beyond the life of the existing programme?

- How might Concern do things better in the future? Which findings may have relevance for future programming or for other similar initiatives elsewhere?

Methodology

The evaluation will be led and facilitated by an external independent evaluation consultant. Concern expects the use of a qualitative approach in data gathering and analysis to verify the quantitative data collected during the end line survey by Concern enumerators. The end line data will be collected in March 2017. The final evaluation report is to be submitted to the donor by the 31st May 2017. In addition a documentation review will be carried out by the evaluation team before and during the evaluation process.

Below are the expected tools to be used for this evaluation.

- **Programme documentation review:** The evaluation team will have to review all relevant documentation and data regarding LRRD programme. These include: the baseline survey and report, programme reports, end-line survey and report. The document review has to commence before the evaluators arrive in Taloqan. As the consultant will be expected to compare the findings of the baseline and end line survey, experience in the area of quantitative data analysis will be essential.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGD):** Questions to be designed will be related to livelihoods, gender and equality. The purpose is to probe important issues more deeply than is possible in the quantitative end line survey in order to gain a detailed comprehensive picture of the conditions and context of the target population and to triangulate and supplement the quantitative findings (- must disaggregate FGDs by sex).
- **Key Informant (KI) Interviews:** Questions for the key informant interviews (from men and women) will be developed to correspond with programme outcomes. The purpose is to include and involve key stakeholders with an understanding of the needs of the target population and to gather more information related to both micro and meso-level outcomes and how local governance structures (community development councils and NRM) and relevant government ministries are responding to the conditions of the Extreme Poor across Concern's intervention areas. The KIs interviews need to target authorities at the District level as well as Concern Programme Managers, sector managers and the Programme Director.

Expected products

The evaluation consultant will present an **inception report** to the Afghanistan programme team including the Concern Country Management Team at the beginning of the evaluation to include the following:

1. Introduction
 - a. Understanding of Concern and programme (activities, logframe, intended beneficiaries, partners, monitoring plan, etc.)
 - b. Key concepts/definitions
 2. Evaluation Design, Methods and Methodology
 - a. Objective and Evaluation Questions
 - b. Deliverables
 - c. Methods and Methodology
 - d. Sampling
 - e. Analysis Plan
 - f. Limitations
- Annexes:
- Evaluation Matrix (Logframe with indicators and how they will be measured and compared to baseline status in the planned study)
 - Draft Evaluation Tools

- A high quality **Evaluation Report** that incorporates the results responding to the purpose and objectives of the evaluation including:
 - Table of Contents
 - List of Abbreviations
 - A stand-alone Executive Summary (3-5 pages) and summary of results and recommendations
 - The report should be a maximum of 25 pages in length (excluding annexes).
 - Recommendations from the evaluation should be targeted at different stakeholders as appropriate.
 - Evaluation findings shared with the country programmes teams in order to share the progress made as well as lessons learnt during a debrief.
 - Annexes should include a list of interviews/meetings, photo gallery, questionnaires, site visits, titles of documents reviewed, other resource persons and participants, TOR and any other relevant documents.
- The consultant will present their findings to the relevant line ministry and to the donor in Kabul.

Evaluation plan and timeline

The evaluation process is estimated to take 22 working days (including 3 travel days) from the start of the consultancy to the final report being submitted to headquarters. The preferred start date is March 2017. The final report is due to the donor by 31st May 2017. The consultant will report to the Country Director. Below is an expected timeline to be confirmed in the consultant's inception report:

Activity /Timeline	Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5
Travel day (1 day)	X				
Consultant to review endline survey report, existing questionnaires and tools and all relevant documentation (2 days)	X				
Consultant to present and agree inception report with the programme team (2 days)	X				
Qualitative data collection in targeted districts: Namakab and Ch'ab districts of Takhar province (6 days including travel). *	X	X			
Meet back with the programme team in Taloqan to triangulate information and clean data (2 days)			X		
Data analysis and report writing (within 4 days)			X	X	
Submission of draft report to the Country team				X	
In-country travel (1 day)				X	
Presentation of preliminary findings (in the form of slides) from draft report to relevant line ministries and donor (1 day)				X	
Travel Day (1 day)				X	
Feedback by programme team into draft report (within 3 days)					X
Submission of 2 nd draft of the report by consultant (within 1 day)					X

Final report submission addressing any feedback on the 2 nd draft ** (1 day)					X
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Minimum Requirements

- Minimum five years of experience in the area of food security/livelihoods/rural development. This can include a combination of academic, research, and management positions.
- Excellent knowledge of gender equality, social equity and women's empowerment issues, in the context of agriculture and rural development
- Demonstrated ability to produce written analysis of socio-economic and gender issues
- Excellent oral and written English language skills
- Demonstrated experience evaluating development projects,
- Fluent in quantitative and/or qualitative research methods.
- Ability/willingness to conduct field work.

Desirable Skills and Experience

- Experience in evaluating or managing similar programmes in Afghanistan
- Dari speaker

* A third district Raghistan is also targeted by the programme but insecurity prevents travel to the area.

6.6 Final itinerary

LRRD Evaluation schedule

Date	Activity /Timeline	Location	Accompanies
Mon -Tue 27-28 th March	Consultant to review end line survey report, existing questionnaires and tools and all relevant documentation (2 days)	Ireland	John
Wed 29 th March	Travel day depart Ireland (1 day)	DUB to Kabul via Dubai	John
Thur 30 th Mar	Arrive Kabul (1 day) Security briefing	Kabul	John, Aine, Jabar
Fri 31 st March	Desk review	Kabul	John
Sat 1 st April	Travel from KAB to FZD to Taloqan	Kabul to Faisabad to Taloqan	John
Sun –Mon 2-3 rd April	Consultant to present and agree inception report & evaluation tools with the programme team and briefing with team plus staff interviews etc. (2 days)	Taloqan	John, Barzgar, Zimarai, Gerard/Eng. Yasin
Tue-Thur 4-6 th April	Qualitative data collection in targeted district Chahab Districts of Takhar province (3 days including travel). - Communities - Project staff - DAIL authorities	Chahab	John, Barzgar

Fri-Sat 7-8 th April	Desk review - Saturday, Meeting Enamullah, BDK PC at 02:00 PM		<i>John</i>
Sun-Tuesday 9-11 th April	Qualitative data collection in targeted district Namakab Districts of Takhar province (3 days including travel). - Communities - Project staff - DAIL authorities	Namakab	John, Tahir
Wed-Thur 12-13 April	Meet back with the programme team in Taloqan to triangulate information and clean data plus staff interviews (2 days)	<i>Taloqan</i>	<i>John, Barzgar, Zimarai, possibly two project staff from Chahab and Namakab</i>
Wed-Thur 12-13 th April	Data analysis and report writing and local government interviews (within 2 days) Meetings: - DAIL authorities - Nutrition focal point, Public Health Directorate - Dr. Lia, Nutrition Officer	<i>Taloqan</i>	<i>Jonh, Rasooli</i>
Fri-Sat 14-15 th April	Data analysis and report writing (2 days)	<i>Taloqan</i>	<i>John</i>
Sun 16 th April	Submission of first draft report to the Country team (1 day)	<i>Taloqan</i>	<i>John, Barzgar, Rasooli</i>
Mon 17 th April	In-country travel (1 day)	<i>Taloqan to Faisabad to Kabul</i>	<i>John</i>
Tue 18 th April	Presentation of preliminary findings (in the form of slides) from draft report to relevant line ministries and donor (1 day)	<i>Kabul</i>	<i>John, Aine, Zimarai</i>
Wed 19 th April	Report writing (1 day)	<i>Kabul</i>	<i>John</i>
Thursday 20 th	Travel Day (1 day)	<i>Kabul to Dublin</i>	<i>John</i>
20-22 April	Feedback by programme team into draft report (within 3 days)	<i>Kabul/Taloqan</i>	<i>Aine, Eng. Yasin, Liam</i>
23 April	Submission of 2 nd draft of the report by consultant (within 1 day)	<i>Ireland</i>	<i>John</i>
24 April	Final report submission addressing any feedback on the 2 nd draft ** (1 day)	<i>Ireland</i>	<i>John</i>

6.7 Questionnaire for the evaluation of the LRRD Project Afghanistan 2017

Key informants

Concern programme staff

Country director/ Programme director

1. Were the outcomes and associated programme relevant, appropriate and strategic to national goals and Concern policies and guidelines?
2. How appropriate were the chosen interventions and programme design to the situation of different stakeholders at different levels (micro, meso and macro, and considering the needs of men, women and others identified as vulnerable to hazards in the programme area)?
3. Are all programme staff fully familiar with the programme log frame and indicators?
4. How strong is the M&E system and are they able to monitor impact?
5. Were there any issues with the programme management or budget control?
6. What were the main challenges faced when implementing the programme?
7. Please explain the targeting system used and the rationale for this? Do you think it was appropriate for targeting the extreme poor as per HCUEP guidelines?
8. What level of impact is Concern having with the authorities at local and district level?
9. Did the LRRD programme have the planned impact on the beneficiaries?
10. How was Value for Money (VFM) achieved through delivery of results? How well did the programme apply VFM principles in relation to delivery of outcome?
11. Have you any lesson learnt and recommendations for future interventions?
12. How sustainable do you think the programme will be? Any significant positive or negative changes taking place beyond the programme?

Programme manager/Provincial manager/ District managers
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1. Was the programme effective at targeting the extreme poor?
2. What's worked well, what's struggling? What has not worked?
3. What were the main challenges faced when implementing the programme?
4. Were the resources used as effectively and efficiently as possible or is there room for improvement? Did it achieve good value for money (VFM)?
5. How effective was the programme M&E system and were there any changes made based on M&E analysis?
6. What has been the main impact on the beneficiaries male and female?
7. To what extent did the programme achieve results in each dimension of extreme poverty and at output level?
8. Was there equal focus on the female focused elements of the programme or any challenges with implementing them?
9. How good was the level of participation of the programme beneficiaries? Was there use of the CRM?
10. How effective was the management and budget control of the programme?
11. Was the programme log frame used all the time and where all staff fully familiar with it?
12. What level of impact/influence is Concern having with the authorities at local and district level?
13. How sustainable do you think the programme is?
14. Have any unintended and/or negative changes been produced?
15. Have you any lesson learnt and recommendations for future interventions?

Nutritionist

1. Please explain how nutrition and hygiene awareness was provided to the beneficiaries?
2. Are you familiar with the programme log frame and nutrition indicators (HDD etc.)?
3. What changes in IYCF have been observed if any?
4. What improvements were there in the dietary diversity among children?
5. Has the programme improved food security over the winter months?
6. How much has the hunger gap been reduced?
7. Is there a reduction in GAM and SAM rates since the start of the project based on the MoPH monitoring?

8. Has the extra production from agriculture and vegetables etc. actually being used to improve nutrition or has most of it being sold?
9. What challenges do they still face in improving the nutritional status of the children?
10. Have you any lessons learnt and recommendations for future nutrition security interventions?

Agriculture extension staff at district level
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1. Please explain the extension methods / approaches you have been using?
2. Is there an approved FFS curriculum used in the trainings?
3. Are you familiar with the programme log frame and indicators?
4. How good were the lead farmers at facilitating the FFS sessions?
5. How well have the farmers adopted the new agricultural technologies?
6. Did the farmers disseminate this information to other farmers within their respective communities?
7. How much did crop production increase during the programme?
8. Has there been any improvements in soil fertility during the project?
9. Is the use of chemical fertiliser justified on a cost basis and have they viable alternatives?
10. Has household income increased for the farmers and by how much?
11. How successful were the plastic tunnels in producing vegetables during the winter months?
12. How successful were the irrigation canals? And what was their impact?
13. How do you work with government staff/DAIL? How good is the relationship? What could be changed?
14. How often do you meet your farmers? How often would you like to meet your farmers?
15. What has worked well, what has not been adopted? Why? What are you most proud of?
16. Were nutrition messages included in FFS?
17. How did the vocational training component work out? any impact yet? Any support from the National Skill Development Program (NSDP) from MoLSAMD?
18. Have you any lessons learnt and recommendations for future food security interventions?
19. How sustainable do you think the programme is?

Community Development Facilitators (CDFs) district level

1. Please explain the role you carried out under the programme?
2. In your opinion, where the extreme really targeted?
3. What impact did you observe from your nutrition and hygiene training with the NHCs?
4. What was the impact of the kitchen gardens on the women using them? Could this be improved?
5. What was the impact of the training on IGA for the beneficiaries? How many generate a profit?
6. What impact did the literacy training have for the beneficiaries?
7. How well the grain banks function and what was the impact?
8. Did the extreme poor access them?
9. Were you able to get good participation of extreme poor women in the project?
10. Have you any lessons learnt and recommendations for future food security interventions?
11. How sustainable do you think the programme is?

M&E officer based in Rustaq covered LRRD

1. Is there an LRRD Programme M&E plan and database?
2. Was the M&E plan fit for purpose? How well was it implemented?
3. Was the programme log frame used all the time and were all staff fully familiar with it?

4. To what extent has the project used monitoring information as learning towards course correction?
5. Was market price information collected on a regular basis to inform the marketing activities?
6. Was there a Livelihood Analysis Report produced for the LRRD programme?
7. What were the main challenges with implementing the M&E Plans?
8. Was there awareness and active use of the CRM guidelines?
9. How sustainable do you think the programme is?
10. How could the M&E be improved for future programmes?

Communities and beneficiaries

Beneficiaries of FFSs FGD

1. When was the group formed? Why? How many members do you have? M/F
2. What are the main activities carried out at the FFS?
3. What new technologies/methods have you been introduced to by the project?
4. Have you tried these or any of the other training on your own land?
5. What worked well? What failed? How can it be improved?
6. How do you access land?
7. Did you receive any other assets from the project?
8. What has been the main impact for you from being in the FFS?
9. Where do you normally get information and ideas on new varieties, crops, pest control, etc from? Do you get regular support from DAIL? Is this useful? Do you have to pay for it? If so is it affordable?
10. Has your dietary diversity improved since you joined the project?
11. Did you receive training from the project on HIV&AIDS, gender equality and nutrition?
12. Will the FFS group or its activities be sustainable in the future?
13. Have you any lessons learnt and recommendations for future food security interventions

Beneficiaries of kitchen gardens

1. How were you selected for this activity?
2. What support did you receive from the project?
3. Did you get sufficient help from a female agriculture extension staff or female lead farmers?
4. Has your soil condition and fertility improved during the project period?
5. What training did you receive from the project?
6. What has been the main impact of kitchen garden for your HH?
7. Has your dietary diversity improved since you joined the project?
8. Have you a surplus to sell?
9. What are the main challenges Kitchen Garden faces and how could it be improved in the future?
10. Will the Kitchen garden be sustainable in the future?

Beneficiaries trained on nutrition and Hygiene

1. What nutrition training did you receive?
2. Did you receive any hygiene kits/training kits?
3. How has this improved your knowledge and awareness on nutrition?
4. Can you give some examples of good IYCF practices?
5. Have you improved your family's dietary diversity since having the training?
6. What has been the impact of this on your children's nutrition and health?
7. What challenges do they face in improving the nutritional status of the children?
8. What training on hygiene awareness did they receive?
9. What has been the impact of improved hygiene awareness if any?

10. What challenges do they face regarding improved hygiene practices?
11. Can they sustain the improved nutrition and hygiene practices?

IGA beneficiary Male & Female HH with livestock

1. What livestock did you receive from the project?
2. Did you receive any other assets from the project?
3. What training did you receive from the project? How well is the Artificial insemination working?
4. How are your livestock doing? (Health, fertility, fodder etc.), How do you access animal health care?
5. What has being the main impact of having these livestock for your HH? How much profit?
6. What is your experience of the pass on system with the offspring?
7. What are the challenges you face with IGA from Livestock?
8. How much profit have you made from the livestock since you received them?
9. How often do you meet a government extension worker? Has this changed since 2013? How useful are their services? Do you have to pay for their services? Is it affordable and cost effective?
10. Have you any lessons learnt and recommendations for future food security interventions

Self Help Groups (SHG)

1. When was the SHG established and how many members?
2. Why was it established?
3. What support and training did you receive from the project?
4. What IGAs are you involved in?
5. What has been the main impact of being members of the SHG? Has it improved you income?
6. How has SHG membership impacted on your workload?
7. What are the main challenges this SHG faces and how could it be improved in the future?
8. Will this SHG be sustainable in the future?

IGA Beneficiary of vocational training

1. How were you selected for this vocational training?
2. What vocational training did you receive from the project? Was it enough? What other inputs did you receive?
3. What has been the main impact of this Vocational training for you?
4. How much income are you making per week/day?
5. What are the main challenges you face to and how could it be improved in the future?
6. Will this Vocational training be sustainable in the future?
7. Have you any other ideas for improving your income generation and food security?

Grain bank committees (GBCs)

1. When was the GBCs formed and why was it established?
2. How many members do you have? M/F, Is there a membership fee and can everyone afford it?
3. What are the GBCs activities and main function?
4. What support and training did you get from the Concern LRRD project?
5. Any issues with pest control and quality of stored seeds?
6. Is the seed treated? Can you access and afford new certified seed on a regular basis?
7. What has being the main impact of the GBC on the poor and vulnerable farmers in the community?

8. What are the main challenges the GBC face and how could it be improved in the future?
9. Will the GBC or its activities be sustainable in the future?

Producer groups and Market facilitators for value chains

1. When was the producer group formed and why was it established?
2. What are the producer group activities and main function?
3. How is the fee for the market facilitators decided and is it affordable?
4. What has been the main impact for you of being a member of a producer group?
5. What are the main challenges you face to and how could it be improved in the future?
6. Did you manage any added value activities?
7. Are you involved in the saving and loan scheme? If yes what has been the benefit for you?

CDC/ NRMC Members

1. When was the CDC/NRMC set up?
2. What are the CDC/NRMC activities and main function?
3. How many members?? How many women are on the committee? Do they participate in discussions and decision-making?
4. Have you received any training or support from Concern or anyone else?
5. What development plans do you have for you community? Do they include any support for the poorest members of your community
6. Do you have any links with the District Development Committee? Do you get any support from them?
7. What has been the committee's biggest achievement to date?
8. What are the main challenges you face to and how could it be improved in the future?

Local authority, DAIL and Ministry of Public Health
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1. What do you know of Concern's LRRD programme?
2. How involved were you in their programme design of LRRD?
3. What capacity building did you or your staff receive if from Concern?
4. How often do you or your staff meet your beneficiaries/farmers?
5. What are the main challenges you face in responding to the needs of the extreme poor in your area?
6. Are you doing any research into helping famers on sloping rain fed land to increase productions?
7. What are your suggestions for possible future interventions/activities to improved food security in Takhar?
8. What are the overall trends in nutrition security in Takhar? Such as global acute malnutrition (GAM) and severe acute malnutrition (SAM) or other inmalnutrition indicators?
9. Have you and nutrition surveys in Namakab or Chahab or other areas in Takhar?
- 10 Do you observe improved nutrition behaviour practices in villages that LRRD carried out nutrition training in?

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