



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2014, Prague, Czech Republic

“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

Agriculture Projects in Afghanistan – From Relief to Development

JAN SVITALEK

People in Need, Relief and Development Department, Czech Republic

Abstract

People in Need organisation is working in Afghanistan since 2001 and the scale of intervention counts from emergency and relief interventions through recovery, disaster preparedness, disaster risk reduction down to longterm development projects and programs such as contribution in National Solidarity Program, Agriculture Education Program, Natural Resource Management (NRM) & Agriculture Program or Urban Poverty Program. The NRM and Agriculture programme has been established since 2008 with support of joint funding of European Commission (EC) and Czech Development Agency (CzDA) and focused directly on mountainous and remote districts in south of Balkh province in northern Afghanistan. The working environment in southern Balkh is challenging from the logistic, environmental and also security point of view, none the less PIN managed to establish firm presence in the area and gained the reputation as virtually only organisation providing the support to local communities on longterm basis, besides relatively weak governmental bodies. This however asks for responsible attitude and longterm planning of the programs and the projects that have to bring visible long-term impacts, based on a good record of good practices and lessons learned. Besides that the understanding the main drivers and bottlenecks is a key for successful planning of the development programs and the recent studies. For example one of the well established beliefs is that the conflicts of last decades had a large impact on quality of agriculture and management of natural resources. Recent studies carried out by PIN however do not bring the evidence of such dynamic. The initial recovery approach that was primarily building the agriculture assets for food insecure families and returnees turned therefore gradually into capacity building of local communities and authorities in natural resource management, conservation agriculture and development of agriculture business and value chains. Two recent projects implemented by PIN and funded by CzDA called “Improved Agriculture in Balkh Province” and “Support to small agriculture entrepreneurs in Balkh” represent well the experience of this transformation, while they included both aspects – the capacity building in income generation activities and general provision of improved assets.

Keywords: Afghanistan, agriculture extension, natural resource management, recovery