Drought Rapid Assessment Report
Western Afghanistan
Badghis province

October, 2014
Drought Assessment Report
[Badghis Province]

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Overview

In response to the Badghis potential drought and in coordination with the UN OCHA, WFP and other stakeholders, a rapid food security & drought assessment was carried out by World Vision Afghanistan (WVA) and the Afghan Government representatives (ANDMA and DAIL) from 20th to 31st Oct 2014 with the aim of understanding the current situation and impact of the drought in Badghis province, particularly in the WVA operational areas in the four districts of Qadis, Qala-I-Now, Muqor and Abkmary.

This assessment was necessary because of failure of the wheat and fodder crops as a result of the late seasonal rain, subsequent delays in the planting season and low rainfall during the growing season. The assessment also underscores the importance of additional needs for children and their families as a result of the drought and the impact of the drought on food security indicators.

The assessment provides guidance for strategic planning and implementation of emergency recovery responses as well as long term programming for the resilience of the communities.

Note that this assessment report only covers the WVA operational areas in the above mentioned districts.

Geographical Area:

Badghis
Summary of key findings:

This report summarizes the current situation of the poorest and most vulnerable households in drought affected areas of Badghis Province in relation to livelihoods and households’ coping strategies and ends with a list of recommendations.

A rapid assessment was designed and was supported by qualitative interviews with families to further understand the personal impact of the drought. The information gathered will help analyze the current situation and inform WVA and other stockholders on emergency, recovery and long term programming in the area.

The findings of the assessment suggest that the impact of the drought has severely affected vulnerable households in Badghis. The lack of long rains and reduced snow fall from December 2013 to February 2014 and subsequent failure of rains in March 2014 have resulted in negative coping mechanism, triggered stress and in depth livelihoods shock amongst farmers and pastoralist households mainly due to water and grazing shortages. This has put increased stress onto an agricultural system struggling to rehabilitate itself after decades of war.

Interviewees indicated that 36.75 % of water sources are running out. Feedback from individual interviews indicates that the adverse conditions are leading to a negative trend in children’s school attendance. As the scarcity of food at household level is forcing children to contribute to the families’ income and tasks, children are beginning to drop out. Many are not going to school and are instead getting small jobs for income generation to help sustain household needs.

During the assessment it has become clear that food insecurity is already high in most households. 86 % of the population in Badghis are totally reliant upon agriculture and/or livestock for their main source of income and food.

Interviews from the population and the community councils revealed a reduction of 56% in rain fed, 33 % in irrigated land and 73 % in pasture or grazing, therefore, families have begun to sell off household assets to buy food, which is demonstrable through a major decrease in the price of meat in Oct (17% in Badghis). A further challenge to the community is their immigration to the centre of Badghis, neighbouring provinces or Iran to find work as labourers.

The summary of key recommendations for empowering the sustainability of the communities’ resilience and livelihoods are:

- Implementation of cash for work, food distribution and provision of fodder for livestock emergency responses. This will reduce the sale of assets, displacement and immigration of the affected families.
- Implementation of recovery and long-term programming that would include interventions around the introduction of improved varieties of seeds and livestock, diversification of funding sources and improved irrigation infrastructure. This is to mitigate these recurring problems.
Background:

According to NRVA report, the West, North, and North-East regions of Afghanistan account for over 90% of the country's total rain-fed wheat production. Badghis Province is particularly reliant on agriculture, with 74% of rural households having access to land.

According to the baseline assessment conducted by WVA from Qala-I-Now district in 2006, 80% of households own some rain-fed land, which is their main source of income. 68% of households in Afghanistan also own livestock. This valuable source of income is also threatened by an overall decline in grazing pasture land in the recent assessment.

The abnormally prolonged lack of rains in western Afghanistan has triggered stress and livelihoods shock amongst farmers due to a shortage of water. Due to ongoing drought, farmers faced problems in the wheat planting season in December 2013. This delayed planting until February 2014. Low rainfall during the growing season from February to April 2014 meant that the majority of the wheat crop failed.

These changes in weather pattern are beginning to cause serious damage to agricultural and pastoral livelihoods. The insufficient supply of water has lead to crop failure, resulting in a deficient food supply which fails to meet the demands of the greater population. Farmers have begun selling livestock as a coping mechanism, which has resulted in major decreases in the cost of livestock in the local market.

The assessment methodology:

The rapid assessment was designed to answer a number of questions and to support decision making on the emergency response and recovery stages of the drought affected areas of Badghis province.

The assessment has the following objectives:

- To assess the impact of the recurrent drought in Badghis province using a rapid Humanitarian Emergency Affairs (HEA) assessment focusing on food security.
- To assess how families are coping with food shortages.
- To develop an approach that encompasses WVA's current portfolio of livelihoods and health programming as well as outlining additional interventions, essential to protect children and their families during the prolonged dry period.

12 teams from the WVA staff and 6 staff from the Afghan Government Representatives (ANDMA-DAIL) conducted structured interviews with Shura leaders, farmers, and women in their villages, using a rapid assessment survey. 60 villages were covered and 300 men and 20 women were interviewed in 7 focused group discussion. The assessment took place from 20 to 31 Oct 14.

55% of villages across the WVA targeted areas in Badghis were selected to obtain a representative indicator of the situation.

It’s worth mentioning that during the assessment process the data collectors realized that the interviewed people exaggerating and try to show the level of drought and its impact much worse than the reality is, therefore the data collectors used a combination of self-observation and individual interviews method (visiting the houses by female staff) in order to gage the level of drought and its impact on the communities’ life.
Pre-drought Livelihoods:

Seasonal Calendar:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>Long rainy and cold season</td>
<td>Rainy</td>
<td>Long and hot dry season, November is cold</td>
<td>Long rainy and cold season</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nomadic period</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wheat harvest</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Start MID</td>
<td>Harvest mid</td>
<td>Planting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cash crops harvest</td>
<td>Planting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Harvest mid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watermelon harvest</td>
<td>Planting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Harvest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Animals consume stored fodder</td>
<td>Birth season</td>
<td>Pasture from April until Dec</td>
<td>Livestock trading season</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Prices</td>
<td>Costs for commodities increase because of increased transport costs. Increased costs associated with winter (fuel for heating)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casual Labour</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Harvest and construction season</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hunger period</td>
<td>No harvest, no casual labour, no natural fodder</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Expenditures</td>
<td>Cost associated with winter (fuel)</td>
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Impact of drought:

The assessment focused on 7 indicators to measure the impact of the drought:

1. Population demographics
2. Yield expectation for 2014
3. Access to food and seed stocks for 2014-15
4. Access to fodder
5. Perceived decrease in water level
6. Seed stocks
7. Changes in basic commodity prices

1. Population demographics:

In the 2013 growing season in Badghis, farmers planted a more diverse of crops, with the majority responding that they had planted wheat and cash crops (watermelon, cumin, sesame and peas). Despite increasing their chances for a successful harvest through
diversification, all of the mentioned crops are heavily reliant on rainfall, which means that the majority have already failed this year.

Respondents in Badghis estimated that 58% of their income derived from agriculture, closely followed by 28% from production and sale of livestock. Only 12.5% of their income was from labour, and aid only represented 1.5%. Farmers living in Badghis cited 60% of their income deriving from aid. This may be a result of increased development programming in Badghis during 2014.

These figures should be treated with caution. Respondents were asked the question, "What is your main source of income?" There is little work available as a labourer in Badghis and very few aid programs operating in remote districts, which will have influenced responses. There are currently two NGOs plus area bases are working in remote area of Badghis province. Respondents from these areas cited labour as an equally important source as livestock and agriculture income.

2. Yield expectation for 2014

Respondents were asked about their expectation of yield crop for the 2014 harvest. 70% of respondents in Badghis indicated that they expected 58% crop failure (30% expected 55% of their crops to survive)

3. Access to food and seed stocks for 2014-15:

86% of farmers in Badghis are totally reliant upon agriculture and/or livestock for their main source of income and food. The effect of the drought has forced farmers to sell assets or get loan to buy food to replace their harvest or to move to the neighboring province and the center of Badghis to find a job.
All farmers interviewed were frustrated at the increased cost in basic commodities and expressed their anxiety about feeding their families in the next few months without external assistance.

4. Access to fodder:

During discussions, participants from all 4 districts expressed their concern about the lack of fodder available for their animals. 73% of the total grazing area has been destroyed. In Badghis, farmers take their livestock up to wild pasture land in the hills during the spring and summer to graze. The low rainfall this year has significantly reduced the amount of wild grasses on the hills, which means communities have been forced to sell a large portion of their livestock at a very cheap price.

Farmers typically use wheat straw to feed their livestock during the winter season. The failure of the wheat crop will thus increase livestock mortality rates in winter 2014. Another coping mechanism for reduced amounts of fodder is for farmers to travel further distances from their home. For example, Shuras in Ab Kamary district explained that this year, many farmers have been forced to remain with their animals in the Sabzak pass area, which has small amounts of wild grasses and water. This area is 70km from Ab Kamary and is in a particularly insecure area – farmers may caught in cross fire between the armed actors in the area. In addition, Sabzak pass is extremely cold during the winter season.

Participants in Moqur district appeared to be the worst affected by the lack of fodder. Shura leaders estimated that only 20% of their community has access to fodder currently and the same percentage will have fodder during the winter months.
5. **Perceived decrease in water level:**

The water level has decreased significantly since the beginning of 2014. Although no scientific data is available, the Shura leaders and farmers in Badghis have observed significant declines in the level of water in wells and karezes which are the main sources for irrigation of crops as well as the sole source of drinking water in rural areas.

Flash flooding on 24 April 2014 also destroyed the main irrigation channels in Badghis (hand-dug canals), which means that even the small amount of rainfall at the beginning of March did not reach agriculture lands.

The table below indicates the estimated average decline in water level provided by Shuras in each district surveyed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Series 1</th>
<th>Series 2</th>
<th>Series 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qadis</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>QIN</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ab Kamary</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Moqur</td>
<td>42%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6. **Seed stocks:**

Every year, farmers reserve a proportion of their crop as seeds for the next agriculture season. **46.5%** farmers interviewed by WVA mentioned that they were unable to save any seeds this year because they were either forced to sell or eat the small amount of crops they managed to harvest. This will impact upon next year’s agriculture season because farmers will be unable to afford seeds. Selling livestock as a coping mechanism will also restrict farmers’ ability to grow crops next year, because they are needed for cultivation.

7. **Changes in basic commodity prices:**

WVA staff conducted a survey of basic commodity prices in Badghis local markets. They asked shop keepers about the average price for these commodities from April to Oct 2014.
Information received demonstrates a slight increase to the price of food commodities and a slight decrease by 17% in the cost of meat and livestock. The cost of wheat particularly reflects the effect of the drought, with an overall increase of 40% in Badghis.

Recommendations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asset protection</strong></td>
<td>• Conditional cash (CFW) to improve disposal income. CFW activities to include water catchment construction, road and canal rehabilitation, tailoring houses (for women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate needs (1-6 months)</td>
<td>• Food aid and food positioning for most severely affected areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asset recovery</strong></td>
<td>• Provision of fodder</td>
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<tr>
<td>(12 months)</td>
<td>• Re-stocking of small livestock with improved varieties</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Vaccination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Training para-veterinarians</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Agriculture</strong></td>
<td>• Distribution of drought resistant wheat seed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduction of cash crops for rain fed areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Establishment of stronger irrigation infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Livelihoods</strong></td>
<td>• Promotion of alternative livelihoods (IGA, bee-keeping- poultry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WASH</strong></td>
<td>• Rehabilitation of destroyed Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Construction of water catchment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Promotion of hygiene</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Extension of water network through piping scheme</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Drought Assessment Report

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