

Overview of AGORA enabled programming in Afghanistan

January, 2024 | Afghanistan

KEY MESSAGES

- The AGORA methodology is applied through **two programmes in Afghanistan since 2018**, respectively focussing on community-based **access to basic services and natural resource management**, and **durable solutions in informal settlements**.
- Through this area-based approach, Acted and IMPACT Initiatives (IMPACT) implement **multisectoral recovery and resilience** programmes in both rural and urban settings.
- Local actors and communities play a key role via the application of AGORA's **locally-led development** approach, as they are **empowered** to be actors in **evidence and needs based aid planning, delivery and monitoring**.

AGORA in a nutshell

Created in 2016, AGORA is a **methodology anchored in local territories and knowledge aiming to strengthen resilience, recovery and governance** in protracted crisis. AGORA has four distinctive features: 1) working at the right geographical scale through local territories; 2) contextualising the action through a strong evidence base and a focus on local knowledge; 3) putting local actors at the center of the action and; 4) building networks and synergies between local and external actors.

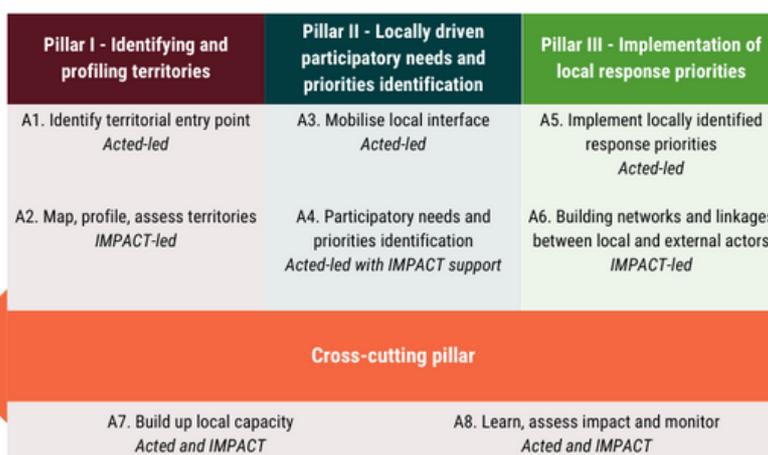
As a joint venture between **Acted and IMPACT**, it **builds on the expertise of each organisation**:

- IMPACT leads on mapping territorial units, profiling these territories, coordination, and visibility
- Acted leads on capacity building, participatory local priority identification, and implementation of local response priorities.

A global outreach:

- 23 projects in 17 countries
- Est. total budget of 127M EUR
- Est. 2.5M+ beneficiaries
- Est. 1800+ organisations supported
- 10 projects ongoing (est. budget of 61M EUR)

AGORA's four pillars:



Countries with past and current AGORA projects:



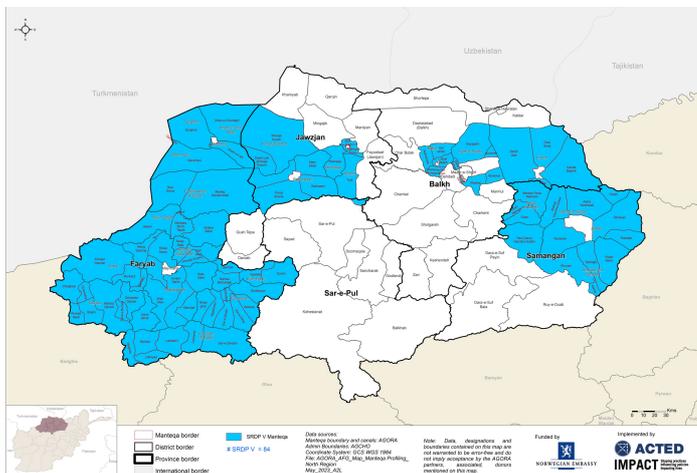
Selecting the appropriate territorial entry point is key. This is done by ensuring that these are anchored in existing socio-spatial features, politically acceptable, have a size that allows both meaningful local engagement as well as scalability, and are adapted to the programme's objective: from natural resource management, to rural development, access to basic services or livelihoods.

AGORA for improved community based access to basic services and natural resource management

Sustained Rural Development Programme (SRDP)

With the support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, AGORA is implemented in Afghanistan since 2018, through the Sustained Rural Development Programme, in Faryab, Jawzjan, Balkh and Samangan provinces, for **1,844,941 individuals**. To support rural development, foster good governance, improve access to basic services, to education and sustainable livelihood, AGORA uses the *manteqa* as the territorial entry point to implement **participatory, resource-based development planning with local communities**. Through this programme, AGORA maps and profiles 84 *manteqa*, supports the elaboration of Local Recovery and Response Plans (LRRPs) by the 84 Manteqa Development Platforms (MDP), promotes accountability, builds local capacities of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and provides sustainable, community-owned basic services.

SRDP area of implementation:

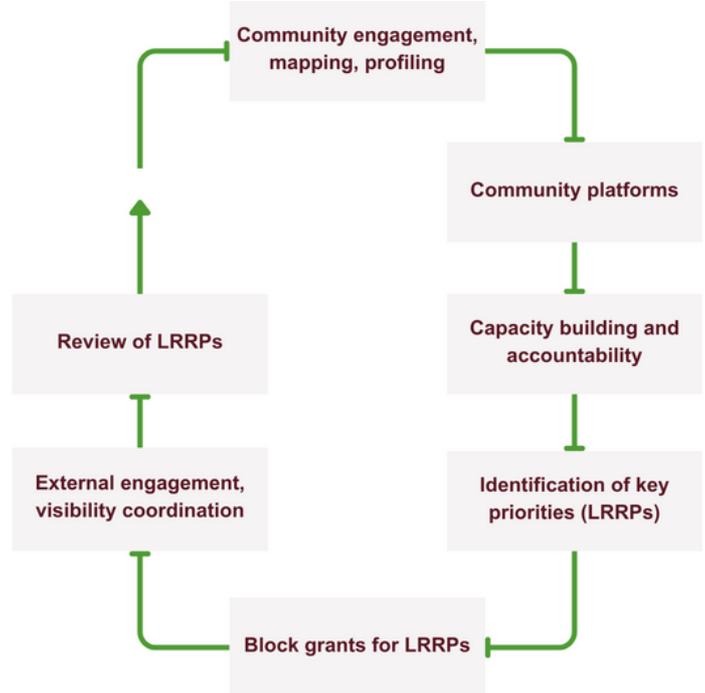


From a pilot to a proof of concept, AGORA enters its second phase in rural areas of Afghanistan and aims to further develop **synergies** with basic services programmes, increase **coordination** between local and international stakeholders, integrate **green programing** and **scale up** the approach.

Key characteristics:

- ✓ Intervening at the right scale for the objective, through the *manteqas*, which are located between villages (too small) and districts (generally too large)
- ✓ Working through **community systems and participatory approaches** to ensure community buy-in, sustainability, safe access for all, and improved accountability
- ✓ **Scalability** and ability to build **synergies** with external actors with resources to support manteqa identified local priorities
- ✓ **Programme focus:** basic services, agriculture, education

SRDP's community based process:



The manteqa

The *manteqa* is a **geographic area containing a number of villages** identified by both its inhabitants and the inhabitants of neighbouring *manteqas* under one common regional name. It is thus the basic reference point for the village population in the area. The *manteqa* boundaries are usually clearly defined by natural geographical features such as rivers, watersheds, etc. As such, it provides an **entry point that is appropriate to engage with communities in ways that are locally owned and accountable**; including for basic services, and natural resource management. *Manteqas* lie between villages and districts, and are a nation-wide reality in rural Afghanistan.

SRDP phase V

The Sustained Rural Development Programme is currently entering its fifth phase (SRDP V). Utilising the AGORA approach, this phase of the programme aims to provide i) increased access to **basic services and livelihood**, ii) increased access to **education and employability**, and ii) improved **agricultural practices** and related livelihoods; with **evidenced-based, inclusive and accountable programming** that is implemented through the *manteqa* territorial entry point.

Additional resources

- Manteqa profiles for SRDP IV (2019): [Executive Summary](#), [Jawzjan](#), [Samangan](#), [Faryab I](#), [Faryab II](#), [Balkh](#)
- Manteqa maps for SRDP IV by district (2019): [Khulm](#), [Nahr e Shahi](#), [Balkh](#)
- [Community Irrigation and Water Systems Management Report](#) for SRDP IV

SRDP's achievements and evolution from phase IV to phase V:

From a pilot – phase IV (2018-2022) ...

-  58 manteqas mapped and profiled
-  41 MDPs
41 LRRPs
-  53 community-driven projects - **1,950,000** USD (construction of schools, clinics, bridges, rehabilitation of roads or irrigation infrastructures, etc...): **231,718** individuals benefitted from the block grants delivered to MDPs for the implementation of prioritised infrastructure works
26 grants for irrigation infrastructure: 20% increase in irrigated land surface
-  5 Vocational Training Centers - **1,687** trainees
18 Youth Development Centers - **20,010** youths, including 12,951 girls
-  44 business development schemes
32,800 daily jobs created
-  Supported:
 - 21 Water User Groups and 168 Water User Associations
 - 58 CSOs
 - 58 agro-cooperatives
 - 66 Women Business Associations

... to a proof of concept – phase V (2023-2025)

-  84 manteqas mapped and profiled
-  84 MDPs (43% women)
84 MDPs trained on resource management, safeguarding, MEAL and accountability
84 manteqas with a Volunteers/Relay Network
84 community-owned LRRPs
84 MDP supported for emergency responses
-  84 grants for LRRPs - USD **1,588,000**
-  4,820 children supported with community-based education
54 schools supported with winterization programs and teachers' trainers
23 Business and Youth Development Hubs: **13,000** trainees
300 apprenticeships supported
-  84 agro-groups and cooperatives supported, and piloted improved and sustainable agricultural practices
192 Water Users Groups and Associations supported
84 women groups supported with kitchen gardening and saffron cultivation
84 Basic Veterinary Workers supported
84 manteqa supported with vaccination campaign and producer training
24 breeder cooperatives supported
24 beekeeping farms
Agro-fairs and marketing practices improved
-  Landscape restoration and environmentally sustainable agricultural approaches piloted in 5 manteqas (**THRIVE**)
-  24 CSOs supported with capacity building and grants to implement the LRRPs
-  1 dashboard - Learning, impact assessment and monitoring & support to coordination and advocacy

Additional resources

- Report on the project SRDP IV - AGORA in Afghanistan: [summary](#) and [annexes](#)

AGORA for durable solutions in informal settlements in urban areas

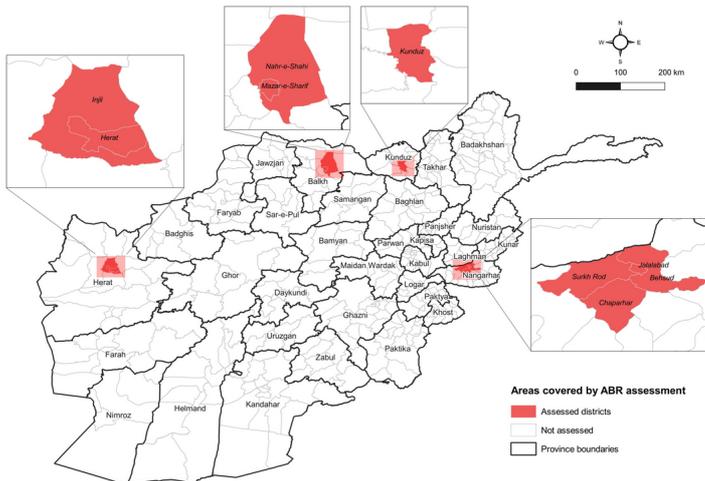
Holistic response to informal settlements populations' multisector emergency needs

With the support of BHA and in collaboration with NRC, AGORA is also applied in urban settings of Afghanistan, through a neighbourhood-based approach (*nahia*) as part of a 23-month project which began in December 2022 and is being implemented in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. It aims to support communities affected by protracted displacement with community-based solutions for local integration of internally displaced populations and recovery of affected urban communities. Building on learnings of the grant's first phase, AGORA aims to provide local level sustainable basic services and national level practical and scalable solutions to protracted displacements.

Verification of shelter repairing, Nagarhar province, September 2023



Area of implementation:



The neighbourhood-based approach

To respond in urban settings, within the AGORA framework, Acted and IMPACT developed a neighbourhood-based approach, leveraging the informal 'gozar' or urban neighbourhood territory (*nahias*), to support communities affected by protracted displacement and integrate the humanitarian response into local planning frameworks; providing pathways for local integration of IDPs in informal settlements (ISET).

Nahias are the city district level within a municipal or administrative boundary through which local services are managed and distributed. *Gozaars* are neighbourhoods and a sub-division of the

nahiya that is generally recognised by the municipality, with a specific number of households living in it, streets and roads. The community that belongs to the *gozar* has a shared sense of belonging, it is represented by a community representative (*wakil-e-gozar*), and it finds joint solutions to common problems.

Key facts:

- 4 areas in Herat, Balkh, Kunduz and Nangarhar provinces*
- 6 area-based assessments (ABAs)**
- 7 Community Response Plans
- 14 Community Committees for service information
14 Youth Committees
- 4,180 individuals supported protection and cash
- 14,000 individuals benefiting from emergency cash
- 2,400 households benefiting from livelihoods support
- 18,000 individuals supported with access to water
- 16,800 individuals benefiting from settlement durable solutions (392,295 indirect)

*The grant covers both area-based activities and ABAs limited to Community Centers' catchment areas from Acted/NRC, as well as some activities that cover all of the country's provinces, e.g. the Whole of Afghanistan Assessment.

**ABAs conducted in all the main cities of the four provinces (Jalalabad, Herat, Kunduz, and Mazar-e-Sharif) and in two neighbourhoods: Injil District (Herat city) and Neher Shahi District (Mazar city).

Key characteristics:

- Intervening at the right scale through the urban district (*nahia*), to identify and respond to needs of IDPs and host communities in ISETs
- Evidence-based and community-driven approach to planning and responding: **ABAs translated into 5 actionable Community Response Plans for multi-sectoral interventions**
- Flexible** response adapted to the local context
- Scalable and durable**
- Programme focus:** basic services, agriculture, WASH, shelter, protection, cash

Additional resources

- Community Response Plans: [Mazar](#), [Herat](#)
- City factsheets: [Herat](#)

AGORA in Afghanistan – what’s next?

2024–2025

Sustained Rural Development Programme

-  84 manteqa profiles and 1 dashboard to be shared
-  84 LRRPs to be reviewed and published
-  Capacity building and implementation of priorities
-  Accountability systems strengthened
-  Advocacy, coordination and fundraising for LRRPs with and for the MDPs
-  Inter-manteqa livelihood programming
-  THRIVE piloting
-  Increased synergies with basic services and livelihood programmes

Neighbourhood based holistic response to multisectoral emergency needs

-  2 new ABA in urban areas finalised and shared
-  2 new Community Response Plans in urban areas for durable solutions
-  Increased synergies with Durable Solutions Working Group and CCCM Working Group for area-based and localised information and coordination, to durable solutions

LRRP Workshop in Babayadigar Manteqa, Balkh Province



LRRP workshop with women MDP members in Babayadgar Manteqa, Balkh province



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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