

Economic Empowerment in Afghanistan

Key Figures



7 artisan value chains mapped across 8 provinces



1,200 individuals (**77% women**) received 9-month vocational training in 19 Business Development Centres in 6 provinces



1,000 most vulnerable women engaged in 20 Women's Artisan Networks



2,500+ MSMEs (**79% women owned**) supported with grants and literacy training



560+ MSMEs received technical capacity-building training to link with international market



1 Design Centre launched in Kabul as a national hub for innovation, MSME support and international market linkage



24 national and international fairs facilitate sustainable market access



84 manteqa communities in 4 provinces restore sustainable agro-pastoral livelihoods

Implementation Overview

5

projects

9

Provinces

30.2M€

Budget

1,862,416

Beneficiaries



Trainee in Embroidery class in Faryab, Oct 2024

The **SCALE-UP AFGHANS** project, funded by the **European Union** and implemented by Acted as a pilot initiative since 2022, aims to safeguard and create sustainable livelihoods across Afghanistan, with a strong emphasis on **women's economic empowerment**. The project provides vocational training, in-kind toolkits, and raw material support, while also delivering business development grants to over **2,500 MSMEs** and technical capacity-building to an additional **540 MSMEs**. By strengthening market linkages and enhancing the visibility of Afghan artisan products both nationally and internationally, Acted is contributing to more resilient and inclusive local economies.

Two years into implementation, an *independent midterm assessment* highlights substantial improvements in the livelihoods and resilience of participants:

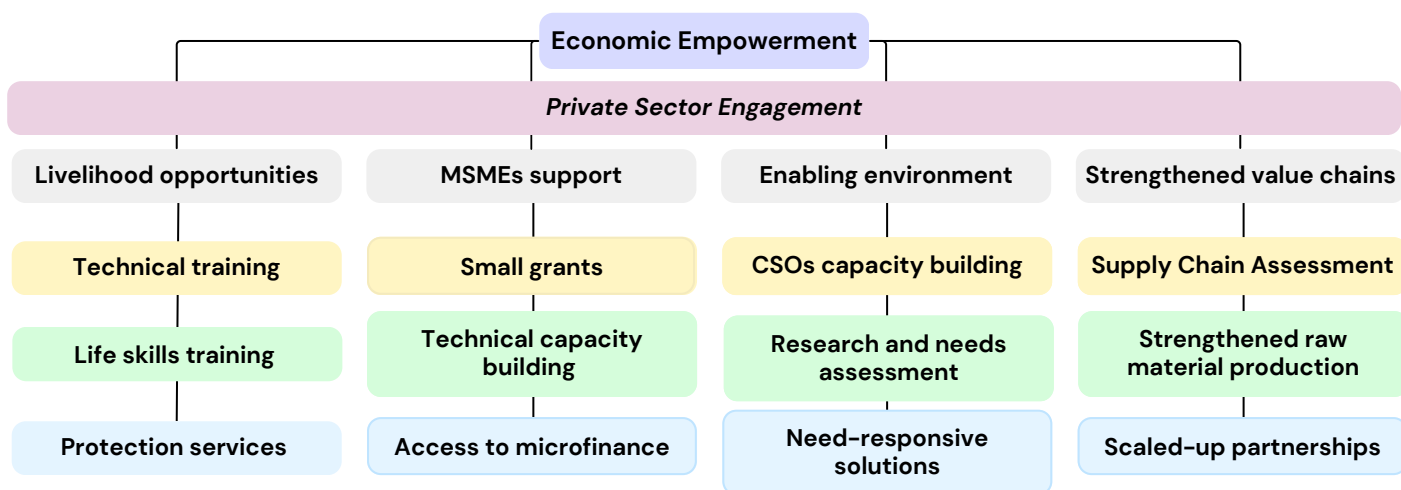
- **Crisis-level livelihood coping strategies**, such as selling income-generating assets, decreasing health or education expenditures or withdrawing children from school, **dropped from 30.7% to 11%**, indicating significant improvement in household livelihoods.
- Emergency-level coping strategies, including begging, high-risk income activities, or early marriage of daughters, declined sharply from **8.66% to just 0.7%**, reflecting improved household resilience.
- **75%** of supported households reported **sustained net income** over the past six months, significantly exceeding project targets.
- **20% growth in household income** among participating artisans and craftsmen following the intervention.

ACTED'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY IN AFGHANISTAN

Acted's strategy on inclusive economic opportunity programming aims at fostering **socio-economic empowerment** and **sustainable development** in Afghanistan, operate on four core pillars:

1. Enhancing livelihood and **income-generating opportunities** through multi-purpose centres (MPCs).
2. Supporting **Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises** (MSMEs) to contribute to sustainable job creation and social and environmental resilience.
3. Reinforcing an **enabling environment** for the growth and resilience of businesses and CSOs
4. Fostering market growth through **strengthened value chains** and increased products demand

The strategy also encompasses a cross-cutting pillar: **private sector engagement**.



Moving forward: Scaling up Afghan MSMEs and Strengthening Livelihoods and Resilience

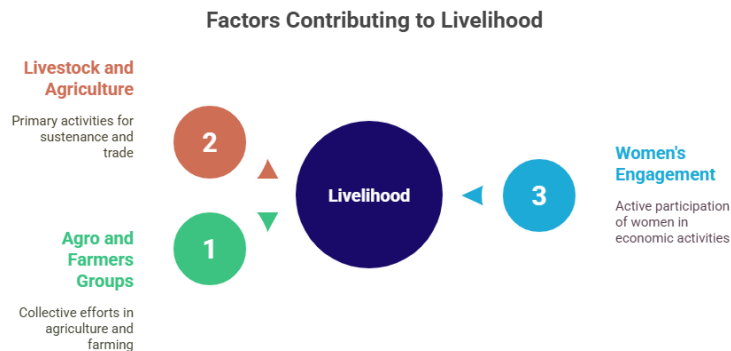
- **Tiered Grants and Capacity-Building for MSMEs** including access to market, solar panel installment, business license support.
- **Upscaling financial literacy training and improved access to microfinance.** Support with business licenses, renewable energy/solar panels, and address administrative barriers to cross-border trade.
- **Strengthening Production Capacity of raw material providers** across priority value chains to ensure consistent quality and supply.
- **Scaling Up Food Processing MSMEs** across key food value chains – olive oil, orange and rose water, tea, honey, and saffron, based on detailed market mapping and value chain analysis.
- **Sustainable operation of Design Centre in Kabul**, linking production to international markets. The centre provides MSMEs with design services, quality assurance, branding and digital marketing, logistics and export facilitation, and business management.
- **Diversification of International Market Partnerships** particularly for high-end value chains, including embroidery, silk weaving, and glass-blowing.
- **Holistic Protection support** for women entrepreneurs through psychosocial support (PSS) and peer-to-peer networking within Women and Girls' Safe Spaces (WGSS).



Carpet weavers in Balkh province, April 2025

BUILDING RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS THROUGH AGRO-PASTORAL VALUE CHAINS

As a central pillar of Acted's THRIVE initiative, **EMERGE (Enhancing Market Economies for Rural Growth and Empowerment)** represents the next phase in Acted's livelihoods programming. Building on years of support to rural producers and agro-pastoral communities, EMERGE strengthens fragile agro-pastoral livelihoods by shifting **from short-term recovery to long-term resilience and market integration**. Implemented across 84 manteqas (local administrative clusters that serve as the main unit of community planning and coordination) in four northern provinces of Afghanistan, EMERGE adopts a multi-layered approach that links farmer/agro-group strengthening and climate-resilient value chain development, while maintaining a **strong focus on women's inclusion**.



- **Women's Economic Empowerment through climate-smart agriculture:** As part of the transition from short-term support to sustainable rural development, 252 lead women farmers have been supported to establish kitchen gardening, saffron and ferula cultivations in NW regions. These climate-smart initiatives have improved household nutrition while creating new sources of environmentally sustainable income.
- **Sustained veterinary for resilient agro-pastoralism:** Building on Acted's ongoing support for livestock-dependent communities, 84 basic veterinary agents provided vaccination and treatment services in 84 manteqas, reaching 61,050 herders. With more than 808,000 animals vaccinated, communities have improved the health of their livestock, increased their food security and productivity, and reduced their dependence on external veterinary assistance.
- **Strengthening livestock value chains:** Thanks to artificial insemination services provided by 24 field veterinary units, 6,670 calves were born, generating 4.7 million USD in annual dairy income for 3,350 farmers. These results reflect EMERGE's focus on increasing food productivity and profitability through improved breed quality and access to essential services.
- **Market integration through cooperative empowerment:** EMERGE built on existing agricultural cooperatives by training 1,560 members of 78 groups in business planning and marketing. Participation in national agricultural fairs generated 1 million AFN in sales and secured over 15 million AFN in new supply agreements, supporting long-term market integration and linkages.



Irrigation of gardening sites in Samangan province, May 2025



Vaccination campaign of sheep and goats in Faryab province, March 2025