

# Area-based approach in Northwest Afghanistan

## Overview of information products

April 2024 | Afghanistan

### CONTENT OF THIS BRIEF

**Information products are available upon request and relevant for organisations active in Northwest Afghanistan.** The products were developed under the Acted and IMPACT area-based response programme 'AGORA'. This brief offers an overview of these products and highlights their significance for evidence-based, localised, and participatory planning and implementation.

**Page 2 Maps** - Deliniating the territorial entry point, the manteqa, infrastructure and resources.

**Page 3 Manteqa Profiles** - Granular intersectoral information on needs, vulnerabilities and resources

**Page 4 Local Recovery and Resilience Plans (LRRP)** - Building synergies with external organisations through community-based identification of needs and priorities.

### ABOUT AGORA

AGORA is a joint venture between Acted and IMPACT Initiatives. Under the motto **'Think Local, Act Global'** AGORA is an innovative area-based approach that aims to better address the relief, environmental and development needs of people in fragile context through a Nexus approach. AGORA has already been piloted in 17 countries with four principles at its foundation:

- Working at the **right geographical scale** enabling meaningful local engagement and the ability to scale-up the action.
- Contextualising action with a strong **evidence base and local knowledge**.
- **Putting local actors at the centre** through participatory planning, implementation and monitoring.
- **Linking local communities with external actors** and country-level response plans by providing visibility to locally identified priorities and capacity-building to local actors.

### AGORA IN AFGHANISTAN

Under the umbrella of AGORA, Acted and IMPACT collaborate to improve local governance, rural livelihoods and basic service provision within the framework of the Sustainable Rural Development Programme V.

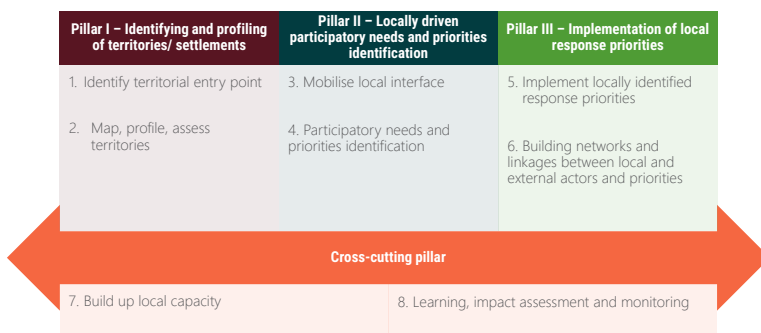
The AGORA strategy is operationalised in different pillars (Figure 1). Under Pillar I, an area known as the *Manteqa* was identified as relevant territorial entrypoint. An extensive mapping exercise identified the territorial boundaries, resources and services of 169 *Manteqa*. This was followed by a profiling of 84 *Manteqa* in Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan and Samangan Province, based on key informant surveys to attain an in-depth, granular understanding of each *Manteqa*.

The area-based assessments constituted the cornerstone for locally driven participatory needs and priorities identification (Pillar II). In each *Manteqa*, community representatives are mobilised in a Manteqa Development Platforms (MDPs) and drafted Local Resilience and Recovery Plans (LRRP) which list the communities needs and priorities. Acted, IMPACT and MDP members engage with external stakeholders (Pillar III) to ensure visibility of locally defined response priorities, facilitate a

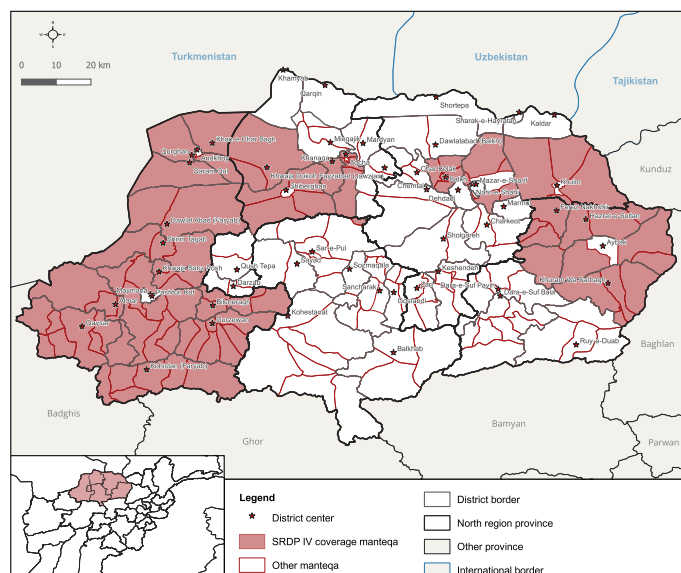
coordinated response and build synergies with other actors.

Through the MDP, the LRRP, and by drawing on evidence on local needs, **AGORA offers an scalable, community-centred solution to to emergency and development issues that can be integrated into the planning and prioritisation efforts of international actors and local governments.**

Figure 1 : The AGORA methodology



Map 1 : Manteqa and districts targeted in Northwest Afghanistan.



# Defining the territorial entry point

Selecting the appropriate territorial boundaries for intervention is essential for efficient, targeted, area-based interventions that leverage local knowledge and existing local governance structures. Research done by Acted and IMPACT in 2022 demonstrated the value of a territory called the *Manteqa* as a suitable entry point for local responses.<sup>1</sup> The *Manteqa* is not an official administrative unit. It exists between the district-level and the village-level. *Manteqa* borders usually follow district borders, allowing for both meaningful local engagement as well as scalability. It is an area recognised by communities, rooted in socio-spatial realities and political legitimacy.

To geographically define the area of intervention and map available resources and services, IMPACT conducted Participatory Mapping Focal Group Discussions in 169 *Manteqa*. Male and female local stakeholders (separately) participated in the mapping exercise in each *manteqa*. Participants identified *Manteqa* boundaries and geographic main features, which were later verified using GIS. As a result, **detailed maps were created for 169 Manteqa in all rural districts of Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan, Samangan and Sar-e-Pul Province**. By pinpointing the location of natural resources and services, such as pastures, water, health clinics, markets and schools, each map constitutes a visual reference for the planning and implementation of local humanitarian and development responses.

## The Manteqa

**To the assessed rural population, the Manteqa was an important way of identifying themselves and facilitated the organisation of agro-pastoral livelihoods.** Participants of the Mapping Focus Group Discussions reported a feeling of belonging and attachment to the *manteqa*. The *Manteqa* boundaries are defined by the local community and are usually clearly delineated by natural geographical features such as rivers, watersheds, or mountain ridges. Furthermore, a *Manteqa* was identified by both its inhabitants and the inhabitants of neighbouring *manteqas* under one common regional name.

Residents in a *Manteqa* commonly share public services, including schools and clinics, and economic resources crucial for the local population’s livelihood, such as irrigation systems, markets, agricultural land and pastures. The customary governance structures that were found to exist at various levels within the *manteqa* play an important role in community resilience and resource management.

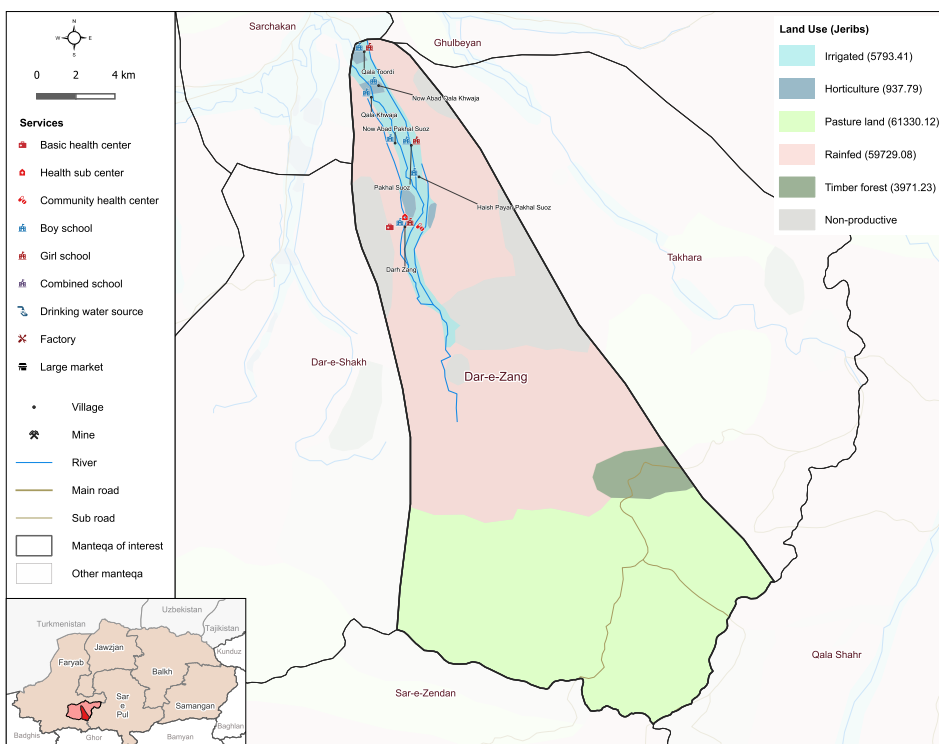
## Information Products

169 Manteqa maps

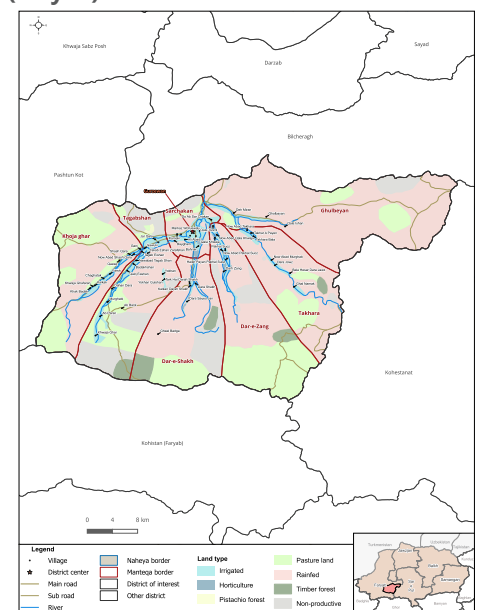
24 District maps

**A geographical reference of the natural and economic resources that sustain rural livelihoods and the location of services in each *manteqa* and district.**

Map 2 : Manteqa Dar-e-Zang, Gurzewan District (Faryab)



Map 3 : Gurzewan District and manteqa (Faryab)



Information products are available upon request. Interested to learn more about the AGORA programme and/or a collaboration?

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# Manteqa Profiling

Rural communities in Afghanistan grapple with the compounding effects of droughts, regime change and the subsequent collapse of the economy and public services.<sup>2</sup> The effectiveness of local response planning hinges on an in-depth understanding of how these complexities impact local communities. Each *Manteqa* boasts a set of resources, local services, livelihood strategies and barriers, resulting in distinct vulnerabilities, resilience and coping mechanisms. In past crises, the customary governance and resource management structures that exist in *manteqas* have demonstrated resilience and contributed to rural communities' ability to absorb shocks.<sup>3</sup>

To advance understanding of the *Manteqa* and encourage a response underpinned by evidence, IMPACT conducted 2,225 key informant interviews, including 445 female respondents, with community leaders across all villages in the 84 *manteqa*. Using this data and by drawing on the quantitative key informant data previously gathered information from the Mapping Focus Group Discussions (p.2), *Manteqa* Profiles and a Dashboard were created.

The outputs showcase inter-sectoral dynamics including local livelihood systems, livelihood opportunities and barriers, the accessibility and functionality of basic services, natural resources, demography and stakeholders. Overall, the products can support organisations across sectors to understand communities' vulnerabilities and the local context. Moreover, they allow a contribution to relief and recovery that is tailored to local needs and leverages existing resources and stakeholders.

## INFORMATION PRODUCTS

84 *Manteqa* Profiles

1 Dashboard

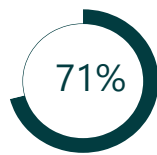
The *Manteqa* Profiles provide an consolidated overview of key intersectoral findings in each *Manteqa*. The Dashboard advances the accessibility of the data by offering different aggregation levels and filters for *manteqa*, district and province.

Information products are available upon request. Interested to learn more about the AGORA programme and/or a collaboration?  
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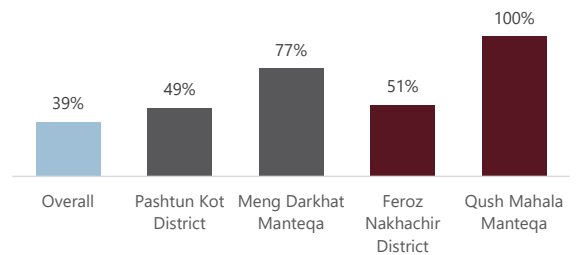
### KEY MESSAGES

- The differences between *Manteqa* within the same district demonstrates the importance of granular information to effectively prioritise and select response modalities. For example, data collected during the *Manteqa* Profiling found that water shortage and natural disasters were primary drivers of needs in the *Manteqa*, but they impacted livelihoods' and access to water and sanitation differently between *Manteqa* within the same district or region. Similarly, access to female health staff differed between *manteqa* within the same district.
- Community leaders were found to manage pastures, land and water. These **local stakeholders** are essential partners in **effective natural resource management** necessary to protect the environment and ensure sustainable livelihoods.

**% of KIs reporting that most households in the village are able to access sufficient water to satisfy daily domestic needs.** In overall assessment area.



**% of KIs reporting insufficient female staff at health facilities.** In overall assessment area and in two *Manteqa* in Pashtun Kot District and Feroz Nakhachir District.



### Manteqa profile of Khwaja Gawhar Manteqa, Almar District, Faryab Province

**KHWAJA GAWHAR MANTEQA**

The participants of the FGD noted that their ancestors migrated to Khwaja Gawhar to protect the borders with Turkmenistan, upon instruction of King Amir Abdul Rahman Khan, in late 19th century. Furthermore, the participants elucidated that the *manteqa* derived its name from a renowned individual named 'Gawar Babar'. Participants reported an attachment to the area, based on shared livelihood and customs and because of the inherited lands, bazaars and mosques.

Khwaja Gawhar consists of 40 villages with an estimated 9 551 households and 63 095 individuals. Key informants indicated that displaced households can be found in around half of the villages. Pashtuns were the major ethnic group and Tajik, Uzbek, Arab, and Hazars were less commonly reported. It was reported that religious scholars and community elders from across the *manteqa* convene a bi-weekly Shura, a traditional council where community leaders discuss important matters and make decisions, to address the community's issues. Additionally, each village has a dedicated Qaryadar, or village head, and Aduab, who typically coordinates between the

community and the local authorities. Furthermore, community elders were said to be instrumental in the management of pastures by mediating in occasional land disputes. Female participants reported that they do not participate in communal decision-making. They commonly voice their concerns to male relatives, while women without male family members addressed their problems directly with religious scholars or the Qaryadar.

No water management or irrigation structures were not commonly reported due to the limited availability of surface water. However, participants pointed out that the *manteqa* maintains vast rainfed lands, or lalmi land, and pastures. Female participants that women in the *manteqa* were not engaged in handicraft production. Participants identified NGO projects of the past 3 years related to livestock support, the building of wells, education services and food assistance. These projects were carried out by ACTED, Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Save the Children and World Food Programme (WFP).

**HEALTHCARE**

42% Of KIs reported the majority of KIs have access to healthcare

67% Of female KIs reported gender equitable access to healthcare

**Available healthcare services\*\***

- Primary care
- Emergency and first aid
- Pharmacy
- Maternity ward
- Polyclinic

**Main barriers to healthcare\*\***

- Cost of services / medicine are too high
- Unable to reach (lack of transport or no money for transport)
- Cost of transport / medicine are too high
- Unable to reach (lack of transport or no money for transport)

**MARKET AND LIVELIHOOD**

100% Of KIs reported that all people above 18 were employed

37% Of KIs reported that women can be employed

**Employment rate and main sources of income\*\***

- 1 Agriculture
- 2 Livestock
- 3 Daily labour (no contract)

**Main women employment sectors and challenges\*\***

- Agriculture or livestock
- Taking Handicrafts
- Lack of resources
- Low selling skills
- Culture restrictions

**Main handicrafts and barriers\*\***

- 1 Embroidery clothes
- 2 Glum, Carpet, Quilt, Rug
- 3 Weaving
- Raw materials are costly
- Unavailability of raw materials
- Raw materials are costly

**Main barriers in accessing markets\*\***

- 1 Cost of items
- 2 Lack of transportation
- 3 Distance to market
- Pasture condition green zones local is reported as unusable
- was reported by KIs that herders are grazing outside the *manteqa* but inside the district, in the village, and within *manteqa* boundaries\*\*\*

**MARKET AND LIVELIHOOD (continued)**

**Main employment sectors and challenges\*\***

- 1 Agriculture
- 2 Livestock
- 3 Daily labour (no contract)

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# Local Recovery and Resilience Plan

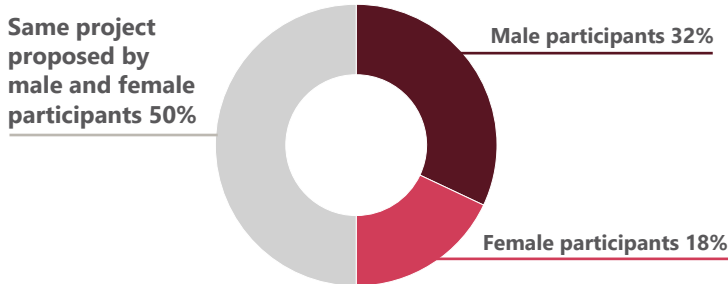
## Development of the LRRPs

The Local Recovery and Resilience Plans (LRRPs) are designed to complement top-down recovery and development efforts with bottom-up community-owned prioritisation. The LRRPs can serve as a reference for joint planning and pooling of common resources towards the implementation of local responses. In the LRRP, communities identify key needs and corresponding relief, recovery and development priorities.

Following the selection of the territorial entry points, Manteqa Development Platforms (MDPs) were created to operationalize participatory response planning, implementation and monitoring. The MDP is a committee established to achieve effective community engagement, mobilisation and communication. The MDP is comprised of elected community representatives, and commonly include elderly, civil society members, youth, and members of Community Development Councils (CDCs). Up to 50% of MDP members are women.

During a two-day workshop facilitated by Acted and IMPACT, the MDPs identified community needs and response priorities and drafted LRRPs. The Manteqa Profiles served as a foundation for MDP members to identify needs and their root causes. Furthermore, findings of the area based assessment were validated by MDP members and complemented based on their experiences. Inclusion of the wider community into the response planning was achieved through discussion of the LRRP with, and its endorsement by, manteqa residents and local stakeholders, such as authorities, community-based organisations, and civil society organisations. This was facilitated by Acted together with the MDP of each Manteqa.

Proportion of projects proposed by male and female per manteqa. Of all 84 manteqa



**391** projects directly benefit women (16% of all projects)

**271** projects directly benefit children (12% of all projects)

**108** projects directly benefit youth (5% of all projects)

## Implementation of the LRRP and community-based monitoring

In line with the bottom-up planning approach, the capacity of MDPs is strengthened to enable their essential role in the implementation of projects, including project management, basic financial management, accountability, and external engagement. With support from Acted and IMPACT, MDPs will monitor the implementation and achievements of the projects on a bi-annual basis. In parallel, Acted conducts an annual review of the LRRPs and its implementation, including MDPs and the wider community.

Proposed projects are funded and advocated for in several ways. MDP members receive training on fundraising and advocacy, and they will be supported by Acted to present plans with local government and development agencies. With funding of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Acted guarantees the implementation of minimally identified for prioritization during the LRRP process, per manteqa. **Using the LRRPs, synergies can be built between communities and external organisations, by linking existing programmes to local communities, referrals, incorporating community priorities into planning and by direct funding of projects proposed by the community.**

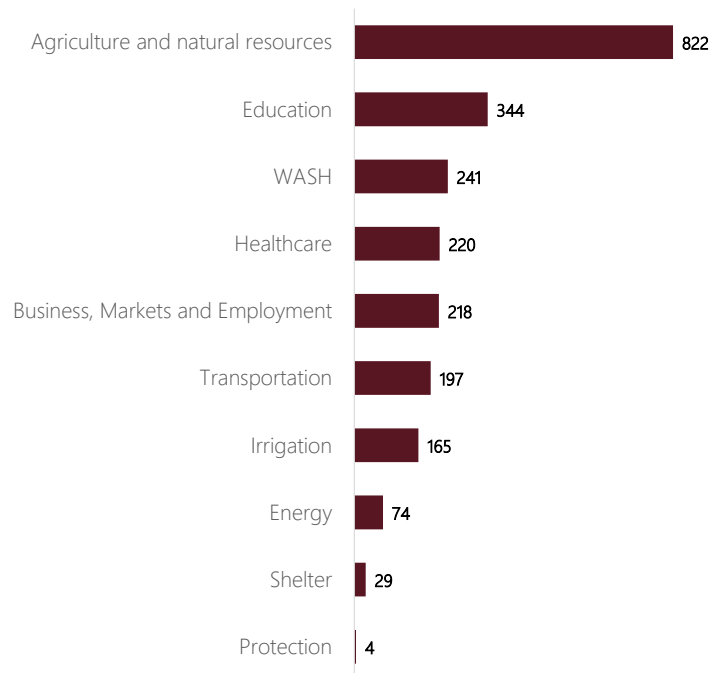
## Output

### 84 Local Resilience and Recovery Plans

#### 1 Dashboard

To support the planning and prioritisation of local response projects by (I)NGOs across sector, budget target group (e.g. women, youth, returnees) and location.

Number of proposed projects per sector. Of all 84 manteqa



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## METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

The primary data to create the Maps, Manteqa Profile and the Dashboard was led by IMPACT and collected in two phases. In phase I, the geographic delineation of each *Manteqa* was defined between May and August 2022. Each *manteqa* was delineated following two 'Mapping Focus Group Discussion', one with local, male, community leaders and one with women representatives, supported by secondary data research.

In phase II, quantitative key informant interviews were conducted at village level and the results were then aggregated at the *Manteqa* level. In March 2023, between 1–3 key informant interviews were carried out, per village. Additionally, separate interviews with women were conducted in at least 20% of the villages of each *manteqa*. Sampling of key informants was purposive with the aim to include community leaders knowledgeable of the assessment topics, such as traditional village heads, head of the Community Development Council, landowners (Zamindar), and water managers (Mirab). In total, trained AGORA enumerators conducted 2,225 key informant interviews, including

445 female key informants. The quantitative data was cleaned using R and through dedicated follow-ups with enumerators. Refer to the [Terms of Reference](#) for more information.

Local Recovery and Resilience Plans (LRRP) were drafted in a two-day workshop facilitated by Acted. Workshop participants are elected members of the Manteqa Development Platform. The Manteqa Development Platform consists on average of 40 members including elders, civil society members, special interest groups, ethnic minorities, youth, IDPs, returnees, etc. Per *Manteqa*, a separate workshop was held for men and women. After the workshops, male and female participants discussed each other projects and identified high-priority projects (3 to 6 priority projects per *manteqa*). The LRRPs were brought to the wider community and local government for feedback and endorsement. In total, 168 workshops were conducted, resulting in 1 LRRP per *manteqa* (84 in total) in 4 provinces (Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan, Samangan). Upon completion of the LRRPs, IMPACT produced a dashboard where the projects can easily be accessed and planned.

## ENDNOTES

### PAGE 2

<sup>1</sup> AGORA. Review of the implementation of the AGORA methodology in Afghanistan under SRDP IV. Annex IV. The notion of *manteqa*: a case study of eight *manteqas* in Faryab Province. Available upon request.

### PAGE 3

<sup>2</sup> OCHA. [Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan Afghanistan 2024](#).

<sup>3</sup> AGORA. Review of the implementation of the AGORA methodology in Afghanistan under SRDP IV. Annex IV. The notion of *manteqa*: a case study of eight *manteqas* in Faryab Province. Available upon request.

