



Executive Summary:

2021 DEC Afghanistan Crisis Appeal External Evaluation Report

Commissioned by the International Rescue Committee



In mid-September 2023, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) commissioned an independent evaluation of its two-phased [DEC-funded project](#)¹ in three provinces of Afghanistan—Helmand, Badghis, and Bameyan. The evaluation, conducted by an independent consultant and a dedicated team, aimed to assess the overall impact of the two-phased project on client households.

The evaluation team employed robust methodologies, conducting 426 household-level interviews with project clients, ensuring representative findings across the three provinces (aggregated). The evaluation engaged female clients (23%) and beneficiaries with disabilities (3%) in efforts towards inclusivity.² Additionally, 49 key informant interviews (KIIs) in the three provinces (a total of 49 KIIs across the three provinces), KII's with 7 IRC employees, and a thorough review of project documents added depth to the evaluation.

The evaluation findings suggest that there was a significant alignment between the project activities and household priority needs, fostering early recovery, and enhancing community resilience. Improved food security and increased income resulting from enhanced crop and livestock production were the visible outcomes. Economic ripple effects stimulated local economies, contributing to sustainable growth and positive impacts on agriculture. **Cash assistance proved versatile**, addressing urgent needs such as food, agriculture, livestock, medical expenses, education, and winterization. This flexibility enhanced the project's efficacy in responding to diverse client requirements. Clients received comprehensive training in agriculture and livestock management, resulting in improved production, market understanding, and agricultural knowledge. This training directly contributed to the project's positive impact on households.

The project performed well in client responsiveness and accountability, providing various feedback channels, including a free hotline system and WhatsApp. The staff demonstrated professionalism, respect, and transparency, contributing to high levels of client satisfaction. Clear communication (by the IRC staff members) on the rights and entitlements of the clients in participation in the project further reinforced accountability.

Active engagement with the community, feedback-seeking initiatives, and community sensitization sessions exemplified the project staff's commitment to transparency and inclusivity. The involvement of both women and men underscored the project's inclusive approach. The project's holistic approach, incorporating community-based disaster risk management and climate-smart agriculture, went beyond immediate relief. Emphasizing inclusivity and community participation, the project addressed both short-term needs and long-term sustainability.

The evaluation concludes that the DEC-funded project had a **positive impact on client households, aligning with global humanitarian standards.** The success of the project, focusing on quality and accountability, contributes valuable lessons to the humanitarian sector.

¹ The DEC funded project titled "Afghanistan Crisis Appeal" was implemented by the IRC in two phases from 15 December 2021 until 31 December 2023.

² Findings are not representative when disaggregated by gender or disability. Given the nature of the project and the type of targeted populations, the proportions of female beneficiaries and persons with disabilities were generally lower, hence, the sample for this evaluation was relatively skewed towards male clients. The second reason is contextual – the challenges around interviewing women in the current Afghan context was a limiting factor.

Highlights of key findings from the evaluation include:

- A total of 92% of respondents stated that the project activities were aligned with their needs and priorities.
- The perspectives and needs of the community members and clients were taken into account during the planning phase.
- Substantial improvement was reported in meeting crucial household priority needs.
- The Project played a positive role in fostering early recovery and community resilience.
- The project increased crop and livestock production, which in turn led to improved food security and additional income.
- The project had positive economic ripple effects, stimulating local economies, especially, through the cash component.
- Cash assistance was reported to be efficiently used by clients to address urgent needs, including food, livestock and agriculture, medical expenses, education, and winterization materials.
- The project created positive economic ripple effects, stimulating local economies, especially, through its cash component.
- The project incorporated community-based disaster risk management and climate-smart agriculture for sustainability.
- Around 92% of the key informants reported that the project selection was carried out by the community members, community shuras, and the project staff together.
- Project document review, and KIIs with the IRC staff confirmed that the IRC maintains a complaint response mechanism.
- A total of 48% of the clients were aware of the IRC-led complaint response mechanism.
- Project staff demonstrated accountability, professionalism, and respect.
- A total of 66% of respondents acknowledged that the project staff oriented them on their rights and entitlements.

Recommendations:

The report provides recommendations to enhance the project's effectiveness further, and the effectiveness of similar future interventions. Firstly, although 48% of respondents were aware of the complaint response mechanism, efforts to enhance awareness should be intensified through additional initiatives. Particularly, channels accessible to communities without phone/network access should be strengthened, recognizing the current limitations faced by such individuals. Additionally, the report suggests investigating challenges related to aid redistribution, as 2% of respondents reported negative consequences, specifically instances where community elders sought a share of assistance received.

Furthermore, concerns arise from 9% of respondents who claimed non-receipt of assistance despite being listed as beneficiaries. This discrepancy requires a thorough investigation by the IRC to ascertain whether errors exist in the client list or if respondents provided inaccurate information. The evaluation also underscores the need for adequate time allocation in future evaluations to avoid tight timelines that may compromise the quality of fieldwork and overall assessment. Importantly, the report recommends implementing the successful community engagement practices observed in this project across all future endeavors, whether DEC funded or not. Moreover, cash assistance is praised for its flexibility, prompting the recommendation that the IRC consistently consider the option of providing cash in the design of similar projects. Lastly, the effectiveness of the IRC's complaint response mechanism suggests its replication in all future projects and DEC-supported interventions.

See the detailed report for more information.

