Public Disclosure Authorized

Project Information Document (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 24-Oct-2019 | Report No: PIDC27928

BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country	Project ID	Parent Project ID (if any)	Project Name
Afghanistan	P170906		Agro-Water and Climate Resilience Project (P170906)
Region	**Estimated Appraisal Date**	**Estimated Board Date**	**Practice Area (Lead)**
SOUTH ASIA	Jun 15, 2020	Aug 26, 2020	Agriculture and Food
Financing Instrument	**Borrower(s)**	**Implementing Agency**	
Investment Project Financing	Ministry of Finance	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Project Development Objective is to Improve Land and Water Productivity and Climate Resilience of Agricultural Systems in Selected Areas of Afghanistan.

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US$, Millions)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	100.00
Total Financing	100.00
of which IBRD/IDA	20.00
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS

World Bank Group Financing

International Development Association (IDA)	20.00
IDA Grant	20.00

Non-World Bank Group Financing

Trust Funds	80.00
Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund	80.00

Environmental and Social Risk Classification	Concept Review Decision
Substantial	Track II-The review did authorize the preparation to continue

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

1. **Substantial improvements in development outcomes have been observed in Afghanistan since 2001**, particularly in expanded access to water, sanitation and electricity, education, and health services. Macroeconomic management remains strong, government revenues have grown rapidly since 2014,[1] and the government has engaged in an impressive range of business environment and public financial management reforms.

2. **However, some gains are now eroding, and risks are rapidly rising. Economic growth has slowed substantially with a significant reduction in international troop numbers** and increased insecurity since 2014. Civilian casualties are at unprecedented levels: 10,459 killed or wounded in 2017 and 10,993 in 2018. While UNAMA reported a 27-percent decrease in casualties in the first half of 2019 compared to the same period in 2018, violence has since picked up, especially in August and September. Various efforts towards a political settlement with the Taliban have been ongoing throughout 2019, but the probability of significant improvements in the security situation in the short run seems low.

3. **Afghanistan faced severe economic headwinds in 2018, with the economy growing by an estimated 1.8 percent**. Two main factors drove the slow growth. Firstly, severe drought had a strong negative impact on agricultural production. Secondly, business and investor confidence deteriorated significantly in the context of elevated uncertainty around: (i) the level and duration of international security assistance; (ii) prospects of continued or worsening election-related violence (civilian deaths reached their highest level since 2001); and (iii) prospects of a peace settlement.

4. **Real GDP growth is expected to have accelerated during the first half of 2019**, mainly driven by the easing of drought conditions and improved agricultural production. Growth is expected to accelerate further through 2021, assuming continuation of various positive circumstances. With the population growing at 2.7 percent, however, the projected growth path will not be strong enough to improve incomes and livelihoods for most Afghans.

5. **The poverty rate in Afghanistan has increased markedly from 38 percent in 2011/12 to 55 percent in 2016/17**. It is estimated to have grown and deepened since then. More than 75% of Afghanistan's population, and nearly 90% of those living in poverty, live in rural areas. Poverty is expected to remain high in the medium-term, driven by weak labor demand (despite an increasing labor force) and security-related constraints on service delivery. Undernutrition is of concern in women, children, displaced people, returnees, households headed by women, people with disabilities and the poor. Despite progress in recent years, undernutrition rates are now increasing and the prevalence of stunting in children under 5 remains high at 41 percent at the national level, with peaks of 60 to 70 percent in some provinces.

6. **Afghanistan is highly vulnerable to weather-related shocks and naturals disasters, and the country's vulnerability is exacerbated by the impacts of climate change**. Afghanistan is among the most vulnerable countries (ranked 8 of

[1] Revenue performance was supported by improved tax and customs administration and enforcement of measures to collect non-tax revenues through fees and charges

170 in the next 30 years) to climate change effects. Between 1960 and 2008, the average annual temperature increased by 0.6 degrees Celsius and is expected to increase between 2.0 and 6.2 degrees Celsius by 2090. Increasing temperatures are causing changes in snowmelt, leading to recurrent and more droughts, intense spring floods and summer water shortages. Every year, some 250,000 people on average are affected by a wide range of environmental disasters including floods, droughts, avalanches, landslides and earthquakes. Historically, flooding is the most frequent natural hazard, causing an average annual damage of US$ 54 million. Droughts have affected about 6.5 million people since 2000.[2] In 2018, drought-induced displacement reached a record level of around 300,000 individuals, mainly to urban areas in adjacent provinces. It is expected that due to climate change, flood and drought risk are likely to increase in the future.

7. **Agriculture constitutes about a quarter of the country's GDP.** Before the conflicts, Afghanistan was self-sufficient in cereals and in some years was even a small exporter, but the country has become a large importer of food[3]. It has a long tradition in horticulture and livestock production, including for export.[4] But the last four decades of conflict have significantly affected the production systems and the country's agricultural productivity is now lower than its pre-war level.[5] The sector remains the second largest contributor to the GDP after services and about half of all households receive income from it. In the foreseeable future, agriculture and minerals are the two sectors with the greatest potential to drive economic growth, and to generate foreign exchange earnings and domestic revenues needed to help offset the projected decline in foreign aid flows. Agriculture has good potential for growth and is highly relevant to poverty reduction and job creation both on-farm and off-farm[6]. However, the impact of weather-related shocks on agriculture is significant: recent years have recorded high volatility of agricultural growth —including periods of sharp dips— owing to high reliance on weather conditions.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

8. **The ongoing conflict and violence coupled with prolonged drought have affected the country's agricultural production system negatively**. Household-level data show that a significant portion of arable land[7] remains underutilized, mainly for lack or poor management of irrigation water. The sector is largely dominated by smallholder farmers as 60% of the farms are smaller than 1 ha and 90% are less than 5 ha. Producers have limited access to improved technologies, production practices, and extension services while natural resources such as land, pastures, and forests are poorly managed. Loss of export market shares can be attributed to the declining productivity of aging orchards and vineyards; lack of new planting; and the capture of these shares by new market entrants that are more competitive on cost and quality. From a positive outlook, the challenges offer ample catch-up opportunities for productivity enhancement and increased resilience of the productive systems.

9. **Agriculture also faces important challenges in the context of climate change and natural disasters (especially water scarcity and drought) and needs to improve its productivity, resilience and efficiency of irrigated agriculture**. Most of the cultivable land receives less than 400 mm of rain per year and annual rainfall is highly variable. The limited

[2] World Bank, Climate Change Knowledge Portal: https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/afghanistan/[accessed October 2019]; World Bank/GFDRR (2017): Disaster Risk Profile: Afghanistan.
[3] In a good year, Afghanistan imports 20% of its needed grains and this figure can go up to 50% in the dry years
[4] In the 1970s, Afghanistan was a world-class producer and exporter of almonds, pomegranates, pistachios, grapes, and apricots, and supplied about 20 % of the raisins in the world market.
[5] Source: Afghanistan Agriculture Sector Review 2014.
[6] The bulk of the poor—82 percent—continue to live in rural areas, relying heavily on agriculture for livelihoods, and households relying on agriculture and livestock for their main income sources experience higher poverty rates, 65 and 66 percent respectively. (World Bank – Afghanistan Development Update)
[7] Out of Afghanistan's land area of 65 million hectares, only about 8 million (or about 12 percent) is arable.

climate projections available for Afghanistan suggests a future of higher temperatures, resulting in higher evapotranspiration, and increased rainfall variability with an increased frequency of extreme events such as floods, droughts and storms, and a major change on the flow regimes of the country's river systems due to reduced snowpack. The main negative impacts of climate change in Afghanistan will be reduced productivity, land degradation and increased food insecurity. A detailed analysis on the climate change impacts on agriculture in Khulm and Balkhab watersheds[8] shows that short-term impacts on the irrigated agriculture can be mitigated with proper water management,[9] while the rain-fed agriculture will be more vulnerable with 30-40% reduction of rain-fed wheat production that will significantly increase food insecurity and famine as rain-fed wheat represents 70% of the country's wheat production. Moreover, important negative impacts are projected in the livestock and forestry subsectors which are major sources of livelihood for the rural poor. The only positive development could potentially be the increased number of crop cultivation / growing days in most parts of north-eastern and central Afghanistan due to increased temperature. With climate change and if water can be supplied, the irrigated multiple cropping potential is expected to increase in all regions due to warming, very distinctly so in the north-eastern, north-western, central and eastern regions. The Afghanistan Agriculture Sector Review (AASR) carried out by the World Bank calls for a selective two pillar strategy for sector development: Pillar I for the commercial development of prioritized value chains that are expected to drive growth in agricultural productivity and create more jobs; and Pillar II for subsistence-oriented productivity improvement of rain-fed farming and extensive livestock systems to cater for food security and livelihood needs of the poor, nomads (Kuchi) and landless people.

10. **Irrigated agriculture contributes around 80% of Afghanistan's agriculture production and is the sector's growth engine.** Given the highly seasonal nature of water flow regimes, appropriate infrastructure for storage and conveyance of water are critical for irrigation. Out of 4.4 million ha identified as irrigable land,[10] about 2 million hectares are currently irrigated on a regular basis. Another 1.8 million ha has been developed for irrigation in the past but is presently not regularly or not at all irrigated and could be brought under cultivation if sufficient irrigation water is made available, either by improved irrigation water management or by storing river water for irrigation purposes. Experience from the On-Farm Water Management Project (OFWMP)[11] demonstrates that, with improvements in traditional canals, conveyance efficiency could be doubled from 40% to 80%; and that land leveling, and improved agronomic practices could increase land productivity by 30% while ensuring higher water use efficiency at the farm level. The experience also shows that access to constant irrigation water encourages farmers to diversify, and switch to production of higher value, labor-intensive crops.

11. **Rainfed agriculture needs to make best use of the fragile environment with focus on livelihood restoration and natural resources conservation.** Improving resilience of rainfed systems can be achieved through the dissemination of available improved land and water management practices, introduction of water harvesting technologies and use of drought resilient varieties and practices. Under the Afghanistan Agriculture Inputs Project (AAIP),[12] the investments made thus far have resulted in improved research capacity of the Agricultural Research Institute of Afghanistan (ARIA), in terms of infrastructure, tools and human resources. Building on FAO's work, these investments have also strengthened a network of private sector seed producing companies. The Project has already supported Ministry of

[8] World Bank, Pilot Climate Change Impact Analysis on Hydrology and Agriculture in the Balkhab Watershed, Northern Afghanistan, 2018.
[9] With climate change, the irrigated multiple cropping potential is expected to increase in all regions (especially in north-eastern, north-western, central and eastern regions) due to warming.
[10] Source: Agriculture Sector Review, 2014 (report #AUS9779).
[11] P120398
[12] P120397

Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) in releasing three drought- and heat-resistant wheat varieties while this work is still under way for additional varieties. The National Horticulture and Livestock Project (NHLP)[13] among other activities has put some efforts on promoting Asafetida (a dryland exportable medicinal[14]), expanding pistachio plantation, establishing water harvest structures, establishing check dams and introducing drought-resistant varieties of fodder crops in selected watersheds. The results achieved thus far are encouraging, and with some customization these activities could be rapidly replicated to many areas benefiting a significant number of vulnerable communities particularly those under famine risks. The project design will also draw from the recommendations of an on-going study under the name of Support for Resilient Landscape Approach.[15]

12. **Marketing channels are often effective in moving products from farmers to consumers**. However, this is usually done by very small traders and the efficiency that could be achieved by having greater economies of scale is lacking. Post-harvest losses are reportedly high, in part because of inadequate storage facilities. Lack of cold-storage is a problem. Handling and packaging are relatively poor and considerable value may be lost by putting all produce together in the same container rather than by grading for size and quality. In this context, linking smallholders and medium size agricultural producers to markets, inducing productivity gains and increasing farmers opportunity for income diversification and value-addition processes can have a significant positive impact.

13. **Resolving resilience and productivity issues in the agriculture sector requires a well-coordinated effort encompassing both irrigated and rainfed production as well as market access.** There is a strong institutional challenge in coordinating these various activities among multiple ministerial departments, however the project can build on existing implementation capacities within MAIL acquired through the recent projects (AAIP, NHLP, OFWMP). Irrigation modernization activities will also be closely coordinated with the upstream rehabilitation activities financed under the Irrigation Restoration and Development Project (IRDP),[16] such coordination being already established with OFWMP.

14. **There are important gender dimensions in Afghanistan agriculture**. Women are generally concentrated at the lower levels of the value chains i.e. homebased processing and livestock husbandry. Men, on the other hand, link households with the market to obtain input supply and sell the products, in addition to their substantial engagement in production. Men also serve as the actors in the upper levels of the value chains, including middlemen or village-level traders and processors, wholesalers, retailers, or exporters. The division of labor is largely a reflection of social and cultural norms, which do not allow women to interact with men or travel by themselves, and make women's exercise of their land ownership rights difficult. These factors severely curtail women's access to resources and services, including credit, training, extension, inputs, and trading and marketing networks. Women do not have collateral to apply for credit or opportunities to participate in extension training because selection for these opportunities is often based on land ownership. Moreover, there are few or no women service providers in extension, credit, input supply, or marketing. Despite the key role women play in harvesting and post-harvest processing, there is little or no training on quality control, including hygiene, sanitation, and higher-value varieties. Recognizing women's predominance in agricultural production, harvesting, and processing, the National Agriculture Development Framework (NADF) of the MAIL stipulates that gender mainstreaming must form an important cross-cutting element of its work in economic regeneration, agricultural production, and natural resource management.

[13] P143841
[14] In the year 2016 alone, Afghanistan exported US$ 70 Million worth of Asafetida to India.
[15] (P169807) draft report, August 2019.
[16] P122235

15. **The main challenges that the proposed project will address include:** (i) water scarcity limiting agriculture production, food security and nutrition, as well as vulnerability to climate change (CC), which affects crop and livestock production and productivity; (ii) poor agricultural practices, low penetration of climate smart agriculture technologies and improved varieties and breeds, leading to low crop and livestock productivity; (iii) low level of organization of most agricultural value chains, and poor post-harvest and market infrastructure, resulting in the reliance on local markets and middle men, and thus low producer prices and value-addition as well as food safety concerns; and (iv) weak services and institutional capacity, resulting in insufficient delivery of extension and advisory services to farmers, particularly to women, and lack of access to productive and financial services. During the preparation phase the team will consider ways to close the gender gap in all these aspects through specific targeting and support for women-led activities, based on the experience of OFWMP, NHLP and Afghanistan Rural Enterprise Development Project (AREDP)[17].

16. **Irrigation and agriculture value chains in Afghanistan offer investment opportunities for the private sector**. Investments that lead to increased productivity, diversification, market access and resilience should include incentives that encourage private investment in the sector. In addition to addressing productivity issues of smallholder farmers and capacity issues with public institutions, there is a need to address issues that currently inhibit private sector growth and investments, including: access to quality product supply, strong and stable supplier relationships, value chain logistics, production facilitation. Potential entry points to expand market penetration include small scale investments in agro-logistics and marketing infrastructures (i.e. collection points, cold chains, processing, and product diversification) where these are relevant. The government Agribusiness Charter adopted in 2018 to achieve a sustainable and competitive agribusiness sector constitutes a conducive framework for leveraging private investment in agriculture and value chains and Mobilizing Finance for Development (MFD).

Relationship to CPF

17. **The Project is aligned with the major thrusts of the Bank's Country Partnership Framework (FY17-20) and Performance Learning Review (FY20-21)**. The documents have established three strategic areas : (i) build strong and accountable institutions to support the government's state-building objectives and enable the state to fulfil its core mandate to deliver basic services to its citizens, and create an enabling environment for the private sector; (ii) support inclusive growth, with a focus on lagging areas and urban informal settlements; and (iii) deepen social inclusion through improved human development outcomes and reduced vulnerability amongst the poorest sections of society, including the large numbers of internally displaced persons and returnees. The document further includes a new cross cutting theme added during the PLR, with the objective of "Improved climate resilient landscapes and infrastructure" to reflect an increased ambition in addressing climate change. The project will provide relevant institutional support to MAIL services and beneficiary communities and leverage private sector to improve delivery of services and access to services (CPF first strategic area). It will promote development of integrated value chains and markets that are inclusive to smallholder farmers including in dryland areas (CPF strategic area 2). The project will also contribute to CPF strategic area 3 by supporting resilient agriculture to climate change and drought, providing rural target communities with specific investments to enhance food security and resilience in the vulnerable zones and mainstreaming women empowerment.

18. **Citizen engagement.** The project will involve beneficiaries through: (i) participatory planning and designing of watershed and irrigation schemes including farmers and herders as well as local institutions and stakeholders; (ii) monitoring of project activities by and provision of feedback from project beneficiaries and other stakeholders;

[17] P11040

(iii)need-based extension services, including farmer call center, knowledge transfer and trainings provided through the project. A Grievance Redress Mechanism will cover all aspects of project implementation and will be available to direct and indirect project beneficiaries. The beneficiaries' engagement activities will be complemented by broader awareness raising and targeted information campaign through social media and other appropriate means. The project also aims to foster greater participation of women by proactive outreach to this target groups. The CE indicators and details will be provided during the project preparation.

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Project Development Objective is to Improve Land and Water Productivity and Climate Resilience of Agricultural Systems in Selected Areas of Afghanistan.

Key Results (From PCN)

19. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) include:

    a. Number of beneficiaries disaggregated by gender;
    b. Increased land productivity of irrigated wheat;
    c. Increased water productivity of irrigated wheat;
    d. Additional area with high-value crops;
    e. Additional dryland area with drought resilient production system and practices (including improved pastures);
    f. Number of producers groups linked to domestic and international buyers disggragated by gender.

D. Concept Description

20. **Component A:** *Support to Irrigated Agriculture Productivity.* Will combine rehabilitation of irrigation schemes with provision of improved water saving technologies and production practices to increase on-farm water application efficiency, maximize yield and quality of products and allow crop diversification. This will lead to modernizing irrigation schemes, bringing currently fallow command areas, located mainly in the downstream of the selected irrigation schemes, under production. Component A will build capacity of farmers and promoting best practices for on-farm water management, thereby building capacity to better address weather-related shocks and potential impacts of climate change. It will include two sub-components: (i) Support to modernization and resilience of irrigation systems to improve water distribution efficiency and contribute to higher water productivity and service reliability; and (ii) Productivity enhancement and diversification to promote a series of activities depicting the best on-farm water management and agronomic practices to maximize land and water productivity, decrease production variability and ensure that the production systems are resilient to weather-related shocks and climate change.

21. **Component B.** *Support for Dryland Farming and Watershed Management*. This component will focus largely on building the resilience of communities in the water scarce areas to maintain and build their productive assets through a range of innovative and climate smart interventions. The key target group of the component are communities living in dryland or seasonally irrigated areas. The project will undertake in selected watersheds and rainfed areas, a range of activities such as better rangeland planning and management, rain water harvesting, soil moisture control, supplementary irrigation systems through intermediate forms of water control (for example spate irrigation), and introduction of drought and heat resistant varieties of crops and grasses. It will be structured into three sub-components: (i) Watershed management planning to support technical assistance and community-based facilitation to design watershed management and dryland productivity plans following a landscape approach; (ii) Improved

dryland farming and sustainable watershed management and adaptation to climate change. It aims at building capacity and supporting stakeholders within the target watershed to adopt sustainable land and water management practices and Climate Smart Technologies as determined and prioritized under subcomponent B1; and (iii) Support for Agro-Meteorology Services. Apart from the Hydromet data collection carried out by the Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW), this sub-component will establish separate network of Hydromet data collection and analysis system focusing on agriculture to provide timely data and forecast to the farmers as well as policy makers. This initiative was started under the EU support, and by expanding the system to the project areas where it is not established yet, the activity will further strengthen the agro-met services in the targeted areas through investments and technical assistance. It would also support water-smart applications mentioned in A2.

22. **Component C:** *Access to Market*. Will strengthen market linkages between producers and off-takers by supporting the establishment of producer organizations, including specific targeting of women groups, and linking them with input suppliers, regional and local buyers, and processing companies. It will support the diversification from staple crop production to higher-value crops, increasing farmers opportunity for income diversification and strengthening resilience to market and production shocks. It will follow a demand-driven approach, where a value chain diagnostic will identify the opportunities and constraints for promising commodity value chains and identify farmers' constraints to participate in these value chains, as well as constraints along the enabling environment. To mobilize private sector investment and participation into key agricultural value chains, the project will adopt the World Bank Group (WBG)'s integrated Maximizing Finance for Development (MFD) approach to agricultural value chain developed in January 2018. The implementation of this component will be closely coordinated with a new project under preparation – Opportunity for Maximizing Agribusiness Investment and Development (OMAID)[18] – that seeks promotes the marked-oriented value chain approach as defined under the Afghanistan Agribusiness Charter 2018, supporting business linkages between farmers and buyers. to establish agriculture parks, and source raw materials from the local farmers.

23. **Component D**: *Implementation Management Support and Institutional Strengthening*. This component will finance a need-based Project Management Unit (PMU), headed by a Project Director and staffed by national and some international staff. It will be established to execute the project and manage all components, including technical, procurement and financial management, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), communication functions. The PMU will include a core team in Kabul as well as decentralized units at the regional level. The PMU will work under the technical supervision of the relevant MAIL directorates.[19] A high-level cross ministerial steering committee will be formed to provide necessary guidance, and strategic direction to the project and ensure coordination between the relevant ministries, and donors. This component will also support institutional strengthening and capacity development for the relevant departments in the Government.

Legal Operational Policies	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	Yes
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No

[18] P168179
[19] The project will benefit from the support provided to MAIL through the TAGHIR Project (P166978) which provides competitive incentives for strategic positions within key ministries, including agriculture.

Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

24. **International waterways.** Some of the irrigation schemes rehabilitated will be located in several international river basins that cover most of the country. However, considering the negligible impact the project supported rehabilitation activities are going to have on water resources an exemption to the notification requirement will be sought.

25. **Environmental risks.** The project will have overall positive impacts on soils and water conservation through both its irrigated and rainfed agriculture activities. It will not transform the current use of any significant portion of land. The integrated landscape management approach, if properly applied, will create greater awareness about a balanced approach between conservation and development, biodiversity and ecosystem services conservation and will pave the way to a dialogue on sustainable development in the country. The environmental risk is related to (i) the possible location of some subprojects and activities in environmentally sensitive areas where security issues might hinder proper monitoring; (ii) the implementation of civil works and possible resulting pollution, although no large-scale works are foreseen; (iii) the diversity of activities which makes difficult to assess the environmental risks and impacts and to monitor the implementation of mitigation measures; (iv) the weak enforcement capacity in the country.

26. **Social Risks.** Overall, the project is expected to result in socio-economic benefits for the country and extend opportunities for the wider rural population through improved agriculture land and water productivity in agriculture sector. The project activities are not expected to cause resettlement impacts; however, the activities will cause land acquisition impacts for irrigation schemes, small check dams and small reservoirs. These community based small water harvest structures will provide irrigation water for a few hectors of land and in this regards land donation and community contribution approach will be followed. Aside from this, the project activities may cause the following social impacts: (i) the activities are expected to cause site-specific disputes over land and water resources among the water users; and (ii) possible Gender Based Violence (GBV) risks. The Implementing Agency (IA) has experience in implementing World Bank and ARTF funded projects and thus is aware of the World Bank's previous environmental and social safeguards policies. However, there will be capacity constraints for developing and implementing the E&S instruments under new ESF.

27. **Climate and disaster risk screening was completed at concept stage**. Occurrence of drought or other climate-related natural disaster could have a strong influence on the achievement of the project objective notably for the dryland areas (see paragraphs 6 and 9). The project promotes climate-smart agriculture practices on the farm-level and sustainable land and water management practices on landscape level, which will be expected to mitigate the climate-induced risk and increase community and agro-ecosystem resilience.

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