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**United Nations Development Programme Iraq
*Cash For Work for Stabilisation Agriculture Activities in Al Hajaj, Salah
Al-Din Governorate***

FINAL PROJECT REPORT



Neglected farms covered with overgrown weeds in Al Hajaj

Human Relief Foundation

19 October 2016

Context

Brief background

Al Hajaj (just south of Baiji) on the River Tigris in Salah Al-Din Governorate has been subject to a range of negative impacts resulting from the ongoing conflict between the Iraq Government and Daesh (ISIL/IS) (Map 1). In April 2016, a HRF team comprising of staff from the HRF Tikrit Office and the Senior Technical Advisor from HRF Erbil Office, visiting Al Hajaja District to conduct a needs assessment. The HRF assessment team consulted with community leaders and members through the establishment of a community platform that was used to identify the pressing needs and to ensure that community members have a direct input into the selection of cash-for-work activities. From the assessment and the community platform the following problems were raised.

Map 1: *Al Hajaj on the Tigris River in Salah Al-Din Governorate*



While the damage and destruction of buildings such as residential housing is less severe than in some other areas there has nevertheless been substantial impacts to local infrastructure and the natural resource base that underpins the livelihoods for many of the farmers that are resident in Al Hajaj District and its villages (. These problems stem from the construction of battle defences such as earth mounds using agricultural soils thus damage farmland surfaces and creating deep erosion, and from the loss of electricity supply lines and transformers that provide the electricity to run the irrigation pumps. In addition, many of the farm lands are overgrown with weeds and shrubs and farmers no longer have access to suitable equipment, farm inputs (fertilisers/seeds), tools and

labour to prepare for the coming spring season. In regards to livestock, locally-constructed cowsheds and poultry farms have been damaged and restocking of livestock is also urgently required. In many of the villages there is debris and rubble is scattered around, with solid waste adding to the piles. The local authorities are unable to deliver any services such as debris removal and solid waste management. The residents of Al Hajaj District were in urgent need of assistance particularly to encourage returnees by providing an enabling environment that supported local food production with a focus of targeting the most vulnerable families in the District.

Map 2: Al Hajaj showing the irrigated agricultural areas both east and west of River Tigris



Rationale

The project was required to provide immediate support for current residents which provided incentives and boosted the safe return of displaced families through the rehabilitation of livelihoods in the newly accessible areas of Al Hajaj District. Linking livelihood stabilisation and enterprise recovery provides the building blocks in long-term recovery and the building of a strong local economy which is also required to build social cohesion and minimise the impacts of the regional conflict as well as deterring extremism and sectarian-based violence which has clearly recently been evident in all areas of Salah Al-Din Governorate. As in HRF's previous interventions this project was not just about recovery and rehabilitation but also re-building the community fabric including the social dimensions required for a just and fair society for the future of Iraq.

Intended objectives

1. Preparation of agricultural lands.
2. Repair of irrigation systems.
3. Repair of livestock sheds.
4. Restocking of livestock / bee keeping.
5. Rubble removal
6. Street cleaning and solid waste management.
7. Housing repairs.

Intended beneficiaries

In Al Hajaj District, HRF worked with the poorest community members through the targeting of vulnerable groups. HRF has always selected beneficiaries for 'cash-for-work' programme based on their need and their availability regardless of their religious, ethnic and/or political backgrounds. As such HRF have never faced political issues or problems in working with beneficiaries in this region.

To maximise the beneficial impacts in all the project activities HRF adopted a selection criteria in each component that was based on maximising the impact to the most vulnerable residents of Al Hajaj District. In addition, a minimum of the 30 workers of the project beneficiaries was women, particularly as it is culturally acceptable for women to work in agriculture related activities. In term of stabilisation this can potentially have profound impacts as forming 'women cash-for-work groups' to prepare agricultural land for spring planting brings a triple-win scenario: 1) direct economic enhancement of women; 2) much need cash injection in the communities and; 3) huge labour burden will be removed as the agricultural lands will be ready for spring planting.

The recruitment of the beneficiaries was taken place in close consultation with the following bodies:

- Mayor of Al Hajaj
- Al Hajaj local government board
- Head of Department of Agriculture in Al Hajaj

HRF did not directly recruit beneficiaries without close consultation with the above bodies and in accordance with the selection criteria as detailed in the project document.

Funding was planned to recruit and employ on average x72 people for a period of approximately 11-weeks. As mentioned a priority was to ensure that a minimum of the 30 workers were women however this figure was raised were possible.

Main project stakeholders

- Al Hajaj Mayor Office
- Al Hajaj Local Government Board
- District Agriculture Office
- District Electricity Board
- Al Hajaj Community Platform

Implementing arrangements

The project was managed by the Head of the HRF Tikrit Office under the direct supervision of the HRF Chief Technical Advisor based in the HRF Erbil Office. In addition the Senior Technical Advisor also based in the HRF Erbil Office carried out regular monitoring missions to Al Hajaj District. The required capacity building and training of key staff from the HRF Tikrit Office took place in Erbil and was conducted by the HRF technical advisors. The cash-for-work modality was managed by the HRF Cash-for-Work Coordinator based in Tikrit and was implemented through a low-profile cash transfer mechanism.

Implementation Progress

Output 1 Preparation of agricultural lands

Agriculture irrigated from the River Tigris is a critical livelihood activity for the people of Al Hajaj District. Farming not only directly sustains the local population but also provides valuable market products for the supply to regional markets that extends even as far as the capital Baghdad, as is the case in all agricultural areas along the River Tigris. Due to the recent protracted conflict many of the fields were not cultivated in 2015, resulting in a decline in locally produced food items, a loss of profits, and the overall collapse of local markets resulting in major food insecurity. In addition to the negative impact on food security many of the farm lands have been neglected and thus are now overgrown with weeds and scrub bushes. Also due to this period of neglect during the traditional farming seasons the top soils have been left exposed to rain, solar, and wind erosion. In addition, top soils in some framings areas were bulldozed into defensive mounds resulting in damage to farming areas, loss of top soils and increased soil erosion. These major agricultural constraints provided a critical entry point for the cash-for-work modality which was used to clear farm lands in preparation for spring planting and to carry out a number of land conservation measures. In addition, other activities also included the production of compost utilising the removed bio-wastes for simple on-farm windrow composting and the clearing of land under, and in some cases pruning of, olive, fruit and palm tree plantations.

In addition to preparing the agricultural lands, community leaders reported that clearing the fields and river banks from the overgrowth and bushes also improved the security in the area and stopped the night attacks from Daesh as the approaches to the houses and villages can now be easily monitored. Since the areas around the villages have been cleared attacks from stealth Daesh has

stopped. Previously Daesh launched small teams of fighters that attacked from the river to mount clandestine attacks against the local security forces.

In total, 2980 cash-for-work days were completed and 57 farmers were provided with farm inputs. In addition, fish lings (5,000) and fish feed were provided to 7 aquaculture farms.

All project targets that were set in the work plan have been achieved.

Output 2 Repair of irrigation systems

Irrigation systems are critical to the river-based farming systems along the Tigris River. In most cases the irrigation pumps are powered by electricity supply but currently due to the damage of power transformers many of the supply lines had been cut. HRF in partnership with the local authorities from the Salah Al-Din Governorate provided small grants to repair the key electricity transformers which resulted in the re-convention of irrigation pumps with electrical supplies. During the project period HRF also conducted a feasibility study for replacing conventional irrigation equipment with solar-powered irrigation equipment to build resilient river-based farming systems.

A total of 108 cash-for-work days were completed. In addition, a total of 14 transformers were fixed and 55 on-farm irrigation pumps were fixed and three mainline irrigation pumps were fixed serving over 750 farmers. Rather than repairing 100 on-farm pumps, opportunities were taken to fix the mainline irrigation pumps which serve multiple farms, but with the same total cost as per the allocated budget line.

All project targets that were set in the work plan have been achieved.

Output 3 Repair of livestock sheds

The beneficiaries engaged on the cash-for-work also carried out repairs to on-farm livestock sheds that are used for the housing of dairy cattle and also repaired poultry facilities that have been selected for restocking. This phase of the work focused on utilising an element of the workforce to carry out manual repairs to the simple traditional structures.

A total of 240 cash-for-work days were completed.

All project targets that were set in the work plan have been achieved.

Output 4 Restocking of livestock /bee keeping

The programme has also partially contributed to local food security by implementing restocking measures that not only increased local food supply and thus availability but also ensured a degree of social mobility for the most vulnerable of poor village families by providing important economic assets in the form of livestock restocking (dairy cattle/poultry) or beehive equipment.

Distribution of beehives was increased to 20 beneficiaries this also helped the farmers that were planting new types of vegetables, because the bees are required to pollinate squashes, as well as pollinating palm trees for improved date production.

A total of 72 cash-for-work days were completed. In addition, a total of 20 cows, 50,000 poultry and 20 beehives were handed over.

All project targets that were set in the work plan have been achieved.

Output 5 Rubble removal

In villages and areas that are still covered in debris and rubble a number of cash-for-work days was allocated to debris removal. This activity also served as a clear post-conflict indicator bringing a degree of psychological comfort as normality is brought back to village life.

A total of 480 cash-for-work days were completed.

All project targets that were set in the work plan have been achieved.

Output 6 Street cleaning and solid waste management

In villages and areas that are still covered in debris and rubble a number of cash-for-work days was allocated to street cleaning. This activity also served as a clear post-conflict indicator bringing a degree of psychological comfort as normality is brought back to village life.

A total of 480 cash-for-work days were completed.

All project targets that were set in the work plan have been achieved.

Output 7 Housing repairs

A very limited number of housing grants and cash-for-work were allocated to the repair of housing. This element was designed to repair the housing stocks of only the most vulnerable families, while also providing critical cash inputs into construction-based livelihoods that also serve as locally-based enterprises such as village masons and carpenters thus building vital village economies.

A total of 542 cash-for-work days were completed and 20 housing grants were allocated

All project targets that were set in the work plan have been achieved.

Challenges and Issues

Managing expectations

Demand in all project activities was much higher than the support and inputs that were provide. Consequently the community platform had to take a more active role in final beneficiary selection. In some cases the local Mayor would precede over section procedures such as the dairy cow distribution which was done through random picking names from a pile of beneficiaries that all met the 'vulnerable' selection criteria. Open transparency was key to ensuring these results were accepted by all the community.

Unexploded ordnances

On some farms unexploded rockets were found by the cash-for-work beneficiaries. In each case the local authorities were informed and the unexploded rockets were checked and items removed. Identifying and managing unexploded ordnances is a vital requirement on all projects in Iraq, particularly when working in the newly liberated areas, and as such has been mainstreamed into all HRF programmes through staff capacity building and training.

Financial payments from UNDP

At times the financial payments from UNDP have taken excessive time to process. Delays in payments always put additional stress on working relationships and on individuals with financial responsibilities. In these cases of delayed payment HRF has worked in close contact with the UNDP supporting team.

Lessons Learned

Improvement in agricultural techniques and extension

The current stabilisation programmes are based on the provision of inputs through 'financial inputs' as cash-for-work and 'agricultural inputs'. Both of these are forms of short duration stabilisation injections that provide an initial boost to upstart agricultural livelihoods, and return to previous farming systems. However, these systems are based on conventional agriculture that is dependent on chemical inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides. An effort should be made to make farmers more aware to organic and low-external-input-sustainable-agriculture (LEISA). This could take the form of: 1) establishing demonstration farms; 2) on-farm-training; 3) capacity building of local agriculture offices and extension staff. Such activities could still be delivered during a stabilisation programme allowing for the delivery of improved technical services for local farmers.

Solar irrigation

The river-based farming systems in Iraq provide excellent conditions to establish solar-based irrigation systems. This would involve the replacing of conventional irrigation equipment (using electricity or diesel pump supplies) with solar-powered irrigation equipment to build resilient river-based farming systems. It is strongly recommended that a pilot solar irrigation is developed in Iraq. HRF have now held meetings with solar equipment suppliers and are developing a concept note.

Result Framework Report

Intended Outcome: SRP Outcome 2: Resilience is built through improved livelihoods, specifically increased employment and access to services. SRP Indicator: 2.1: # of the most vulnerable host community and IDP families with increased access to income (Note: Each direct beneficiaries represents one family with an average size of 6 who are all indirect beneficiaries)							
INTENDED OUTPUTS	INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	INPUTS	ACHIEVEMENTS
Output 1: Preparation of agricultural lands Indicators: 2,980 CFW days completed; inputs for 50 farms given Baseline: Targets:	Activity 1: Assessment of agricultural plots Activity 2: Prioritisation of plots Activity 3: Removal of weeds & shrubs through weeding and hoeing Activity 4: Formation of on-farm compost windrows using wastes Activity 5: Tilling and raking of top soils Activity 6: Provision of farm inputs to selected beneficiaries.	Done Done Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	- - Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	- - Done Done Done		\$7,650	Total 2,980 CFW days completed Farm inputs provided to 57 farms for planting and initial application of NPK fertilizer Fish lings (5,000) and fish feed provided to 7 aquaculture farms
Output 2: Repair of irrigation systems Indicators: 108 CFW days; 10 transformer fixed, 100 irrigation pumps fixed Baseline: Targets:	Activity 1: Liaison with District Electricity Board Activity 2: Repairing of key transformers Activity 3: Assessment of irrigation lines and irrigation pumps	Done Ongoing Done	- Ongoing Ongoing	- Done Done		\$11,462.77	Total 108 CFW days completed 14 transformers fixed 55 on-farm irrigation pump fixed and 3 mainline irrigation pumps fixed

**Cash For Work for Stabilisation Agriculture Activities in Al Hajaj
Salah Al-Din Governorate**

11

	Activity 4: Relaying of irrigation pipes Activity 5: Repair of irrigation pumps	Ongoing Ongoing	Ongoing Ongoing	Done Done			
Output 3: Repair of Livestock sheds Indicators: 240 CFW days completed. Baseline: Targets:	Activity 1: Assessment of on-farm infrastructures Activity 2: Repair of traditional cattle sheds Activity 3: Clearing of debris from poultry farms / fish ponds	Done Ongoing Ongoing	- Done Done	- - -		\$5,280.80	Total 240 CFW days completed
Output 4: Restocking of Livestock / bee keeping Indicators: 72 CFW days; 20 cows, 50,000 poultry, 12 beehives handed over. Baseline: Targets:	Activity 1: Identification of restocking beneficiaries Activity 2: Assessment of facilities Activity 3: Repair of facilities if required Activity 4: Provision of restocking items	Done Done Ongoing Ongoing	- - Done Done	- - - -		\$5,859.38	Total 72 CFW days completed Total 20 cows, 50,000 poultry and 20 beehives handed over
Output 5: Rubble removal Indicators: 480 CFW days completed. Baseline: Targets:	Activity 1: Assessment of rubble disposal site Activity 2: Removal and transportation of rubble to disposal site Activity 3: Recruitment and training of rubble management teams Activity 4: Processing of rubble at disposal site Activity 5: Final disposal of inert materials	Done Ongoing n/a n/a n/a	- Done na n/a n/a	- - na n/a n/a		\$10,560.00	Total 373 CFW days completed

**Cash For Work for Stabilisation Agriculture Activities in Al Hajaj
Salah Al-Din Governorate**

12

	Activity 6: Grouping of reusable materials for construction sector Activity 7: Processing of reusable materials for construction sector	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	n/a n/a			
Output 6: Street cleaning and solid waste management Indicators: 480 CFW days completed Baseline: Targets:	Activity 1: Assessment of solid waste accumulation Activity 2: Prioritisation of intervention Activity 3: Recruitment and training of street cleaning teams Activity 4: Implementation of street cleaning teams Activity 5: Assessment of solid waste disposal site Activity 6: Removal and transportation of solid waste to disposal site	Activity not yet started	Done Done Done Done Done Done	- - - - - -		\$10,560.00	Total 480 CFW days completed
Output 7: Housing repairs Indicators: 540 CFW days completed; 20 grants given. Baseline: Targets:	Activity 1: Assessment of housing / room damage Activity 2: Costing of partial repairs Activity 3: Prioritisation of interventions Activity 4: Issuing grants Activity 5: Monitoring Activity 6: Linking beneficiaries with micro-enterprises	Activity not yet started	Ongoing Ongoing Activity not yet started	Done Done Done Done Done Done		\$13,732.12	Total 542 CFW days completed Total of 20 housing repair grants given

Activity info Indicator Report

SRP/3RP Output	Indicator	Location 1: Al Hajaj		Location 2: (Name of camp or District/Governorate)		Location 3: (Name of camp or District/Governorate)	
		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Objective 1: Preparation of agricultural lands							
1.1. Increased employment opportunities for returnees	# of returnees benefited temporary employment activities (cash for work etc.)	123	273				
1.2. Farm enterprises supported	# farm enterprises benefited through provision of farm inputs	42	18				
1.3. Aquaculture supported	# of returnees benefited from inclusion in aquaculture cooperative	12	8				
Objective 2: Repair of irrigation systems							
2.1. Increased employment opportunities for returnees	# of returnees benefited temporary employment activities (cash for work etc.)		6				
2.2. Farm enterprises supported	# farm enterprises benefited through repair of irrigation pumps		30				
Objective 3: Repair of livestock sheds							
3.1. Increased employment opportunities for returnees	# of returnees benefited temporary employment activities (cash for work etc.)	13	7				
3.2. Farm enterprises supported	# farm enterprises benefited through provision of dairy cow	20					
Objective 4: Restocking of livestock/bee keeping							
4.1. Increased employment opportunities for returnees	# of returnees benefited temporary employment activities (cash for work etc.)	8	5				

**Cash For Work for Stabilisation Agriculture Activities in Al Hajaj
Salah Al-Din Governorate**

14

4.2. Farm enterprises supported	# farm enterprises benefited through provision of poultry	92	8				
	# farm enterprises benefited through provision of bee hives	0	20				
Objective 5: Rubble removal and Objective 6 Street cleaning and solid waste management							
5.1./6.1. Increased employment opportunities for returnees	# of returnees benefited temporary employment activities (cash for work etc.)	0	81				
Objective 7: Housing repairs							
7.1. Increased employment opportunities for returnees	# of returnees benefited temporary employment activities (cash for work etc.)	0	45				
8.1. Housing repair grants	# households awarded housing report	3	10				