

### Understanding the Drivers of Dietary Diversity Among the Highland Communities of the Shah Foladi Protected Area Bamyan, Afghanistan 2016-17

#### INTRODUCTION

LANSA is an international research partnership investigating how agriculture and agri-food systems can be better designed to advance nutrition, focusing on policies, interventions and strategies that can improve nutritional status in South Asia. COAM have been active in Bamyan province since 2010, working to protect Afghanistan's natural heritage, support local communities and improve livelihoods through community-based natural resource management, ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change, gender equality and sustainable livelihoods programmes.

#### SHAH FOLADI PROTECTED AREA

Established in 2009, the Shah Foladi Protected Area is located in the Koh-e-Baba mountain range of Bamyan Province in Afghanistan's Central Highlands Region. It remains an important area for environment and agriculture, with rivers from the Koh-e-Baba providing water to Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries throughout the year. The population is concentrated in villages situated in narrow valleys surrounded by rangelands, pastures and mountains. During the winter, the communities are isolated and vulnerable to the harsh conditions of rural mountain life. The predominantly agrarian society is at the mercy of extreme variations in temperature, natural hazards and disasters such as mudslides, avalanches and extreme drought. As the communities rely predominantly on the natural resource base for their livelihood, it is vital to understand their relationship to the land and agricultural practices in order to sustainably manage, protect and maximise benefits from ecosystem services of this rich area.



#### AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

Afghanistan has long been known for its rich crop genetic biodiversity but many families choose high-yield, high-risk monocropping as a form of agriculture. Wheat and potatoes are the predominant crops grown and consumed in Bamyan, while sheep and cow meat, though scarce, make up the rest of the diet. Women's involvement in agriculture, natural resource management and decision-making capabilities are key components influencing nutrition, as are the severe environmental determinants. Long, harsh winters limit market access and make crop diversification and growing vegetables difficult. Understanding traditional farming practices and the environmental factors and impacts of climate change on local agrobiodiversity and farming systems is key to improving food and nutritional status and building resilience among the rural mountain communities in Bamyan, Afghanistan.

#### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Explore the fundamental, underlying and immediate determinants of dietary diversity in the rural, highland communities of Bamyan, Afghanistan.
- Investigate enabling environments and the social and environmental factors that influence household decision-making patterns.
- Research the potential of agriculture to address malnutrition and understand the cultural and social enablers and inhibitors impacting dietary diversity.
- Investigate the linkages between climate change, biodiversity, agricultural systems, gender equality, rural livelihoods, and nutrition.
- Raise awareness about agriculture, nutrition and environment through active dissemination of knowledge and findings, workshops and publications.
- Establish a framework for integrated research on health, nutrition, environment and sustainable livelihoods to support policy implementation and inform development work to build resilience among Afghanistan's rural communities.

#### METHODOLOGY FOR ACTION RESEARCH IN THE SHAH FOLADI PROTECTED AREA

LANSA and COAM are actively engaging with communities through community consultations, household questionnaires, focus groups and surveys. Key stakeholders are involved through a variety of channels and media in order to integrate agriculture and nutrition programmes and policies to promote coordination among national and international partners to address the complex challenges of malnutrition in the diverse regions of Afghanistan. The research has potential to impact a range of areas from agriculture to food markets, consumption patterns and household nutrition to the policy-making environment.

#### RESEARCH LOCATIONS

##### 5 VALLEYS IN THE SHAH FOLADI

1. Somara: Sar-e-Somara, Garmbolaq and Aliahmad villages
2. Dukoni: Yatimak, Molgar and Jawzari villages
3. Khushkak: Chapqolok, Qabrizaghak, Sorkhaktangi and Olang-e-Kalan villages
4. Chapdara: Sar-e-Chapdara, Gero and Petap villages
5. Jawkar: Jawkar, Dalak-e-Bala villages

#### PARTNERS

Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in South Asia (LANSA)  
Conservation Organisation for Afghan Mountain Areas (COAM)  
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)  
School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (SOAS)  
National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA)  
Communities of the Shah Foladi Protected Area  
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