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Three Canal Cleaning Projects Benefit 19,000 Families in Helmand

Through the National Area-Based Development Program of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, three canal cleaning projects have been completed, in the last two months, in Helmand Province, benefiting around 19,000 families. Two of the canals cleaned were in Nawar District and the other was in Marja District, with a total cost of US \$ 114,520. Through these projects, 94,520 cubic meters of irrigation canal were cleaned, creating 4,315 labor days for local people.

These projects were implemented through a tripartite agreement among MRRD, Community Development Councils and District Development Assemblies. According to the contract, the CDCs implemented the projects, the DDAs monitored them and the Ministry secured the funding from international donors. In addition to the community contribution of \$11,450 in the shape of labor, almost all the remaining funding for implementing the projects was provided by a British donor, the Department for International Development (DFID).

Many of the previously-irrigated fields of Helmand had become infertile as irrigation canals had been blocked for so long. Farmers had to rely on small patches of land which were difficult to water. As there was so little irrigated land remaining, poor farmers had to grow poppy on their fields to earn enough money for their basic needs. Now that the irrigation canals are cleaned and the water flow is ensured, the people of Nawar and Marja districts of Helmand returned to planting licit crops on their fields.

In addition to these projects, in the past five months, five canal cleaning projects have been completed in Marja District, as well as five canal cleaning and two canal excavation projects in the Bost District of Helmand.