



Helping Afghan Farmers Organization (HAFO)

**Narrative Report
for Project #.LAG-I-00-99-00017-00
Integrated Water and Coastal Resources Management
in Nad-I-Ali & Marja Districts,
Helmand Province,
Afghanistan**

Submitted to DAI

April 2003

NARRATIVE REPORT

DECEMBER 2002 - APRIL 2003

General Information

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Project Information

Project Title: Drain Cleaning in Nad-I-Ali and Marja Districts
Province: Helmand
District: Nad-I-Ali and Marja Districts
Starting Date: 15 December 2002
Completion Date: 31 May 2003
Duration: 5.5 months

Background

The Helmand Valley irrigation system comprises almost 500 km of main drains and nearly 600 km of lateral drains. Most of these drains have not been cleaned for the past 23 years. This is beginning to cause irrigation water to back up, leading to water logging, salination of the soils, and potential crop failures. In order to mitigate this problem of clogged drains, HAFO is cleaning the drains in Nad-i-Ali and Marja districts. The drains are being cleaned using a combination of labour intensive and capital-intensive technologies i.e. draglines and laborers.

Project Activities

DAI and HAFO started a pilot project for the drain cleaning in Nad-I-Ali on 15 October 2002 and payment was based on man-days, not the volume of silt removed. As of 25 January 2003 the volume of silt removed became the basis for payment in accordance with the contract, instead of man-days payments. The amount of work completed to date at each site is described below.

1) Nad-I-Ali

Based on surveys and technical calculations, the quantity of silt removed by dragline and invoiced to DAI from 25 January 2003 till the reporting time was 21,609.50m³, while 28,808.02 m³ of silt was removed by manual labor. This amount has been invoiced to DAI.

However, not all of the completed work has been surveyed. A second survey has been done by HAFO and DAI, Table 1 below lists the results of this survey. Please note that this work has not yet been invoiced, as it has not been finalized by DAI field engineers yet.

TABLE 1

Drain	Length (m)	Category	Volume of silt removed (m ³)
1-Q	2056	3	5,718
FD25	900	1	1,373
2E	2425	3	8,044
2F	2663	3	12,594
Total			27,729

Table 2 shows work that has been done on the drains, however the second survey has not been completed yet.

TABLE 2

Drain	Length (m)
2F Spur 4	5,120
2F Spur 3	1,975
2F Spur 2	1,355
2F Spur 1	369
2F Spur	2,110
Total	10,929

Table 3 shows the volume of silt that has been removed by the backhoe. The work has been surveyed, however not yet invoiced as the work has not been finalized by DAI field engineers.

TABLE 3 - Backhoe

Drain	Length (m)	Volume of silt removed (m ³)
2F Spur C	481	2,103

Table 4 shows the volume of silt that has been removed by dragline in Drain 2. The work has been surveyed, however not yet invoiced as the work has not been finalized by DAI field engineers.

TABLE 4 - Dragline

Drain	Length (m)	Volume (m ³)
Drain 2 dragline	6,000	19,508

2) Marja

Drain cleaning was due to start in Marja at the same time as Nad-I-Ali, however due to problems with the supply of draglines there has been a delay in commencement of this work. It was agreed by DAI and HAFO that the main drains should be cleaned with draglines first, followed by cleaning of the secondary drains using manual labor. Work was consequently unable to start on time until the draglines were available. Hopefully we will be able to start work using draglines and manual labor in the first week of May 2003.

Problems Arisen/Proposed Solutions

1) Shortage of labour

Since the beginning of the project at Nad-I-Ali HAFO has employed an average of 700 laborers/day. The lowest number of laborers over this time has been 500 laborers/day. However since mid April 2003 a decreasing trend in laborers at the site trend has been observed. From 900 laborers/day, a drop was observed in mid-April to 500 laborers/day. The number dropped again to 390 laborers/day and then ultimately to 250 laborers/day which is the current labour force on the site. There are several issues which have caused this decrease in laborers on the site.

- a) **Poppy harvesting.** Whilst cultivation of poppies has been vastly reduced this year in the Nad-I-Ali and Marja districts of Helmand province, poppy cultivation has continued in the neighboring provinces of Farah and Nimroz. Laborers have left the project site temporarily to travel to Farah and Nimroz to participate in the poppy harvest. The laborers earn a percentage of the raw opium which has a very high market value. The daily wage the laborers earn cleaning drains cannot compete with the return from this activity. The incentive to partake in the poppy harvest for several weeks is therefore much greater than to remain at the project site. These laborers will return to the project site in mid-May after the harvest is complete. It should be noted that this is a situation which is independent of HAFO's management of the project, and will be resolved in 2-3 weeks.
- b) **Wheat cultivation.** Laborers cultivating wheat have also needed to leave their jobs at Nad-I-Ali as mid-April is the period when birds will attack the wheat and potentially destroy the wheat harvest. The farmers need to attend the wheat crop and keep the birds away during this time. As with the culmination of the poppy harvests, these farmers will return to work at the project site once this period in the cultivation of wheat is finished. Again, this issue has occurred due to reasons beyond the control of HAFO and will be resolved in 2-3 weeks.
- c) **Laborers hired by DAI.** In mid-April, DAI began to hire their own laborers and supervisors to work in Nad-I-Ali. When DAI hired these additional laborers, HAFO's labor force decreased from 390 to 250 laborers/day. DAI hired approximately 100 to 150 laborers/day so whilst extra laborers have been hired by DAI, the total workforce on the site has in effect remained static. Supervisors have also been employed by DAI to manage the workers.

In an effort to resolve the issue of labour shortage, HAFO has consulted with the shuras, woloswals, and IDP camp representatives. Labor will be available to return to work after harvesting is completed.

2) Hiring of additional laborers and supervisors by DAI

As described in point 1) above, DAI has hired laborers and supervisors to work concurrently with HAFO at the Nad-I-Ali project site. Unfortunately HAFO was not

informed of the decision by DAI to hire workers independently of HAFO and this has resulted in a number of problems which are listed below.

- a) **Conflicting pay rate.** DAI is paying its laborers 100Afs/day which is in direct conflict to HAFO's pay rate of 90Afs/day. That is equivalent to \$.1.96 and is in fluctuating each day. HAFO is paying the laborers at the pay rate agreed in the sub-agreement budget, based on an average exchange rate from US\$ to Afs over the project duration. We kindly request that this issue be resolved immediately in order to facilitate the management of the project.
- b) **Confusion amongst laborers.** Since its inception, the project has been implemented by HAFO. With the introduction by DAI of its own supervisors and laborers, it has become increasingly difficult for HAFO to effectively manage and supervise the laborers. The workers demands irrelevant things and if not fulfilled, they join the other party. This has serious negative implications for the future management of the project, particularly as two entities are paying laborers at differing pay rates.
- c) **Reduction in HAFO laborers and supervisors.** As a result of DAI hiring laborers and supervisors at a higher pay rate, there has been a subsequent decrease in the number of laborers and supervisors available to HAFO. As mentioned in Point 1) the total number of laborers at the site essentially remains constant however the workers are now split under two management teams instead of one.
- d) HAFO was of the understanding that DAI staff are at the site to monitor and evaluate the project, not to implement the project. Should DAI deem that HAFO does not have the capacity to carry out the scope of work detailed in the contract, then according to the sub-agreement under **ARTICLE 11.2.2** DAI is required to serve written notice to HAFO, so that HAFO may be given the opportunity to defend our project work. Unfortunately HAFO has not received any written notice to date. We believe that we do have the capacity to continue to carry out the work, particularly as the shortage of total labour at the site has been due to temporary problems (poppy harvesting and wheat cultivation) which will be resolved in May when the farmers will return to the drain cleaning workforce. However, if DAI requires further evidence that HAFO can provide the capacity we will be happy to discuss the issue with DAI staff and provide whatever additional information is required.

3) Problems associated with draglines

At the commencement of the project HAFO and DAI verbally agreed to source the draglines from the Helmand Construction Company (HCC). HCC initially provided three draglines however one of these broke after only a couple of weeks in Marja. Eng. Jawed, Director of HAFO, subsequently contacted Ahmad Yosuf Nooristani, the Minister of Irrigation, who promised to provide three draglines from Band Sarday area of Ghazni province. Unfortunately the provision of these draglines never eventuated.

After lengthy discussions with the Director of HCC, Haji Farooq, HCC has agreed to supply three more draglines so that a total of five will be available for HAFO – two at Nad-I-Ali and three at Marja.

When the project started, DAI engineers advised that the main drains should be cleaned using draglines first before starting to clean the secondary drains. Due to the delay in supplying of the draglines, the full quota of laborers has therefore not been required to work on the site as the cleaning of the secondary drains could not commence.

4) Payments from DAI

In the majority of projects implemented by HAFO, an advance is usually paid at the beginning of the project by the donor so that work can begin immediately. Under the terms of the DAI sub-agreement with HAFO, there was no provision of an advance, so we have been required to spend our own money in order to keep the project running. DAI has paid for all bills submitted covering work from 15 October 2002 to 12 January 2003. However, since then unfortunately no monies have been received from DAI. HAFO has submitted three invoices since January 2003 and the outstanding invoiced balance is now US\$.77,599.95

In addition, money that HAFO has invested in the project that is still waiting to be finalized by DAI engineers is more than US\$.90,000. The total amount spent by HAFO on this project as at 30 April 2003 is more than US\$.200,000

This delay in payments has resulted in HAFO not being able to afford to pay the full quota of 1,500 laborers/day, instead averaging 700 laborers/day. HAFO does not have a large cash reserve with which to implement a project and relies on regular payments from its donors. We were advised that there were some queries on the submitted invoices which was why no payments had been authorized by DAIs. HAFO would gratefully appreciate immediate notice from DAI should any problems arise concerning the submitted invoices so that the problems can be resolved and minimize any potential payment delays.

5) Decision on categories and conducting surveys

HAFO and DAI have been discussing the classification of categories since the beginning of the project. After many meetings, in the final week of April 2003 all parties finally agreed to determine the category of the drain according to the following criteria in situ:

- a) Nature of soil e.g loose mud, trees, roots, bushes.
- b) Top width of drain on site as in the contract.
- c) Bottom width of drain on site as in the contract.
- d) Depth of drain on site as in the contract.

Both HAFO and DAI engineers working in the site are authorized to jointly classify the category. This issue has now been resolved and HAFO does not anticipate any problems in the future.

HAFO did not originally include a survey team in the budget, however in order to expedite the surveying process HAFO hired supporting staff and engineers to jointly conduct surveys with the DAI surveying team.

Proposed Activities

The proposed activities for the month of May 2003 are as follows:

- 1) Nad-I-Ali. Work will continue in the Nad-I-Ali drains using draglines and laborers. HAFO plans to employ 500-700 laborers /day during this period.
- 2) May. HAFO plans to start cleaning the main drains at Marja using 2-3 draglines. Work will also commence on the secondary drains targeting 700 labors/day.

In addition, rehabilitation of culverts and other small structures where required will be carried out at both sites after consultation with DAI field engineers.

Conclusion

A priority for the continued success of this project is the resolution of the issue of DAI's involvement in the actual implementation of the project. HAFO would prefer to continue to manage the project as specified in the sub-agreement and believe that we have the capacity to do so. Difficulties will continue to arise whilst there are two organizations managing the same project. We feel that a solution to this issue needs to be reached as soon as possible in consultation with all parties.

A number of other problems which have arisen during the course of the project have now been rectified. The labour shortage which has been experienced by HAFO in the field will, as detailed earlier, be rectified in May once the laborers are free to return to the project site.

Overall, we are pleased with the progress of the project to date and do not anticipate that the remainder of the work will encounter any further hindrances.