DACAAR Strategic Framework

2026 -2028



Foreword

It is with great pride that the Governing Board presents the DACAAR Strategic Framework for 2026-2028 - an ambitious, grounded, and forward-looking roadmap for our work in Afghanistan. This strategy reflects both the vast experience accumulated by DACAAR over four decades and the adaptability required in a country facing profound humanitarian and development challenges.

Afghanistan's people continue to navigate an environment shaped by economic fragility, climate-driven shocks, and barriers to inclusive participation not least for women. In response, this strategy places strong emphasis on strengthening livelihoods, enhancing disaster preparedness and resilience, and expanding women's economic opportunities. These priorities are not new to DACAAR, but in this strategy they come together in a more integrated and holistic way - because people do not live in sectors. Their needs, strengths, and aspirations are interconnected, and so our support must be as well.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) remain at the heart of who we are. It is our core technical strength and a proven foundation for healthier, more resilient communities. The observant reader may therefore wonder why WASH does not appear as a stand-alone strategic priority. We assure you that it is deeply embedded across all pillars. Our continued excellence in WASH will enable and reinforce the broader outcomes we seek to achieve in livelihoods, resilience, and gender-inclusive economic participation.

This strategy also marks an important step toward stronger localization. DACAAR's long-standing presence and the trust we have built across Afghanistan place us in a unique position to help nurture genuine partnerships with local and national civil society organizations. These relationships will not only strengthen community-level ownership of programs but also contribute to a more sustainable, Afghan-led development ecosystem. At the same time, DACAAR will increase its participation in international fora relevant to its work, for instance as new members of the Climate Action Network for South Asia (CANSA). Lastly, to support the strategic objectives, DACAAR will embark on a reform of its MEAL System and implement an internal staff capacity building program.

The process of shaping this strategy has been inclusive and collaborative. Our sincere gratitude goes to all colleagues who contributed - Our dedicated team at the main office in Kabul, the committed staff working tirelessly across our regional and field offices and those in Denmark. Your insights, experience, and unwavering commitment to the people of Afghanistan have been invaluable.

I would also like to express our deep appreciation to our donors. Your continued support makes it possible for DACAAR to reach some of Afghanistan's most vulnerable communities with dignity, quality, and impact. We look forward to strengthening these partnerships as we bring this strategy to life. Together, we will continue striving for a more secure, inclusive, and self-reliant future for Afghanistan.

On behalf of DACAAR, thank you.

Astrid Coyne-Jensen

Chairperson

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Abbreviations

CBO	Community-Based Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSL	Food Security and Livelihoods
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HNRP	Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEA	Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KII	Key Informant Interview
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRM	Natural Resource Management
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SSED	Small-Scale Enterprise Development
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Funds
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WEO	Women’s Economic Opportunities

1. Background

The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) is a longstanding, non-governmental, non-partisan humanitarian and development organization that has been serving the people of Afghanistan since 1984. Originally established to support Afghan refugees in Pakistan, DACAAR transitioned into Afghanistan in the early 1990s and has since become a trusted and impartial actor with deep roots in Afghan communities across the country. Over the past four decades, DACAAR has built a strong reputation for delivering high-quality, community-based interventions in some of the country's most remote and underserved areas, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or political affiliation.

DACAAR's work focuses on improving the livelihoods, resilience, and dignity of Afghans through an integrated, multi-sectoral approach. Its core programming areas include Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Natural Resource Management (NRM), Small-Scale Enterprise Development (SSED), and Women's Economic Opportunities (WEO). DACAAR is widely recognized as a national leader in the WASH sector, known for its technical expertise, community engagement models, and commitment to inclusive, sustainable service delivery. In addition, the organization integrates Natural Resource Management (NRM) with a focus on environmental sustainability and climate resilience principles into relevant programming, particularly in water-scarce and disaster-prone regions.

DACAAR's inclusive approach prioritizes gender equality, community ownership, and accountability. Through strong Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) systems, DACAAR ensures that its programming is informed by evidence, adapted to changing contexts, and aligned with the needs of the people it serves. The organization maintains close partnerships with Afghan civil society actors, local authorities, and international donors, and it continues to advocate for locally driven, conflict-sensitive, and rights-based development in Afghanistan.

Operating in a highly complex and evolving context, DACAAR remains committed to reaching the most vulnerable populations, especially internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, women, youth, and marginalized host communities. (In the following called Key Target Groups) As it launches its Strategic Framework for 2026–2028, DACAAR draws on its legacy, values, and field-tested models to build a future where Afghan communities can live with dignity, resilience, and hope.

In alignment with its mission and evolving context, the Framework is structured around five core strategic objectives, complemented by two supportive objectives that strengthen the overall framework. These priorities reflect the organization's commitment to inclusive, sustainable, and locally led development:

The five core strategic objectives are:

- **Sustainable Livelihoods:** Enhancing income-generating opportunities, food security, and economic resilience across all thematic areas.
- **Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability:** Promoting nature-based solutions, responsible resource use, and community-level climate adaptation.
- **Women's Economic Opportunities:** Expanding women's access to skills, resources, and financial systems to promote their economic empowerment.

- **Crisis Response and Disaster Preparedness:** Strengthening preparedness and rapid response to humanitarian crises, displacement, and emergencies.
- **Localization through Partnership:** Promoting locally led development through stronger partnerships with Afghan civil society and community actors.

These core strategic objectives are further strengthened by three supportive measures that ensure effective implementation across the strategic plan:

- **Governance, Fundraising, lobby and advocacy** The headquarters (HQ) in Copenhagen and the Main office in Kabul (MO) will give increased priority to Governance, management and accountability; Fundraising, Development Architecture and donor relations; Strategic communication and advocacy; Organizational oversight and support.
- **Improved MEAL Systems:** Enhancing program quality, learning, and accountability through robust data systems and digital tools.
- **Internal Capacity Building and Leadership:** Investing in staff development, inclusive leadership, and organizational growth to drive excellence and sustainability.

The Strategic Framework is aligned with major global commitments and standards to ensure coherence, accountability, and donor confidence. It reflects the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** through efforts in livelihoods, food security, health, gender equality, clean water, economic growth, reduced inequalities, climate action, and partnerships. The strategy is also working towards the application of **Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS)** and advances the **Grand Bargain localization agenda**. It also upholds the **Sphere Standards**, follows **IASC guidance** on protection and disability inclusion, and integrates the **OECD-DAC criteria** to ensure relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability. In addition, it supports the **Sendai Framework** on disaster risk reduction and aligns with the **Global Compact on Refugees and Internal Displacement Frameworks** to strengthen durable solutions.

2. Context and Target Groups

Afghanistan remains one of the world's most complex humanitarian and development settings, shaped by overlapping political, economic, environmental, and social crises. As of 2025, nearly half the population, an estimated 22.9 million Afghans, require humanitarian assistance to survive (HNRP, 2025)[1]. Years of conflict, recurring natural disasters, and economic instability have eroded access to basic services and deepened chronic poverty, especially in rural areas where over 70% of Afghans live (IPS 2025)[2]. The situation is further worsened by mass displacement and the return of Afghans from neighboring countries, many of whom arrive with no assets or support systems. These realities demand a flexible, inclusive, and integrated humanitarian response that prioritizes resilience, and the restoration of livelihoods.

Afghanistan has seen a reduction in large-scale conflict since the 2021 political transition; however, security concerns persist due to ongoing cross-border tensions, particularly along the Pakistan frontier. This evolving environment requires adaptive, localized programming. At the same time, the international aid landscape is shifting, with donors increasingly emphasizing locally

[1] file:///C:/Users/Administrator/Downloads/Afghanistan-Humanitarian-Needs-and-Response-Plan-2025.pdf
[2] https://www.ipsnews.net/2021/09/afghanistan-efforts-to-prevent-a-food-crisis-before-everything-becomes-more-serious

led, resilient, and cost-effective programming, highlighting the urgent need for flexible localized approaches in both humanitarian and development efforts (OECD 2024)[3].

Gender inequality and social exclusion continue to present significant challenges in the country, with many women and girls experiencing limited access to education, employment opportunities in certain sectors, and mobility—factors that can constrain their full participation in public and economic life (UN Women) [4]. These constraints not only affect individual rights but also weaken community resilience and economic potential, especially for female-headed households, widows, and women with disabilities. Youth also face growing frustration due to limited access to quality education, jobs, and leadership roles. Advancing gender equity and youth inclusion is both a justice issue and a critical driver of sustainable development and social stability.

Environmental and climate-related risks are increasingly shaping Afghanistan's development trajectory. Nearly 9 million individuals were impacted by climate hazards in the last 12 months, with over 500,000 displaced by floods, drought, and other disasters (IOM)[5]. The country is highly vulnerable to natural hazards such as drought, flash floods, harsh winters, and earthquakes. In 2024, flash floods affected more than 23 provinces and caused significant loss of life and property. These recurring events have worsened food insecurity, displaced families, and destroyed agricultural livelihoods (UNFPA 2024)[6]. At the same time, rising temperatures, desertification, and poor land use practices are accelerating environmental degradation, making long-term recovery more difficult. Climate resilience and nature-based solutions must therefore become central to programmatic strategies, particularly in rural and agricultural regions.

Access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene remains a critical public health issue across the country. Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, is on the verge of becoming the first modern capital city to face a complete water shortage[7]. The city's groundwater levels have dropped drastically due to over-extraction and contamination, putting millions at risk of waterborne diseases. According to Humanitarian Action analysis, nearly 21 million people are without adequate WASH services[8]. Poor water infrastructure, combined with population displacement and a lack of hygiene awareness, has led to increased cases of diarrhea, cholera, and other preventable diseases. As a recognized leader in WASH, and through the integration of natural resource management (NRM) principles, DACAAR plays a pivotal role in mitigating environmental and health risks by strengthening community water systems, promoting ecosystem-based approaches, and facilitating localized disaster risk reduction efforts.

Economically, Afghanistan faces widespread hardship, fueled by a dramatic reduction in foreign aid, high inflation, currency instability, and mass unemployment. Sanctions on government officials, combined with asset freezes and banking restrictions, have significantly disrupted financial systems and discouraged foreign investment (World Bank ORG)[9]. These macroeconomic shocks have severely limited household purchasing power, especially among

[3] https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pathways-towards-effective-locally-led-development-co-operation_51079bba-en.html
[4] https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Gender-country-profile-Afghanistan-en.pdf
[5] https://afghanistan.iom.int/news/climate-crisis-drives-displacement-worsens-afghanistans-humanitarian-needs-iom-report
[6] https://www.unfpa.org/resources/chad-flash-update-september-2024
[7] https://edition.cnn.com/2025/07/19/asia/afghanistan-kabul-water-crisis-report-intl-hnk
[8] https://humanitarianaction.info/plan/1263/article/water-sanitation-and-hygiene
[9] https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan/overview

rural farmers, youth, and women, many of whom lack access to markets, training, or formal employment. The informal economy remains oversaturated, with limited prospects for long-term financial independence without targeted livelihood support.

Despite the adversity faced in recent years, there are meaningful opportunities for adaptation and positive change. Organizations like DACAAR, with deep community trust and contextual expertise, are well-positioned to deliver programming that is responsive to local needs, integrating gender sensitivity, climate awareness, and conflict sensitivity. The growing reach of mobile technology, even in remote areas, opens new possibilities for digital monitoring, community feedback, remote learning, and timely program adjustments. However, these advances must be balanced with careful attention to data privacy and cybersecurity risks.

Therefore, the Strategic Framework is both timely and necessary, and is intentionally oriented toward key target groups, including IDPs, returnees, people with disabilities, and other populations experiencing heightened socio-economic vulnerability *(See table 1).* It responds to the shrinking humanitarian space, anticipates risks such as funding instability, restrictive policies, digital threats, and builds upon its longstanding presence in Afghanistan to promote inclusive leadership, intersectional programming, and evidence-driven accountability. The Framework prioritizes WASH to improve public health, integrates environmental sustainability through responsible water use and nature-based solutions, and promotes inclusive economic growth by supporting small-scale enterprises and expanding women's access to skills and financial opportunities.

Table 1: Key Target Group and Estimated People in Need

Target Group	**Number (HNRP 2025 / other sources)**
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	3,199,650 (UNHCR Data Portal)[10]
Returnees	Over 1,200,000 undocumented returnees from Jan–Dec 2024 (ReliefWeb)[11]
Women (in "people in need")	5,700,000 women among people in need (unocha.org)[12]
Children / Youth	12,000,000 children in need (UNICEF)[13]
People with Disabilities	No clear national figure available in HNRP 2025

[10] unhcr.org/en/country/afg
[11] Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 (December 2024) [EN/PS/Dari] - Afghanistan | ReliefWeb
[12] OCHA
[13] UNICEF Afghanistan Humanitarian Situation Report No. 6, 1 Jan - 30 June 2025.pdf.pdf

3. Vision for Change

Vision, Mission, Values, and Principles





Core Values

Integrity: We act transparently and honestly.

Inclusiveness: We value diversity, gender equality, and participation

Respect: We honor Afghan traditions, dignity, and cultural diversity.

Collaboration: We work in partnerships across sectors and stakeholders.

Learning and Adaptation: We commit to innovation, evidence-based programming, and continuous learning.

Principles

The core principles outlined below are supported by DACAAR's existing policy environment. The organization's comprehensive policy framework, including the PSEA Policy, Protection Guidelines, Conflict Sensitivity Policy, Environmental Policy, and Anti-Terrorism and Sanctions Compliance Policy, operationalizes these principles across all areas of programming and internal governance. This alignment ensures that DACAAR's 3-Year Strategy is grounded in ethical, inclusive, and rights-based approaches, while maintaining operational integrity, legal compliance, and community trust in Afghanistan's complex and high-risk context.

- **Humanitarian Principles** (Humanity, Neutrality, Impartiality, Independence)
- **Gender Equality and Social Inclusion**
- **Accountability to Affected Populations**
- **Safeguarding and Protection**
- **Conflict Sensitivity and Do No Harm**
- **Data Security and Privacy**

Our Vision for Change is informed by the following **Theory of Change (ToC)**:

> If we build equitable and sustainable livelihoods for Afghans through inclusive economic opportunities, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable practices, robust MEAL systems, strong community engagement, locally-led development, gender-sensitive programming, while leveraging DACAAR's expertise in WASH, natural resource management and livelihoods, then we will be able to deliver more effective, inclusive, and sustainable development outcomes that directly improve the wellbeing, resilience, and self-reliance of IDPs, returnees, and the most vulnerable communities.

This ToC is underpinned by the belief that sustainable development outcomes are achieved when Afghans have access to equitable livelihoods, when programming is inclusive and locally led, and when resilience to climate and environmental shocks is strengthened through integrated and accountable systems.

To achieve this, we will promote inclusive economic opportunities for the key target groups; embed climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable practices across all interventions; and leverage DACAAR's recognized leadership in WASH, natural resource management, and livelihoods to ensure holistic, cross-sectoral solutions. We will also strengthen MEAL systems to enhance accountability, adaptive learning, and evidence-based decision-making, while positioning communities at the center of design, implementation, and oversight processes.

Simultaneously, we will advance locally led development, ensuring that communities drive priorities and solutions, while embedding gender sensitivity and intersectionality to address overlapping vulnerabilities linked to age, disability, ethnicity, and geography. In the long term, this will result in improved wellbeing, resilience, and self-reliance among Afghan communities, stronger organizational effectiveness and legitimacy, and an organizational model that is both adaptive to future challenges and firmly rooted in local realities.

The context analysis recognizes pressing challenges such as shrinking humanitarian space, heightened community expectations, and the urgent need for more digital accountability and transparency, which this ToC seeks to address.

Assumptions and Preconditions

The successful implementation of the 3-year Strategic Framework is based on several key assumptions and preconditions:

- **Operating Context Stability**
  – The political and security environment remains stable enough to allow for sustained programming and access to vulnerable communities.
- **Community Engagement and Acceptance**
  – Communities are willing and able to actively engage in program design, implementation, and monitoring, including the use of digital platforms where feasible.
- **Adequate Financial and Technical Resources**
  – Donor support and funding streams remain available and sufficiently diversified to sustain priority programs. Technical expertise can be mobilized in-country or through partnerships.
- **Policy and Regulatory Space**
  – Humanitarian and development actors continue to retain the necessary operational

space to deliver impartial and principled assistance, particularly in relation to gender-sensitive programming.

- **Environmental and Climate Preconditions**
  – While climate hazards will persist, mitigation and adaptation efforts will be feasible through the adoption of nature-based solutions, sustainable resource management, and community-led practices.

- **Digital and Data Safeguards**
  – Expansion of digital MEAL systems and data-driven approaches is accompanied by robust safeguarding, ethical use standards, and cyber resilience to protect beneficiary data and organizational credibility.

See Annex 7.2 for a schematic overview of our Theory of Change (ToC)

4. Strategic Objectives

DACAAR, through its Strategic Framework, reaffirms its commitment to addressing the challenges facing Afghan communities by focusing on inclusive, resilient, and locally driven solutions. Recognizing the ongoing socio-economic instability, environmental risks, displacement, and the exclusion of women and youth, DACAAR has identified five strategic objectives that guide its programming over the next three years. These objectives reflect the organization's integrated approach to humanitarian response, sustainable development, and organizational strengthening.

Each strategic objective is designed to respond to immediate community needs while also building long-term capacity, promoting equity, and ensuring that the most vulnerable populations are not left behind. The framework aligns with national development priorities and global goals, and is rooted in DACAAR's core values of integrity, inclusiveness, respect, collaboration and a commitment to delivering quality outcomes.

Strategic Objective 1: Sustainable Livelihood

Improve the sustainable livelihoods of poor Afghan households through DACAAR's 4 thematic areas WASH, Natural Resource Management, Small Scale Enterprise Development, Women's Economic Opportunities

The strategic objective reinforces DACAARs commitment to improve sustainable livelihoods emphasizing a multi-sector, area-based approach that bridges Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Natural Resource Management (NRM), Small-Scale Enterprise Development (SSED), and Women's Economic Opportunities (WEO). [14] Through an integrated approach our work will increase livelihoods through providing access to safe drinking water, improve health conditions, increase income-generating opportunities, enhance food security, and strengthen community self-reliance.

WASH will continue to be the cornerstone of DACAARs work, ensuring household access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene. WASH activities will be closely integrated with NRM, SSED and WEO to contribute to a coherent and sustainable livelihoods that are resilient to environmental shocks; responsive to market dynamics, and inclusive of those often left out of development

[14] See also program policies for each of the 4 program types

processes. The focus is on creating diversified income sources, boosting food security, responding to malnutrition and health issues through behavior change and enabling Afghan communities to build dignified, economic self-reliant futures.

Community engagement, inclusive planning, and local ownership are embedded in all activities to ensure that livelihood programming is not only relevant and sustainable but also driven by the needs and aspirations of those it serves. Through market-oriented vocational training, support for home-based and small-scale enterprises, climate-resilient agriculture, and localized food systems, this objective contributes with a multifaceted access to better health, economic recovery, social cohesion, and increased household incomes.

Strategic Objective 2: Climate Change Resilience and Environmental Sustainability

Strengthened climate change resilience and environmental sustainability through nature-based solutions, community-led adaptation, and sustainable resource management

DACAAR prioritizes the urgent need to address the growing impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on Afghan communities—particularly those already facing displacement, poverty, and resource scarcity. This objective builds on DACAAR's recognized work in Natural Resource Management (NRM) and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) to promote a more resilient, adaptive, and ecologically sustainable future.

Afghanistan's fragile ecosystems are increasingly vulnerable to climate shocks such as droughts, floods, and soil erosion, all of which directly undermine livelihoods, food security, and access to safe water. This strategic objective aims to strengthen community resilience by advancing nature-based solutions, supporting sustainable land and water use, and embedding localized Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) into community planning.

DACAAR will work with communities to rehabilitate watersheds, protect and manage water sources, and restore degraded lands while promoting low-cost, sustainable technologies for water conservation and soil fertility. Community-based adaptation measures will be scaled up through inclusive training and participatory planning, ensuring that women, youth, and marginalized groups are actively involved in managing their local environments and preparing for climate-related risks.

This objective also reinforces environmental sustainability by integrating conservation awareness, environmentally sound practices, and climate-smart agriculture into all relevant programming. By aligning ecological protection with development goals, DACAAR helps communities not just cope with climate challenges, but also adapt and grow stronger through local, practical, and sustainable solutions.

Strategic Objective 3: Women's Economic Opportunities

Expanded women's economic opportunities through inclusive skills development, entrepreneurship support, and gender-sensitive market access

DACAAR recognizes the urgent need to expand access to economic resources, and decision-making opportunities, especially for women and girls who remain significantly underserved in these areas. Limited access to formal employment and meaningful participation in public life continues to hinder their full contribution to the country's development. This strategic objective reflects DACAAR's long-standing commitment to gender equity by placing women's economic opportunities at the center of its livelihoods and community development agenda over the next three years.

This objective aims to create enabling environments where Afghan women, especially those in rural areas, returnees, IDPs, and female-headed households can build sustainable livelihoods, start and grow small enterprises, and participate meaningfully in the local economy. Through tailored vocational training, financial literacy, business development support, and access to markets, DACAAR will strengthen women's capacities to generate income, manage resources, and build resilience against socio-economic shocks.

To address social norms and structural barriers, DACAAR will adopt gender-sensitive programming models that ensure culturally appropriate, safe, and inclusive environments for women to participate in economic activities. The strategy will also engage men, community elders, and local leaders to build broad-based support for women's participation and challenge restrictive attitudes through awareness and dialogue. By strengthening women's access to cooperatives, savings and loan groups, and local value chains, the strategy fosters collaboration, confidence-building, and increased visibility of women as economic actors, while ensuring that protection principles are embedded in all empowerment initiatives.

DACAAR will also work closely with other sectors including WASH, NRM, and SSED, to ensure that women's economic roles are not isolated, but **integrated across all thematic areas.** This ensures that women's contributions are visible, valued, and supported within broader community systems. Ultimately, this objective reflects DACAAR's belief that empowering women economically is not only a pathway to personal and household wellbeing, but also fundamental to achieving lasting development, community resilience, and social transformation.

Strategic Objective 4: Crisis Response and Disaster Preparedness

Enhanced crisis response through rapid humanitarian action and disaster preparedness

DACAAR, in line with its humanitarian mandate and long-standing presence in some of Afghanistan's most crisis-prone areas, is committed to ensuring timely, principled, and people-centered crisis response. As humanitarian needs remain acute due to conflict, natural disasters, economic collapse, and widespread displacement, this strategic objective focuses on saving lives, restoring dignity, and supporting communities to recover and rebuild.

Afghanistan faces recurring emergencies from droughts, floods, and earthquakes to armed conflict and mass displacement, which continue to erode livelihoods, disrupt access to basic

services, and heighten protection risks for the most at-risk populations. This objective prioritizes strengthening DACAAR's capacity to deliver rapid, high-quality humanitarian assistance while also supporting disaster preparedness and resilience-building processes in affected communities.

DACAAR will invest in pre-positioning of emergency supplies, rapid response mechanisms, and mobile teams equipped to deliver life-saving services including WASH, non-food items (NFIs), and hygiene support. Special attention will be given to the needs of key target groups who often face disproportionate risks during crises.

Parallel to the emergency response, the strategy emphasizes anticipatory preparedness to help communities better withstand and respond to future shocks. This includes strengthening early warning systems, pre-positioning essential supplies, and building local capacity for rapid and coordinated crisis response. This objective reinforces DACAAR's commitment to the humanitarian-development nexus, ensuring that timely, proactive interventions reduce the impact of emergencies and that no crisis-affected community is left behind in the journey toward resilience.

Strategic Objective 5: Localization Through Partnership

Promote localization through locally led development, organizational strengthening, and partnership with local actors

In line with the Grand Bargain commitments of 2016 and its long-standing aspiration to be "as local as possible and as international as necessary", DACAAR sees localization as a central aspect this Strategic Framework. As emphasized in the Interim Localization Policy, DACAAR recognizes its responsibility and unique positioning to contribute to a stronger, more capable, and more influential Afghan civil society. Localization is therefore not just a program activity; it is a core organizational commitment shaped by DACAAR's history, identity, and way of working.[15]

Localization for DACAAR is understood as gradually transforming how aid is conceived, delivered, monitored, and sustained in Afghanistan, prioritizing meaningful and partnership-based approaches. This goes beyond shifting responsibilities; it involves building equitable partnerships, investing in long-term capacity, and empowering Afghan actors to set priorities, influence outcomes, and strengthen their advocacy potential. Considering the current restrictions and uncertainties in Afghanistan, this approach is both necessary and strategic.[16]

Under this strategic objective, DACAAR will support local partners to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate interventions across thematic areas. By engaging national NGOs, community-based organizations, Community Representative Groups, and other grassroots actors that are deeply rooted in Afghan society and equipped with contextual knowledge, DACAAR aims to strengthen locally led, relevant, and sustainable development efforts. Through partnership-based programming, DACAAR aims to improve access and ensure that development activities are guided by locally identified priorities. Particular attention will be given to inclusive participation;

[15] Reference is made to DACAARs Interim Localization Policy which – time wise – follow the Strategic Framework.

[16] *According to ACBAR- Localization Factsheet Section 2:* ***Localization*** *in Afghanistan refers to the purposeful and meaningful transition of power, leadership, decision-making and resources to Afghan organizations and communities, enabling them to shape and deliver aid in contextually relevant, inclusive and sustainable ways – while navigating a complex and often restrictive environment.*

ensuring women, youth, persons with disabilities, IDPs, and other marginalized groups have a voice in shaping priorities and solutions.

Aligned with DACAAR's Partnership Policy which outlines how local partnerships will be formed, assessed, and supported through due diligence, capacity development, joint learning, and mutual accountability - DACAAR also acknowledges that significant risks are associated with closer collaboration with national/local actors that must be responsibly managed through clear procedures, monitoring systems and mitigation measures.

DACAAR's organizational structure (one country of operation), national workforce, and limited reliance on expatriate staff, positions the organization as a "localized international." This strategic objective builds on that foundation and reflects the belief that empowering Afghan institutions and communities is essential for sustainable, cost-effective, and resilient development outcomes - now and in the future.

5. Supportive Measures

In support of the 5 strategic objectives outlined above, DACAAR will strengthen its own capacity in the following three supportive measures:

Governance, Fundraising, lobby and advocacy

The headquarters (HQ) in Copenhagen and the Main office in Kabul (MO) will give increased priority to Governance, management and accountability; Fundraising and donor relations; Strategic communication and advocacy; Organizational oversight and support.

The funding situation with reduced international priority on Afghanistan from major institutional donors and countries requires increased strategic focus on funding opportunities, regular dialogue with donors and politicians as well as on communication.

The DACAAR Head Quarter (HQ) serves as strategic, administrative, and representational hub of DACAAR. The HQ is holding the responsibility for facilitating and supporting the GB, CD, SMT and ensures that the program work in Afghanistan are well governed, funded, compliant and connected to the donors. networks and other relevant stakeholders.

Improve MEAL System

Leverage MEAL systems, digital modification, and evidence-based adaptation to enhance program quality, accountability, learning from performance and community engagement

DACAAR recognizes the critical role of data, learning, and digital innovation in driving high-quality, accountable, and adaptive programming, which is why it prioritizes the strengthening of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) systems to ensure transparency, effectiveness, and continuous improvement. In a rapidly changing and resource-constrained environment like Afghanistan, robust MEAL practices are essential for making better decisions, improving program outcomes, and demonstrating accountability to communities, donors, and partners.

This objective focuses on leveraging digital transformation to enhance data collection, analysis, and real-time monitoring. By adopting mobile tools, GIS mapping, dashboards, and other digital platforms, DACAAR aims to increase efficiency, program visibility, and timely learning. Staff capacity will be strengthened to use these tools effectively, enhancing a data-driven culture that supports continuous improvement and evidence-based planning.

Community engagement lies at the core of this objective. DACAAR will scale up participatory monitoring and feedback mechanisms, ensuring that program participants, particularly People with Disability (PWDs), women, youth, and marginalized groups, have a voice in shaping services. These accountability systems will be integrated across all thematic areas to help strengthen risk management, performance, trust, responsiveness, and shared ownership of development outcomes. Apart from digital enhancement, DACAAR is also committed to safeguarding data through secure systems, clear protocols, and staff training to ensure the confidentiality and protection of all collected information.

To ensure the efficiency and impact of DACAAR's work, MEAL efforts will focus on continuously improving program quality for beneficiaries. This requires a skilled and committed MEAL team and the integration of gender diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) throughout all processes. DEI principles will guide the selection of indicators and the analysis of disaggregated data to ensure equitable outcomes.

DACAAR will also systematically improve learning processes through timely evaluations, after-action reviews, and knowledge-sharing initiatives. Lessons learned will inform future programming and contribute to sector-wide improvements. By integrating strong MEAL systems with digital tools and participatory approaches, DACAAR will ensure that its work remains relevant, effective, and responsive to the evolving needs of the Afghan people.

Internal capacity building and organizational development

DACAAR, as a longstanding development and humanitarian actor in Afghanistan, recognizes that sustainable impact relies not only on effective programming but also on the strength of its people, partners, and the communities it serves. This strategic objective prioritizes investments in human capital, organizational development, and inclusive leadership to ensure responsiveness, resilience, and excellence across the organization. Over the next three years, DACAAR will put more focus on strengthening the knowledge, skills, and leadership capacity of its staff, from field teams to senior management, through tailored training, mentoring, peer learning, and leadership development. Emphasis will be placed on building technical expertise in key thematic areas while also enhancing competencies in program design, planning, coordination, and adaptive management.

This objective supports the organizational capacity of local partners**,** including Afghan civil society organizations, community-based structures, and local actors. Through technical assistance, joint programming, and capacity-sharing models, DACAAR will help these local entities grow into trusted development actors capable of designing and delivering impactful, community-owned solutions. This directly contributes to the localization agenda and reinforces DACAAR's commitment to shifting power and resources closer to the communities themselves.

In the spirit of inclusion and sustainability, DACAAR will also work to cultivate local leadership within the communities it serves, particularly among youth, women, and other traditionally underrepresented groups. By facilitating leadership opportunities, decision-making roles, and community-led planning processes, DACAAR ensures that local actors are not only beneficiaries but co-creators of change.

This objective also emphasizes organizational learning and knowledge management, ensuring that DACAAR's organizational knowledge is effectively captured, shared, and used to inform practice. By strengthening internal systems and promoting a value-driven culture of accountability, professionalism, and continuous improvement, DACAAR aims to boost operational efficiency, staff retention, and adaptability. Ultimately, this objective supports DACAAR's vision of becoming a dynamic, learning organization, one that invests in people and leadership at all levels to drive sustainable impact, local ownership, and transformative change across Afghanistan.

6. International Networking and Cooperation

Although not formulated as a separate strategic objective, DACAAR will actively position itself within global and regional networks. Initially, these will be focused on climate change adaptation and disaster risk management but may over time also include other areas.[17] By joining established international forums, technical working groups, and knowledge-sharing platforms, the organization will both contribute Afghan-specific expertise and gain access to the latest global practices, research, and innovations. Engagement in these networks will strengthen its visibility, deepen partnerships, and ensure that Afghan communities remain represented in broader climate and disaster resilience dialogues.

In parallel, DACAAR will explore opportunities to participate in regional project bids—either independently or as part of a consortium with other international or local NGOs. Collaborating in joint proposals will allow it to pool expertise, meet donor requirements, and design multi-country initiatives that reflect shared challenges – realistically across South and Central Asia. Such cooperation will also enhance DACAARs operational capacity and open pathways for long-term, sustainable programming.

Finally, DACAAR may consider pursuing a strategic partnership with a like-minded NGO operating in another part of the world that faces comparable vulnerabilities. This partnership would support mutual learning, exchange of best practices, and potential co-creation of new approaches to humanitarian or development interventions. Through this global peer relationship, the DACAAR aims to strengthen its strategic outlook, diversify its knowledge base, and amplify its impact both in Afghanistan and internationally.
A preliminary plan outlining potential expansion pathway will be developed and presented to the DACAAR Board for discussion within the first year of the strategy period.

7. ANNEXES

7.1 Alignment with International Frameworks

DACAAR's 2026–2028 Strategic Framework is purposefully designed to align with key international commitments, principles, and frameworks that guide humanitarian and development

[17] In 2025, for instance, DACAAR joined the Climate Action Network for South Asia (CANSA).

efforts globally. This alignment ensures strategic coherence, strengthens donor confidence, and enhances the relevance and impact of programming in Afghanistan's evolving operational environment.

i. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

DACAAR's strategy aligns closely with the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, with a focus on leaving no one behind. The strategic objectives and cross-cutting commitments directly support the following SDGs:

SDG	Title	DACAAR Alignment Explanation
SDG 1	No Poverty	DACAAR's integrated approach to livelihoods, rural development, and emergency response directly addresses drivers of poverty in remote and conflict-affected areas of Afghanistan by building household resilience and reducing dependency on aid.
SDG 2	Zero Hunger	DACAAR programs contribute to SDG 2: Zero Hunger by promoting food security, and resilient livelihoods through climate-smart agriculture, sustainable water use, and income generation, particularly for vulnerable communities facing environmental shocks such as droughts and floods.
SDG 3	Good Health and Well-being	Through its WASH and hygiene promotion activities, DACAAR reduces health risks, particularly waterborne diseases. Its work integrates community-based health messaging, nutrition-sensitive programming, and gender-inclusive WASH facilities.
SDG 5	Gender Equality	Gender is mainstreamed across all DACAAR programs. This includes ensuring safe access to WASH facilities, promoting women's economic empowerment, and operationalizing gender-sensitive safeguarding and MEAL systems.
SDG 6	Clean Water and Sanitation	A flagship area of DACAAR's work, WASH services are delivered through durable water infrastructure, sanitation promotion, and hygiene awareness in underserved and rural communities, aligning with humanitarian and development needs.
SDG 8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	Through vocational training, support to women's self-help groups, and local partner capacity strengthening, DACAAR promotes sustainable livelihoods and contributes to community-based economic empowerment.
SDG 10	Reduced Inequalities	DACAAR's programming targets marginalized populations, including women, displaced persons, and rural households, using an intersectional lens to reduce access gaps in WASH, livelihoods, and community governance.
SDG 13	Climate Action	Climate adaptation is embedded in DACAAR's Natural Resource Management (NRM) work, including drought mitigation, watershed management, and promotion of climate-resilient livelihoods in high-risk regions.
SDG 16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	DACAAR strengthens community governance through participatory mechanisms, GRM systems, and collaboration with civil society to enhance accountability, conflict sensitivity, and local ownership of service delivery.
SDG 17	Partnerships for the Goals	DACAAR's localization approach emphasizes equitable partnerships with Afghan NGOs, community-based organizations, and donors. These partnerships ensure joint design, implementation, and sustainability of programs.

7.2 Schematic ToC

Vision of change	Empowered Afghan communities achieve sustainable well-being, dignity, and resilience.	
Long-term impact	DACAAR will deliver integrated, inclusive, and community-driven humanitarian and development assistance, grounded in dignity, equality, and resilience	**Assumptions and Preconditions**
Strategic objectives	Livelihoods: Enhancing income-generating opportunities, food security, and economic resilience across all thematic areas.	Women's Economic Opportunities: Expanding women's access to skills, resources, and financial s systems to promote their economic empowerment.	**Policy and Regulatory Space:** Humanitarian and development actors continue to retain the necessary operational space to deliver impartial and principled assistance, particularly in relation to gender-sensitive programming.
Strategic objectives	Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability: Promoting nature-based solutions, responsible resource use, and community-level climate adaptation.	Localization: Promoting locally led development through stronger partnerships with Afghan civil society and community actors.	**Community Engagement and Acceptance:** Communities are willing and able to actively engage in program design, implementation, and monitoring, including the use of digital platforms where feasible.
Strategic objectives	Crisis Response: Strengthening preparedness and rapid response to humanitarian crises, displacement, and emergencies.		**While climate hazards will persist:** mitigation and adaptation efforts will be feasible through the adoption of nature-based solutions, sustainable resource management, and community-led practices.
interventions	DACAAR's recognized leadership in WASH, natural resource management, and livelihoods to ensure holistic, cross-sectoral solutions	Market-oriented vocational training, support for home-based and small-scale enterprises, climate-resilient agriculture, and localized food systems,	**Operating Context Stability:** The political and security environment remains stable enough to allow for sustained programming and access to vulnerable communities.
Supportive Measures	The Secretariat in Copenhagen Delivers international lobby and fundraising – technical assistance, management and administration	Leverage MEAL Systems: Enhancing program quality, learning, and accountability through robust data systems and digital tools Capacity Building and Leadership: Investing in staff development, inclusive leadership, and institutional growth to drive excellence and sustainability.	


DACAAR