

# Joint Development Associates International

Scenes from Afghanistan

January 2012

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## Discover Afghanistan

Afghanistan's official languages are Dari and Pashto, both of which are Indo-European languages in the Iranian sub-family. Written Dari and Pashto both use a modified Arabic script.

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Dear Friends,

The winter months are busy for JDA's agronomy team as they bring Field Days to northern farmers. Read on and consider sharing **Scenes** with a farmer you know!



A JDA Field Day is an opportunity for farmers to be introduced to the benefits of using a 2-wheel tractor in contrast to traditional methods of using oxen and spreading seeds by hand. Sample plots are planted so that farmers can observe the differences in methods. Return visits by JDA's agronomy team help farmers understand the advantages of mechaniza-

tion. They discuss seed treatment and selection, weed control, sowing techniques and the importance of fertilizer for establishing resilient and vigorous plants.

## "Carrying a mountain is easier than changing someone's mind."

*Arabic saying*

Some excerpts from Field Day discussions:

A farmer wanted to make sure that the seed being used would produce naan (bread) that would not fall in the tandoor (oven). \* He explained that last year's seed had yielded well but did not produce good bread. The farmer was unable to identify the variety of seed he used, illustrating the need for better methods of correct seed identification thus avoiding the mistake of sowing seed that is not preferred. Farmers are not always able to name their varieties, especially if they come from seeds released over the last few years, home saved and/or the fact that varieties are often misnamed by organizations and seed companies themselves.

Farmers in Kholm district who participated in a village Field Day observed that plowing by oxen is much better than by tractor for this reason: oxen plow the land more slowly than the tractor so the quality is better. The speed of the tractor may compromise the quality of the crop, the thinking goes.

As JDA's team gains understanding of the unique challenges in each village, their repeat visits build relationships, trust, and a deeper understanding of technologies that can increase crop yields.

*\* Afghan bread is cooked on the sides of a clay oven. Bread will occasionally fall onto the coals at the bottom.*

