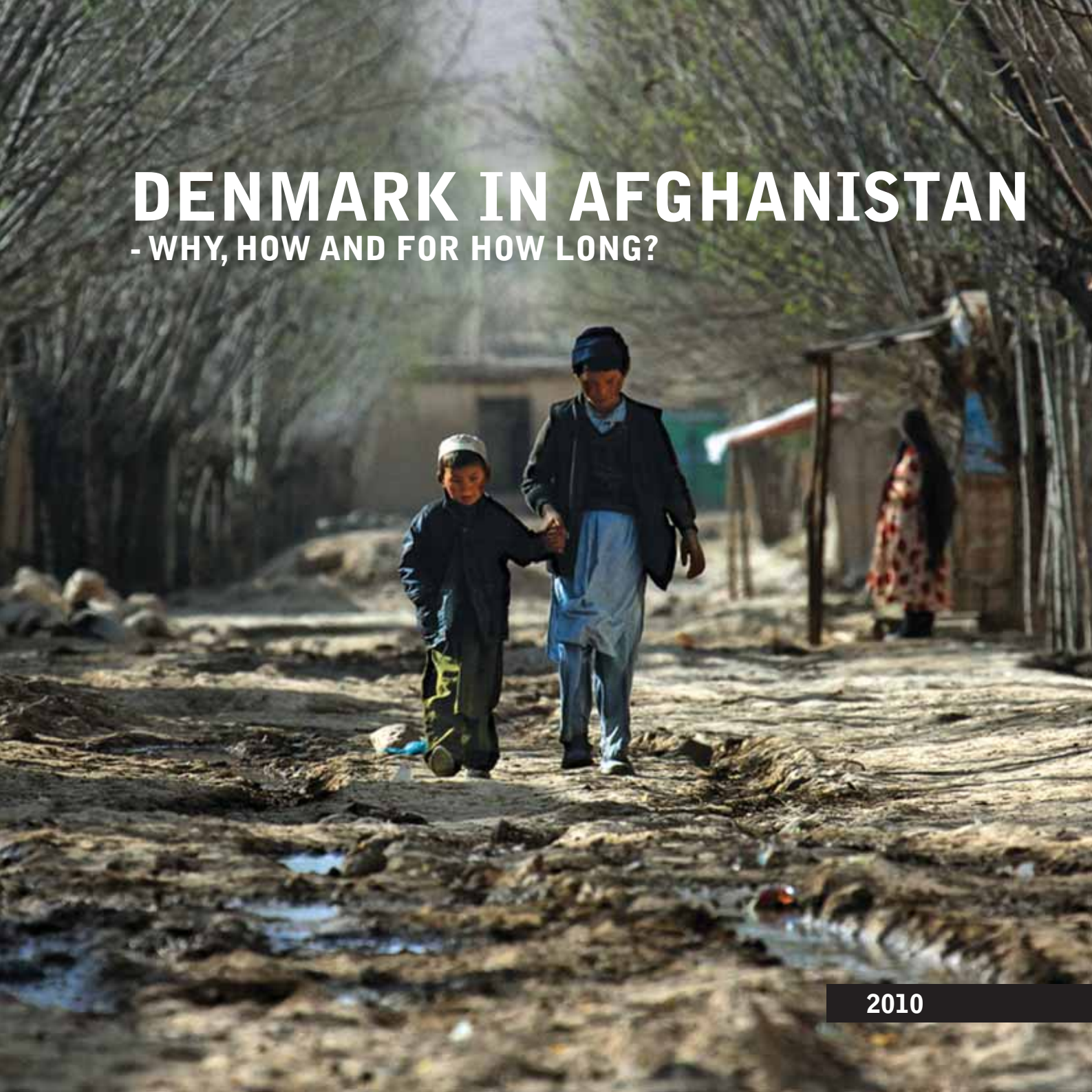


# DENMARK IN AFGHANISTAN

- WHY, HOW AND FOR HOW LONG?



2010

## AFGHANISTAN - FAST FACTS

Population:..... 29 million  
Area:..... 625,225 sq km  
(15 times larger than Denmark)  
GDI per capita:..... 250 US\$  
Capital:..... Kabul  
Life expectancy:..... 44 years  
Access to clean water:..... 22 per cent  
Population below the age of 18:..... 53 per cent  
Under-five mortality rate:... 1 death per 5 live births  
Education:..... Only 3 out of 10 adults are literate

## DENMARK IN AFGHANISTAN

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Author: Pernille Dueholm  
Linguistic adviser: Jesper Heldgaard  
Translator: Malene Simonsen  
Layout: Lene Hessilt  
Illustrations: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mini-  
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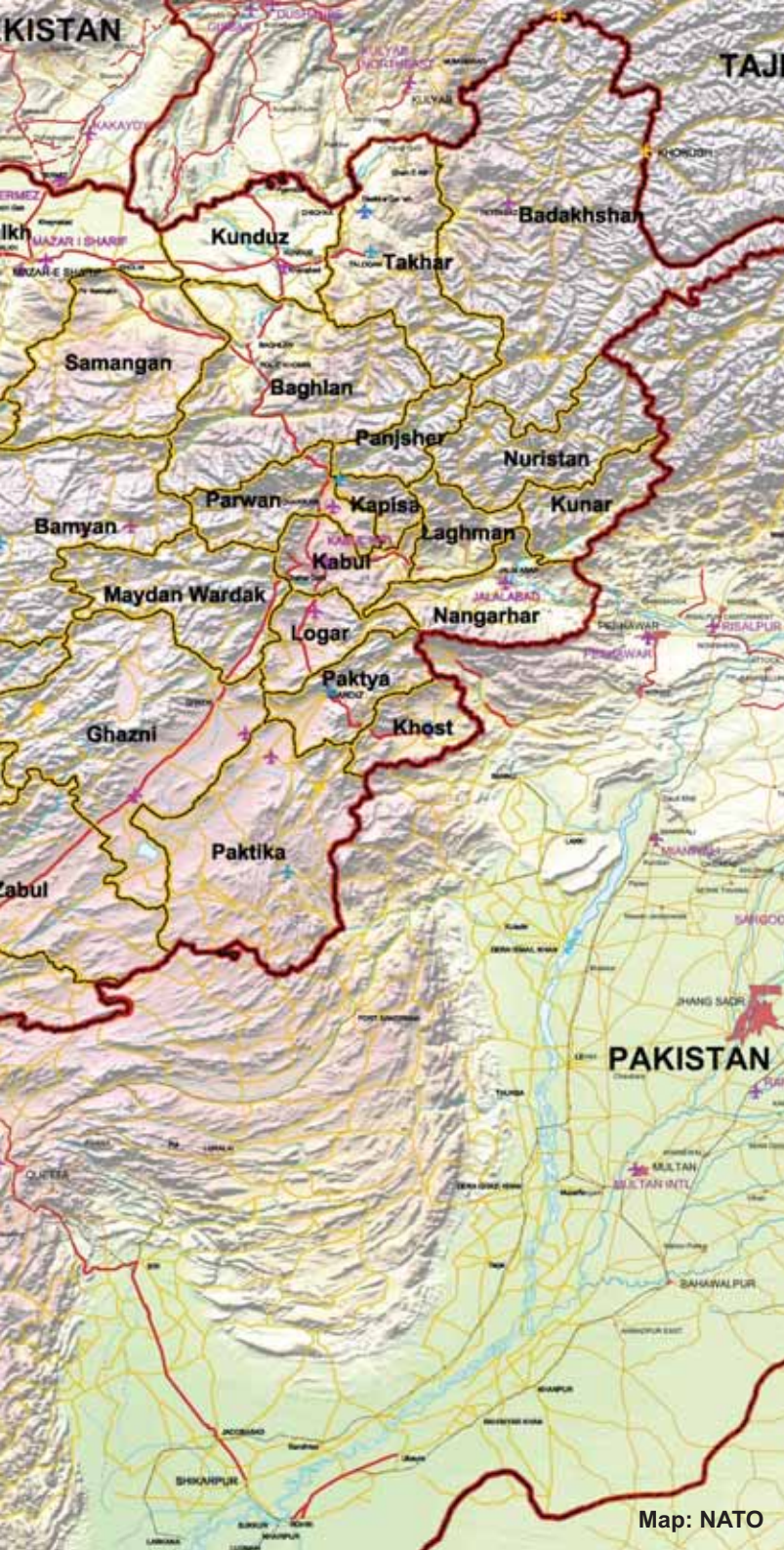
Enquiries concerning this publication:  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Asiatisk Plads 2  
1448 Copenhagen K  
Denmark

Phone: +45 3392 0000  
Fax: +45 3354 0533  
Email: [um@um.dk](mailto:um@um.dk)

Internet: [www.Afghanistan.um.dk](http://www.Afghanistan.um.dk)  
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Map: NATO

## DEAR READER

Denmark has been contributing to the efforts to establish security and stability in Afghanistan since 2001 when the Taliban regime was removed from power in an international military operation. On the next pages you will discover the reasons behind the engagement in Afghanistan and find out how and when the objectives will be reached. You will read about the working day of the Danish soldiers in the Helmand province and about the ways that Denmark contributes to the civilian reconstruction all over the country. You will meet a variety of Danes who work in Afghanistan. You will read about the challenges that persist – but also about the results that have been obtained. The objective of this booklet is to provide you with information that will improve your ability to assess whether the engagement makes a difference.

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# WHY, HOW AND FOR HOW LONG?

## IT IS ALSO FOR OUR OWN SAKE THAT WE PARTICIPATE IN THE WAR

In 2001 a broad majority of the Danish parliament adopted a proposal on Danish assistance to the Afghans in removing the Taliban regime and supporting the construction of a new Afghanistan. The Danish involvement is also help to self-help: We prevent terrorism from striking our country. The Taliban regime allowed terrorist groups to establish training camps in Afghanistan, and this is where the terrorists trained prior to the attacks on the USA on the 11th of September 2001 and on London in 2005. Peace and development in Afghanistan may play a part in preventing that the country will again become a refuge for terrorists.

The Danish soldiers fight for security in Afghanistan. This is a tremendously difficult task which has resulted in many dead and wounded Danish soldiers. An expanding task for the Danish military contingent is to train the Afghan soldiers so that the Afghan army will become able to assume responsibility for protecting the population in the course of time.

But provision of security is not enough. Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world, and lasting peace depends on facilitating a better life for each individual Afghan and his or her hope for the future. That is why Denmark has been assisting Afghanistan extensively since 2002 – first and foremost through supporting development programmes implemented by the Afghan government.

Assistance is not provided without terms. It presupposes that Afghanistan will continue its democratic development and enhance the respect for the human rights. Especially the conditions for the women need improvement.

## LACK OF SECURITY CREATES PROBLEMS

For decades Afghanistan has been a dangerous place to live. In recent years a certain stability has been established in most parts of the country, but even in relatively calm areas insurgent groups and rivalling criminal groups undermine reconstruction and development efforts. Taliban and other insurgent groups mainly operate in the southern and eastern parts of the country where fighting continues. And the southern part of Afghanistan is the very place where the Danish soldiers are deployed.

Taliban and other insurgent groups cannot win by conventional military means which is why they apply other means such as roadside bombs and suicide bombs. The attacks are directed not only against international and Afghan security forces but also against relief organisations, officials and civilians who support the Afghan government.

Supported by international troops, the Afghan army fights to remove Taliban and other insurgent groups from inhabited areas thereby enabling the government to provide basic services to the people again. In short, the strategy is a four steps 'clear-hold-build-transfer' approach:

- **Clear:** Afghan and international troops clear an area of Taliban and other insurgent groups.
- **Hold:** Military and police forces bring the area under control.
- **Build:** Government officials return to re-establish schools, health care, rule of law, water supply, etc. This development creates jobs. The local security forces are being trained.

181 OUT OF 182 COUNTRIES

Afghanistan is last but one on the UNDP Human Development Index.

## DENMARK IS NOT ALONE

A total of 46 countries participate in the military engagement in Afghanistan. Along with Denmark, many of them also support the reconstruction financially. In addition to this, 20 countries support financially only. All in all more than 60 countries support Afghanistan – with troops, financial support or both.

1973

A coup initiates decades of conflict and civil war

1996

Taliban wins the capital of Kabul

2001

Sep 11: Al-Qaeda acts of terrorism in the USA

The Taliban regime refuses to extradite Osama bin Laden from the Al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan

Oct 7: The USA and Great Britain attack Afghanistan - Operation Enduring Freedom

Dec 5: The Bonn Agreement between the parties of the winning Afghan coalition: They decide to introduce democracy and request the international community for security and reconstruction assistance

Dec 20: UN authorises the international security force ISAF

Dec 22: An interim government is installed headed by Hamid Karzai

Jan 5: At a donors' conference in Tokyo several countries committed to fund reconstruction in Afghanistan.

2002

Denmark pledged a 500 million DKK donation in the span of five years

Jan 11: The Danish parliament authorises the deployment of Danish troops to Afghanistan

Jan-Feb: The first international peacekeeping troops arrive – including the first Danish soldiers

April: Denmark opens an office of representation in Kabul. This expands to an embassy in 2006

- **Transfer:** When the security situation is relatively stabilised, the responsibility for the security will gradually be transferred to the Afghan authorities, and the international forces will assume a supporting role. The objective is that the Afghan government will be able to assume full responsibility, and that the international troops will be able to pull out gradually.

## A WHOLE COUNTRY NEEDS RECONSTRUCTION

It is necessary to construct a solid foundation for Afghanistan to manage without assistance from abroad. The work is on-going in many areas: The army and the police receive training that will enable them to provide security in the future. Schools, hospitals, health clinics, roads, airports and power stations are being rebuilt and new ones are being built. Doctors, school teachers and judges are being educated. New laws are being passed on several areas. Elections are being held, entailing that the country is now again led by politicians elected by the people. Effective collection of taxes and trade in commodities will fund the improvements.



*The Afghan security forces cannot provide security independently yet. That is the opinion of the majority of the Afghans and the reason why they want the international security forces to remain in Afghanistan for the time being.*

## ROHULLAH, 13 YEARS OLD AND – ALMOST – A SUICIDE BOMBER

'I had serious disputes with my parents on many issues, so I escaped and went to Miramshah in Pakistan...Shawkat [a friend of an acquaintance] took me to a house [a religious boarding school – madrasa] where about 26 other boys - some younger and some older than me - were housed. Shawkat and other men were teaching us about jihad, Islam and holy war...Then one afternoon Shawkat congratulated me and said that I had been selected for martyrdom. He also told me that after the martyrdom I would enter Heaven and would be remembered as a hero... They also told me that I would earn more blessings from God if I detonated my vest in a crowded area and killed as many infidels as possible...But on my first night in Khost [in Afghanistan] I was arrested. I know I did wrong and I regret it. I miss my parents and my brothers and sisters. I wish I had never escaped from home,' Rohullah says. He is currently imprisoned in Afghanistan.

Source: IRIN

More than 60 countries contribute to the national reconstruction of Afghanistan, and they have divided the work between themselves. Denmark is primarily concerned with:

- primary school education
- development projects initiated by the villages themselves
- loans to Afghans who want to launch their own businesses
- funding of elections
- human rights and women's rights

Through the deployment of troops, Denmark has been dealing with security issues in parts of the troubled Helmand province since 2006.



Photo: IRIN

## CIVILIAN LOSSES

It is unavoidable that civilian Afghans get affected by the conflict. Even though the Afghan and the international security forces do all that they possibly can to avoid civilian losses, it sometimes happens that the wrong people are hit because the insurgents hide among – and dress like – the local population. According to UN, the insurgent groups are responsible for two thirds of the civilian losses. They use roadside and suicide bombs and attack civilians who cooperate with the government.

2003

Danish F-16 fighters enter Afghan air space and drop bombs

2004

Jan 4: A Loya Jirga (a grand council) authorises a new, democratic constitution

## WHO IS TALIBAN AND THE VIOLENT INSURGENT GROUPS?

The violent insurgent groups do not constitute a homogeneous or joined group. Some of them are plain criminal gangs. The largest group is Taliban. But Taliban is not an actual organisation with a traditional leadership. Rather, it is a network of different groups who cooperate. This is the reason why it is difficult to enter into an agreement with Taliban about peace and reconciliation.

## WHERE DOES TALIBAN COME FROM?

Taliban mostly recruits from the Pashtun tribe, but it is important to stress that only a minority of the Pashtuns support the aims and methods of Taliban. The Pashtuns live on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border. Some join Taliban from ideological reasons, other do it to earn their living or because Taliban threatens them or their families.

## WHAT DOES TALIBAN WANT?

Taliban wants to resume power in Afghanistan and reintroduce their combination of a strict interpretation of the Koran and norms from the peasant culture in the South. When Taliban was in power, they dictated that women could not work outside the home, to mention one example. Women doctors were not allowed to work either, entailing that women and girls were denied medical attention because they were not allowed to be treated by doctors of the opposite sex. Women had to wear all-covering burqas, and girls could not attend school.

Taliban has never won an election in Afghanistan, and an opinion poll from BBC shows that only 6 per cent of the Afghan people wants Taliban back in power. Taliban has a legitimate right to champion political opinions as a political party, not through the use of arms.

Danish soldiers are deployed to Feyzabad in northern Afghanistan

Oct 9: Hamid Karzai wins the presidential election, obtaining 55 per cent of all votes

A strategy for the Danish development aid to Afghanistan 2005-09 is launched

2005

Sep 18: The first parliamentary and provincial elections in more than 30 years

2006

The first Danish troops in Helmand  
The battle of the town Musa Qala

2007

Jun 1: The Danish parliament decides to increase the military engagement and deploy a Danish battle group in central Helmand

2008

Joint military and civilian strategy for the Danish engagement 2008-12

2009

Aug-Oct: Hamid Karzai is re-elected president but legitimacy is weakened because of extensive election fraud

Dec: NATO and the USA announce an increase in efforts to train the Afghan security forces and a gradual transfer of the security responsibility

# DANISH SOLDIERS AND POLICE CONTRIBUTE TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SECURITY

## DANISH SOLDIERS IN ARMED CONFLICT

Generally speaking, the international engagement has improved the security situation in Afghanistan. In the northern, central and western parts of the country rebuilding efforts have intensified. But the pace is slower in the provinces disturbed by unrest – not least in the Helmand province in southern Afghanistan.

The Helmand province is the very location of the majority of the approximately 750 Danish soldiers who who conduct joint operations with troops from Great Britain, the USA, Estonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Importantly, the engagement takes place in cooperation with the Afghan security forces, i.e. soldiers and police.



*In Helmand many of the Danish soldiers live in Camp Price outside the city of Gereshk which is located in the middle of the Danish area of responsibility. Other soldiers live in forward operation bases or in Camp Bastion, the large joint camp for the international forces.*

The top priority is to provide security in areas with high population densities. Denmark is responsible for establishing security in the central part of the Helmand province in and around the city of Gereshk. Gereshk is an important trade centre, situated on Highway 1 which connects all the large cities in Afghanistan. That is why a safe environment in Gereshk has a large impact on the economic development in the entire province.

## UN MANDATE

The foundation for the international military and civilian assistance to Afghanistan is the UN resolutions which stress that the situation in the country is a threat to international peace and security. The resolutions request the international community to assist the Afghan government in establishing and sustaining security, extending its authority to the whole of the country to enhance peace and stability in the region and globally and contributing to the improvement of the living conditions for the Afghan people.



The Danish contingent assists the Afghan army to force out insurgent groups from the area. The Danish soldiers also go on patrols and speak with the local people – to inspire confidence and obtain information.

One of the most important tasks for the Danish soldiers is to train their Afghan colleagues so that they will become able to conduct military operations independently in the course of time. Denmark will not have troops deployed in Afghanistan forever. On the contrary, the strategy for the Danish engagement stresses that the military engagement of Denmark will be restructured and reduced in step with the ability of the Afghan forces to manage law and order.

### DID YOU KNOW

- that the Danish contingent is part of the international peace-building force ISAF (International Security Assistance Force). ISAF is led by NATO. More than 40 countries partake in ISAF. 26 of those countries are members of NATO, and five of them are Muslim countries. Find out more on [www.ISAF.NATO.int](http://www.ISAF.NATO.int)

Photo: Kenneth Rimm



### DANIEL HENRIKSEN, SOLDIER, 22 YEARS OLD. PREVIOUSLY DEPLOYED IN HELMAND

'Before we went on patrol I always called my mother and told her that I love her and care a lot about her. It served as a kind of code meaning that I was going on a patrol where it might get dangerous - without those words actually being said. I do this for Denmark. And I am proud of what we do, proud of being a Dane. I think that I have made a difference. Hell yeah, I have done my part in making the world a better place to live.'

### SEE A FILM ABOUT THE WORK OF THE SOLDIERS

The soldiers have many different tasks, including conducting patrols, participating in armed action, talking with the local population about security issues and making agreements with local authorities about areas that need protection. The soldiers are the ones who initiate the first development projects – until the security situation in the area has improved in a degree that makes it possible for the civilian authorities and relief organisations to enter. On the homepage of the Ministry of Defence you can see a film about Danish soldiers on the job: [www.fmn.dk/eng/](http://www.fmn.dk/eng/)



*The soldiers are the first to talk with the local people about their needs. Until the security situation has improved, it is not possible for the Afghan authorities and civil organisations to work in the area.*

## **AS CIVILIAN AS POSSIBLE – AS MILITARY AS NECESSARY**

Gradually, the Danish engagement will intensify the civilian rebuilding efforts while reducing the military engagement. Even though unrest slows the reconstruction initiatives in the Helmand province, there is also progress. Security has improved to an extent that makes it possible for the Afghan authorities to work in the districts and show people that the government wants to consult the local population. When Denmark deployed troops to Helmand in 2006, the authorities were present in only five out of the 13 districts of Helmand. There are now governors in 10 districts.

Supported by Denmark, two new schools have been built and a teachers' college of education has been rebuilt and reopened. The construction of additionally nine schools and three residence halls have been initiated, and they are expected to be completed in 2010-11. A Danish scholarship programme will enable up to 2000 pupils and students from remote districts to access education in the province capital of Lashkar Gah. Also a maternity home and a midwife training school have been opened. That would not have been possible under the Taliban regime.

## **THIS IS HOW MUCH THE DANISH ENGAGEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN COSTS**

The military engagement involves extra expenses for the Danish Defence amounting to 200 million US\$ a year. Development and relief aid amounts to 90 million US\$ (2009). In addition to these numbers, the human losses amount to 31 Danish soldiers who have been killed in Afghanistan. Also, 80 Danes have been wounded in degrees varying from superficial wounds to disablement (as of the 22nd of March 2010).

## DANISH POLICE OFFICERS IN AFGHANISTAN

Regrettably, the police is more feared than wanted in many parts of Afghanistan. There are several examples of police taking bribes and misusing their position. The Danish police in Afghanistan will help change this situation by training the Afghan police in routine police tasks and by conducting basic training for police recruits.

But it has to happen fast. This is why the basic training of the Afghan police is limited initially to six weeks of training before they are sent off to work. In comparison, police training in Denmark is four years. Moreover, it is difficult to recruit qualified people for the police because a police salary is low and the work very dangerous. 70-80 per cent of the new police recruits are illiterate, 35-40 per cent are drug addicts and 8-10 per cent are alcoholics.

Therefore, Denmark cooperates with the Afghan Ministry of the Interior to ensure that in future the police will get a salary on which they can live. A better salary will attract more people with better qualifications and decrease the temptation to take bribes. There are now attempts at transferring police salaries directly through cell phones in an effort to reduce corruption. Prior to this, parts of the police salaries used to disappear before the money got through.

Denmark also trains the Afghan police trainers, enabling them to train many more colleagues in the regions. Danish police officers also work in the Helmand Province. They train the local police in the Danish area of operations and advise on correct treatment of people in custody, among other issues. All in all, the Danish police officers have a difficult task.

There are around  
20 Danish police advisers  
in Afghanistan as part of the joint  
European police mission, EUPOL

Photo: Kenneth Rimm



### MICHAEL LILLEBALLE, POLICE OFFICER IN VOLLSMOSE, DENMARK, 45 YEARS OLD. SERVING IN KABUL.

'It is a challenge to convince the civilian population to trust the police. During the training we tell them about ethics, morals and corruption. We talk about local policing – how important it is to be part of the local population. I tell them that where I come from, my colleagues and I cannot carry out the police tasks alone. We need people to tell us what is going on. From sources around the town we now hear that people notice a difference in the way the police behave. We take that as a pat on the shoulder. We realize that we change things here.'

# A WHOLE NEW BEGINNING FOR THE AFGHAN STATE

The Afghanistan that needed assistance to make a fresh start after the fall of the Taliban regime, was a country plagued by decades of civil war and dictatorship. And there is still much work to be done before the new democracy will function, and before state and government will be able to provide basic services such as education, health care and law and order. The Afghan authorities barely function: Ministries are still in the process of being established, new laws need to be passed and the serious shortage of educated officials need to be rectified. In addition to this, widespread corruption and abuse of power are accepted because the will and capacity to prosecute suspects lack. Therefore, it is necessary that the international community continues to provide advisers and funds in the decades to come.

The Afghans expect to see changes from the new form of government – democracy. At the same time, democracy has yet to show its true worth: It takes a long time to establish a democracy, but the first frail steps have been taken.

## THE AFGHANS NEED TO CONTROL THE DEVELOPMENT THEMSELVES

Afghanistan must become a secure place to live. The Afghans need to experience that the authorities manage the basic services so that the individual Afghan can provide for her or his family. In cooperation with donor countries the Afghan government has written a concrete plan for short- and long-term needs in the sectors of water, transportation, health care, education, agriculture, raw materials and so forth.

The countries that support Afghanistan have divided the tasks between themselves. Denmark supports the Afghan

state building by financing elections, salaries for officials and by supporting the human rights and women's rights, among other areas.

An important principle governing the Danish assistance is that the support has to be channelled through the Afghan ministries. The Afghan government needs to be the master in its own house and be assisted in obtaining skills that make it possible to manage the development in Afghanistan. This will not happen if donor countries chose and pick the projects that they want to support.

## DENMARK FUNDS TEACHER SALARIES

Paying the public employees is a great expenditure on the national budget of Afghanistan. The state income from mining, taxes and tolls far from cover the expenses. That is why donors from abroad such as Denmark contribute



*It is expensive and difficult to hold elections in Afghanistan. In many areas ballot boxes and lists have to be transported to remote towns on donkeys. Photo: UNAMA*



*Masooda, 18 years old, voting for the first time. 83 per cent of the population think that women should have the opportunity of voting at the elections. 27 per cent of the members of the Afghan parliament are women. That is more than in most Western countries. Photo: UNAMA*

to the salaries of the public employees. This makes sense because education is one of the sectors that Denmark funds extensively. Half the public employees are teachers. Without salaries for the teachers the education system would break down.

## **DEMOCRACY FOR THE FIRST TIME**

Since 2001 the Afghans have elected their president twice, and they have held parliamentary, provincial and local elections for the first time in more than 30 years. The way that the elections were held caused sharp and fair criticism. It takes time to introduce democracy in a country defined by conflict, clan structures and powerful men in the local communities.

Denmark has assisted in writing the new constitution of the country and partially funds election expenses. Denmark also assists in training new parliamentarians so that they come to understand their role and the rules of democracy.

## **JUST GIRLS – JUSTICE FOR GIRLS?**

The new Afghan constitution from 2004 says all the 'right' things: the human rights and the freedom of speech need to be respected, and women and men have equal rights. However, in practical terms the situation is different, affecting negatively especially the Afghan women and girls. They suffer oppression, discrimination and domestic violence. Often they are without legal rights when it comes to inheritance and land ownership. The girls are forcibly married off, and many girls get married long before they have reached the legal minimum age of 16. Often families do this to make some money or to remedy crimes.

The rule of law is also weak in other areas: Crimes are not investigated and criminals not prosecuted. The freedom of speech is under pressure, and journalists need to be careful.

Denmark works to enhance the respect for the human rights by exercising sustained political pressure on the Afghan government. Denmark also supports organisations that pursue legal proceedings for poor people, funds women's shelters and educate independent journalists. The special efforts of Denmark concerning the education of girls includes the objective of assisting women in getting to know their rights and to be able to defend and provide for themselves.

It seems that there is hope for the Afghan women. Public support to equal rights has increased considerably: 87 per cent of the Afghan people think that there should be equal opportunities for women and men to access education. 67 per cent think that women should have the opportunity of working outside the home. Source: Asia Foundation opinion poll from October 2009

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HELPING PEOPLE HELP THEMSELVES

Afghanistan is one of the poorest and least developed countries. The standard of health is one of the lowest in the world. Life expectancy is only 44 years. Malnutrition and undernourishment are widespread – almost half the population does not get enough food. Afghanistan desperately needs economic development to move away from the bottom of the list of the poorest countries in the world. But this calls for assistance from abroad for many years.

Denmark has chosen to support especially the economic and social developments of Afghanistan. This will be realized by financing education for the children and job creation for their parents. Other donor countries support in other areas.

## EDUCATION IS AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

Afghan parents want to see their children off to school and regard education as a way to escape poverty. They want new schools to be built and have the schools rebuilt that are being destroyed by Taliban. Under the Taliban regime

girls were not allowed to attend school, and women were not allowed to teach. The outcome was that only 700,000 boys from a total of 15 million children attended school. Today more than 7 million go to school – of which one third are girls. An opinion poll shows that nine out of ten Afghans think that women and men should have equal opportunities to access education.

But there is still a long way to go: Only three out of ten adults are literate. In the Helmand province only three per cent of the women and six per cent of the men know how to read and write. Education is needed – as a long term investment. Only after 15-20 years will it be possible to see the effects of a more educated population.

Denmark funds a substantial part of the expenses of the Afghan Ministry of Education: Construction of schools, printing of school books and training of and salaries to teachers. Since 2002, a total of 3,500 schools have been either constructed or reconstructed, but many more are needed before all children can attend school.



*The pupils in Badakshan look forward to the completion of their new school before it begins to snow in October. From then on, they can also go to school in the winter. The inhabitants of the village have collected the rocks for the school themselves. Denmark funds the salaries of the construction workers and the materials that are not available in the area, e.g. windows and wood for the roof.*



## MICRO-LOANS CREATE JOBS AND INCOMES

The Afghans desperately need jobs and income opportunities to overcome poverty. Denmark also supports extensively in this area. One of the Danish initiatives is to finance a countrywide programme that provides small loans to people who want to start their own businesses. This is also known as micro-financing. Surprisingly, 60 per cent of the loan takers are women. They usually start a small production at home with the aim of selling the surplus. The business activities of the women may involve poultry keeping so that they can sell eggs, or keeping a cow so that they can sell milk or home-made yoghurt. In other instances, a loan is used for a sewing machine or a carpet loom. Or it could finance one of the small beauty saloons that spread across the cities. The men usually open their own shops or buy tractors to plough for others against payment.

## VISIBLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE VILLAGES

One of the most popular development programmes among the Afghans is a programme that enables the

Afghans to begin rebuilding their own villages themselves. The village simply receives 200 US\$ per family, and the inhabitants will have to agree on the way to spend the money. Around 22,000 villages – or almost all villages in Afghanistan – have received money from the programme which is funded by Denmark and other nations.

The block grants enable the newly elected village development councils to work and clearly signal to the local population that the development efforts reach their places. Typically, the money is used to fund a well or a water pipe from the mountains so that women and children will be relieved from working many hours every day to fetch water. Some money is used on roads, enabling farmers to bring their produce to the markets faster. Another portion of the money is used for a shared generator for producing electricity. In that way all houses will have light, entailing that the adults in the house can work in the evenings while the children do their homework.



Photo: IRIN

## HOPE FOR A LIFE WITH DIGNITY

Haji Bibi, 45 years old, lost her husband and only son during the war, and now she has to live with her daughter by the family of her son-in-law. But the family is poor and Haji Bibi is a burden to them. When she heard about the possibility to get a micro-loan, she saw a way out of dependency. Her first loan was on 200 US\$. That money enabled her to open a small stall. Haji Bibi says, 'I was a burden to the family of my son-in-law, and that was discouraging. Now I am a respected woman because I earn my own living and contribute to the family. I believe that I can manage my own stall and be independent. Thanks to the micro-financing programme.' Haji Bibi has paid off the loan and taken a new one to expand the stall.

Source: IRIN

# DISASTER RELIEF AND AID TO REFUGEES

## MAHMOOD AND HIS FAMILY RETURN TO... NOTHING

Just as Mahmood (at the back) and his brothers, many internally displaced persons do not have access to education. Mahmood and his younger siblings walk a quarter of an hour to fetch water in small buckets, but there is not enough water to wash themselves. 'I took my brother to a school, but they would not accept him because he was dirty,' Mahmood says. A mud-built hut has been the home of the family after they fled their village when Mahmood's father and uncle were killed by Taliban. The family lost everything. Mahmood and his grandfather go to the nearest village everyday in an effort to earn some money by washing cars or running errands for other people. Apart from that, they survive on charity. The children have to help as best as they can. Source: IRIN



The past 30 years of war have forced millions of Afghans to flee. In 2001 almost one fourth of the population had fled the country. A majority settled in refugee camps in the neighbouring countries – Pakistan and Iran – while a minority fled to the Western countries. There are still around two million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, but almost five million people have returned and more are coming. This is an indication that people believe in a future in Afghanistan.

The possibilities are few for those refugees who have neither homes, nor jobs to return to, and the authorities cannot provide either. Some returnees end up in temporary camps – this time in Afghanistan. This is where the returnees will have to create their new lives, and in time the camps will grow into villages. Denmark funds the construction of housing and wells and assists in mediating in conflicts concerning land ownership. Denmark also supports the construction of schools in new settlements.

## REFUGEE IN ONE'S OWN COUNTRY

Aside from the refugees who return from abroad, there are around 300,000 internally displaced Afghans. They have fled from one part of the country to another because of armed conflicts, droughts or poverty. Source: UNHCR



## WHEN NATURAL DISASTERS STRIKE

Afghanistan has a rough climate. Summers can be so dry that the harvest fails, winters so rough and long that people run out of food, and the most vulnerable – children, elderly and sick people – die of cold. When the snow melts in the mountains in the spring, it causes large floods

and mud slides that block the roads. In addition to this, there is the risk of earthquakes. When natural disasters strike, Denmark supports the UN emergency response which consists of food aid, blankets and tents, among other items.



*Afghanistan struggles with a multitude of problems. In 2009 unusually heavy showers caused floods and severe damage in five northern provinces of Afghanistan. UN World Food Programme distributed emergency food rations consisting of wheat, high-protein pulses, oil and salt. Photo: WFP*

## THE SHORTEST LIFE EXPECTANCY IN THE WORLD

The mean life expectancy in Afghanistan is the lowest in the world: 44 years for men and 43 for women. One fifth of all children die before the age of five.

## DANISH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS ALSO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE

Non-governmental organisations, NGOs, are private relief organisations. The Danish NGOs that work in Afghanistan are granted financial support to their activities from DANIDA, the Danish government organisation for development assistance. From the 90 million US\$ that Denmark allocates to development aid in Afghanistan every year, approximately 8 million US\$ are channelled through the relief organisations.

Several Danish NGOs have many years of experience in Afghanistan – some of them have worked there for more than 30 years. Their in-depth knowledge of the local situation means that they have been able to stay out of armed conflict to a large extent. They only work where they can count on protection from the local population.

The NGOs implement the majority of their projects in rural districts, and these projects are part of bringing development to areas not yet within the reach of the Afghan government. The close cooperation with the local communities ensures that funds are allocated to projects that are really wanted by the population. Local ownership of the projects increases the possibilities of the projects to last after the direct support ceases. The long experience of the NGOs in Afghanistan contributes to their high rate of success.

Each NGO has its own way of doing things, and each organisation has its own priorities: health, agriculture, water supplies, circus for children, sports or removal of land mines.

**DACAAR** (Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees) is the largest Danish relief organisation in Afghanistan. Hand pumps from DACAAR ensure millions of Afghans in rural districts clean drinking water. DACAAR is also engaged in agriculture and courses for women so they can

take up a trade and earn their own living.  
[www.dacaar.org](http://www.dacaar.org)

**DAARTT** (Danish Assistance to Afghan Rehabilitation and Technical Training) constructs and maintains schools financed partly by donor funds, partly by funds from the Afghan government. DAARTT has helped the Afghan Ministry of Education set up guidelines and standards for all school building in Afghanistan.  
[www.daartt.org](http://www.daartt.org)

**MOBILE MINI CIRCUS** (MMCC) teaches children acrobatics. Their road shows teaches the audience about the importance of washing one's hands and using clean drinking water, among other issues.  
[www.afghanmmcc.org](http://www.afghanmmcc.org)



*Even though the Danish organisation DACAAR has provided 6 million Afghans with drinking water, much work remains to be done:  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the people still need access to clean drinking water. Photo: UNAMA*

### YOU CAN DO MUCH WITH A LIMITED AMOUNT OF MONEY

An elderly Danish woman donated one million US\$ to DAARTT in 2008. Following the advice of DAARTT, she decided that the money should go to a residence hall for women students at the university in the province of Kapisa and to the construction of two upper secondary schools for girls.



*Afghan demining personnel face a great task: The goal is to have Afghanistan cleared of mines in 2013.*

*Photo: UNAMA*

**MISSION EAST** works in remote areas in northern Afghanistan. The priorities are basic health issues, hygiene and clean drinking water, but also agriculture: introduction of new crops, better farming techniques and the production of honey. Mission East also initiates women's groups.  
[www.miseast.org](http://www.miseast.org)

**DANISH DEMINING GROUP** clears areas of unexploded ordnances and mines. They train Afghan demining personnel – 5,000 Afghans have received demining training by now. Currently, the organisation is transferring its projects to the Afghan authorities.  
[www.danishdemininggroup.dk](http://www.danishdemininggroup.dk)

**DANISH AFGHANISTAN COMMITTEE (DAC)** runs a district hospital, two large and eight smaller health clinics along with seven so-called health stations in the western province Herat. The district hospital has just been appointed by the health authorities as a model hospital that will inspire the training of health personnel in the rest of the country. DAC also runs a dormitory for pupil midwives and nurses.  
[www.afghan.dk](http://www.afghan.dk)

**GLOBAL EDUCATION THROUGH SPORT (GES)** collaborates with six centres in Kabul that offer education to poor children working on the streets to support their families. Every week the centres are visited by thousands of street children. GES trains sports trainers who arrange sports activities for both boys and girls at the centres. The sports activities give the children success experiences, strengthen their self-esteem and teach them social skills. GES cooperates with the Ministry of Education on collaboration between the street centres and the schools.  
[www.globaledusport.org](http://www.globaledusport.org)

## **YOU CAN ALSO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

You can donate funds to the relief organisations that are already working in Afghanistan. You can also start up your own project. But in that case, it is an advantage to partner with an Afghan institution or organisation. Or to cooperate with one of the Danish organisations that is familiar with the country.

Danish citizens and organisations may apply for funding of the transportation of e.g. used equipment or clothes that have been collected. Information on this can be found on the homepage of the Project Advice and Training Centre: [www.prngo.dk](http://www.prngo.dk) and on the website of MS ActionAid Denmark on [www.ms.dk/sw760.asp](http://www.ms.dk/sw760.asp) It is possible to apply for funds for cultural exchange initiatives on the site [www.dccd.dk](http://www.dccd.dk)

## **A SEVERELY SHATTERED HEALTH SYSTEM**

Afghanistan has the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the world. Every eighth woman die in connection to child-birth. Only 9,000 midwives and nurses serve a population of 29 million. That would correspond to only 1,500 midwives and nurses in Denmark. There are 30 times more: 45,000.

# DANES AT WORK IN AFGHANISTAN

We hear a lot about the Danish troops deployed in Afghanistan, but many other Danes work there too.

**The soldiers:** The Danish parliament has authorized the deployment of up to 750 Danish troops to Afghanistan. Most of them – around 700 – are stationed in the Helmand province. The remaining soldiers are attached to other parts of the international operation. Some Danes work in ISAF Headquarters in Kabul where they plan the training of the Afghan soldiers, for example, while others work in Kabul airport transporting other Danish soldiers. Sometimes Denmark deploys a medical team or soldiers from special forces units.

**The Danish Embassy in Kabul** is the link that connects Denmark and Afghanistan. The role of the embassy is to present Danish viewpoints to the Afghan government and negotiate with the Afghan

authorities about the Danish engagement in Afghanistan. The embassy is also responsible for the organisation of the Danish development aid and the coordination of the Danish efforts with more than 64 other countries that support Afghanistan. One ambassador and 10 more civilian employees are stationed in Kabul.

**Technical experts** are deployed to the Helmand province to advise on education and stabilisation. Some of them cooperate directly with the Afghan authorities, while others plan the civilian projects financed by Denmark and implemented by Afghan companies. Six civilian advisers are stationed in Helmand.

**Police officers** are deployed in order to advise, train and monitor the Afghan police. The majority of the approximately 20 Danish police advisers form part of the European police mission in the country, EUPOL. More than half of

**INGE-LISE AAEN, MIDWIFE, 62 YEARS OLD.  
LIVES AND WORKS IN HERAT**

Inge-Lise Aaen heads the health initiatives of the Danish Afghanistan Committee in the Herat province in western Afghanistan. This includes a district hospital, ten health centres, a women's residence hall for pupil nurses and midwives along with many travelling health teams. Inge-Lise thinks that assistance to the more peaceful areas of Afghanistan is crucial if peace is going to have a chance. 'The development is at a tipping point. I am not sure whether the war will spread or peaceful developments will get a chance. But I know that success in keeping provinces like Herat out of the war, will only be obtained if we support the Afghans.'



Photo: Charlotte Aagaard

the Danish police work in Kabul, while the rest of them work in various provinces.

**Non-governmental organisations (NGOs):** Private Danish relief organisations in Afghanistan also employ people in the country, some of them have more than 1,000 employees. But only a minority of those are Danes. The number of Danes deployed varies between the organisations, but the total is typically less than 50 people.

**UN and other international organisations** employ Danes as advisers in Afghanistan.

**Private Danish companies:** Several Danish companies ranging from garages, pharmaceutical companies and cell phone distributors to firms that supply the military camps have chosen to establish themselves in Afghanistan, some of them with Danish employees stationed in the country.

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO WORK IN AFGHANISTAN?

You can apply for a job in organisations working in Afghanistan, or become an adviser to the Afghan government. Find out about the job opportunities on the home pages of the Danish NGOs and on the following sites

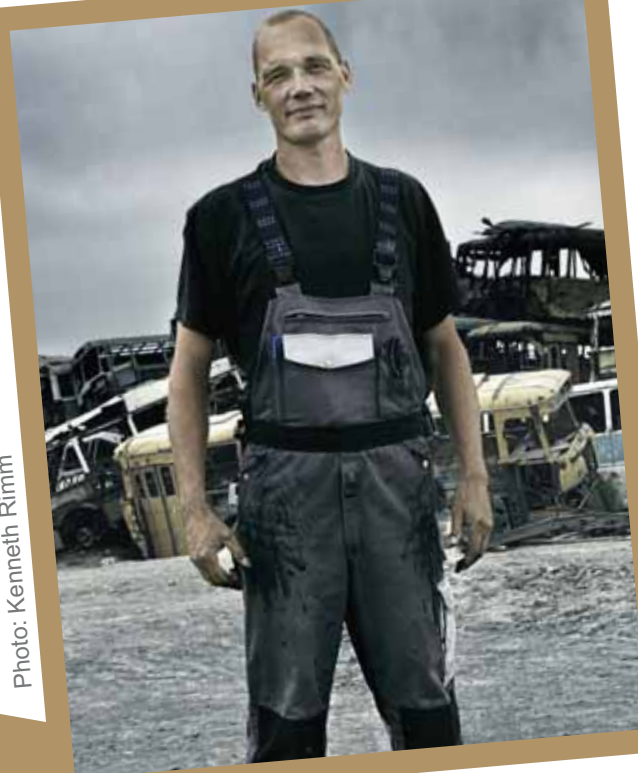
[www.acbar.org](http://www.acbar.org)

[www.UNDP.org.af](http://www.UNDP.org.af)

[www.alljobsinafghanistan.com](http://www.alljobsinafghanistan.com)

The Danish troops are being deployed through the Ministry of Defence. The positions as civilian advisers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be applied for through job advertisements posted by the ministry.

Photo: Kenneth Rimm



## CLAUS PEDERSEN, AUTO MECHANIC, 42 YEARS OLD. LIVES AND WORKS IN KABUL

Claus Pedersen works at a Danish-owned garage called 'No Lemon'. He says, 'Many people at home cannot picture me living and working here. They have a completely different perception of Afghanistan: Most people see it as a war zone with shooting in the streets and bomb explosions every day. But I have not felt in danger in the two and a half years that I have been here. It is all about applying one's common sense and keeping a low profile. I just drive around in my work clothes and an old Hilux – in that way melting right into the townscape.'

# DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

In spite of the many set-backs in Afghanistan, optimism is growing among the Afghans. An opinion poll conducted for Asia Foundation in 2009 shows that more and more Afghans think that the country moves in the right direction. They notice an improved security situation, improved services and see real results of the rebuilding efforts. Especially appreciated are the opening of new schools and health clinics and improved water supplies. Six out of ten Afghans express that their financial situation is better today than it was under the Taliban regime.

Afghanistan does move in the right direction:

## More Afghans get an education

- Today seven million children attend school, including more than two million girls. Only 700,000 children went to school under the Taliban regime which prohibited girls from attending school.
- 20,000 teachers have received supplementary training. Today 28 per cent of the teachers are women.
- 3,500 schools have been built or rebuilt, meaning that there are now 9,000 schools.
- Together with the USA, Denmark has funded the printing of more than 50 million school books.
- 150 journalists are receiving supplementary training with support from Denmark.



*New roads facilitate trade and transportation and the road construction employs many people. Photo: UNAMA*



*Under the Taliban regime, girls were not even allowed to attend school. Today more than two million Afghan girls go to school. In 2008 alone a total of 370,000 Afghan girls enrolled in primary school.*

## The financial situation improves year by year

- Afghanistan is one of the fastest growing economies in Asia: The gross domestic product has increased with 70 per cent since 2002. The economy expanded by 7.5 per cent in the fiscal year 2007-08. A poor harvest in 2008-09 lead to a modest 2.5 per cent increase, but 2010 expects a good harvest and increased economic growth.

## New jobs have been created

- A programme supported by Denmark called the National Solidarity Programme has contributed to the creation of 22 million days of employment for local skilled and unskilled construction workers through block grants.
- The construction of new schools supported by Denmark has created temporary employment to 72,000 unskilled workmen and permanent jobs for many teachers.
- A micro-financing programme supported by Denmark has granted loans to around 400,000 Afghans. Research shows that almost two jobs is created by each loan – a total of 750,000 new jobs.

### The security situation has improved

- Taliban has not been able to resume power in the country since 2001
- Two thirds of the country have stabilised so much that the Afghan security forces, supported by international troops, can keep the situation under control, enabling the implementation of reconstruction efforts and the development process.
- Gradually, the international security forces are able to transfer the security responsibility to the Afghan security forces, entailing that they can intensify the training of their Afghan colleagues.
- More than 65,000 Afghan soldiers and 80,000 police have been trained. More than 90 per cent of the ISAF operations are joint operations including the Afghan army as part of the training.

### Better access to health care

- In 2002 only one out of ten Afghans had access to health care. Now eight out of ten have this access.
- Child mortality has fallen and the vaccination programmes save around 35,000 children every year.
- Tuberculosis outbreaks have halved. Tuberculosis infects mostly women.

### More infrastructure is being built

- More than 13,000 kilometres of road have been constructed or reconstructed since 2002.
- Three times as many Afghans have been supplied with power since 2002. But there is still much to be done: Only 20 per cent of people in the cities have power, while in the rural districts it is only 10 per cent. Construction of new transmission lines from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan is on-going.
- Today there are 16 independent TV and 60 radio stations. Radio and TV are the primary sources of information.
- 75 per cent of the local population can access a phone. 4 million Afghans own a cell phone, and every month thousands more buy one.

### Opium cultivation continues to decrease

- More than half of the provinces – 20 out of 34 provinces – are now free of opium cultivation. Only six provinces were free of opium as late as in 2006.



*Opium cultivation in the Helmand province decreased by 30 per cent in 2009, reasons being a combination of the Danish assisted distribution of wheat seed grains to farmers, drought, low prices for narcotics and high prices for wheat. Photo: UNAMA*

### THERE IS HOPE BUT STILL MUCH TO BE DONE

Positive outcomes and tendencies do show in a number of areas in Afghanistan. However, one has to be a realist concerning the pace in which the Afghans will be able to manage their country's problems. The next years will also prove difficult. The engagement continues to rely on patience and full acknowledgement of the immense challenges faced by the Afghan government and the Afghan people.

## **FIND ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS SUCH AS:**

Why has Denmark decided to send troops and development aid to Afghanistan?

What does Denmark actually do in Afghanistan?

What are the reasons behind the conflict that Denmark helps solve?

How does a 13-year-old almost end up as a suicide bomber?

Why do Danes chose to work in Afghanistan?

Does the Danish engagement make a difference?

FORSVARSMINISTERIET  
DANISH MINISTRY OF DEFENCE



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS OF DENMARK



### **FURTHER READING:**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs: [www.afghanistan.um.dk](http://www.afghanistan.um.dk)

Ministry of Defence: [www.fmn.dk](http://www.fmn.dk) - see the Afghanistan theme

Army Operational Command: [www.hok.dk](http://www.hok.dk)

- see 'International info/ISAF'

On the site [www.danida.netboghandel.dk](http://www.danida.netboghandel.dk) you can order publications on Afghanistan from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs without charge. Available publications include:

- Executive summary of the strategy for the Danish engagement in Afghanistan 2008-12
- The plan for the Danish engagement in the Helmand province