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DENMARK'S ENGAGEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

Executive summary of the Government's Strategy for
the Danish Political, Civilian and Military Efforts

2008 - 2012

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Denmark's Engagement in Afghanistan 2008-2012

The overall objective of Denmark's engagement in Afghanistan is to contribute to national, regional and global security by preventing the country from again becoming a safe haven for terrorists.

Denmark's engagement also aims at contributing to the growth of a stable and more developed Afghanistan that can take charge of its own security, continue its democratic development and promote respect for human rights.

The Danish efforts in Afghanistan are consistent with a proactive Danish foreign policy by contributing to the international efforts that arise from UN Security Council resolutions. The efforts are also consistent with Denmark's development policy objectives, including poverty reduction.

The situation in Afghanistan is expected to remain unstable in the years ahead, and thus the situation in Afghanistan continues to constitute a potential threat to international peace and security. Afghanistan is one of the world's poorest countries, and stable development requires delivery of tangible improvements for the population.

In the period 2008-12, Denmark will enhance its efforts in Afghanistan, and the goal is gradually to shift the balance in the direction of a more extensive civilian effort and a more

withdrawn military role. In the first part of the period, this will entail a temporary increase in the number of deployed forces, whose tasks will include performing specific functions in connection with ISAF-led operations. During the period 2008-12, the overall objective of the military efforts is for Denmark to contribute to establishing conditions for extending the authority of the Afghan Government in the Helmand Province. The goal is to enable the Afghan security forces to implement operations independently at brigade level and to enforce the Afghan Government's authority in the most important parts of the province and here support the exercise of civilian Afghan authority. The Danish military engagement will be reduced in step with the achievement of these objectives.

Building capacity in Afghanistan is a central component of the international and Danish military efforts. In parallel with a solid military engagement in southern Afghanistan, Denmark will contribute to building up the Afghan security forces. The goal is that Denmark assumes a more withdrawn military role in the strategy period, during which the Danish efforts will increasingly focus on training and education. At the same time, the police training efforts will be stepped up.

Denmark's overall engagement in the strategy period will amount up to DKK 1 billion per year. Within the development field, the enhanced efforts will entail a doubling of assistance to Afghanistan in the strategy period. In 2008, therefore, the assistance will increase to DKK 300 million, and in the period 2009-2012 it will increase to DKK 400 million annually. In addition, support will be channelled through Danish

NGOs and extraordinary humanitarian contributions if the situation requires it. Also within the provision of development assistance, capacity building will be included as an element at all levels of public administration and in civil society in order to ensure Afghan ownership of development.



Two girls in Afghanistan Photo: Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin

Afghanistan is a mosaic of progress and continued challenges. Democratic institutions have been established, free elections have been held and a new constitution has been drawn up. Furthermore, a number of social indicators show substantial progress. However, Afghanistan continues to be a society emerging from conflict. The country's social structure and social cohesion are far from established. There is still an armed insurgency against the Afghan Government, although it is pos-

sible to implement development activities in large parts of the country. Despite the elections, the Government's legitimacy is limited in the eyes of the population, because it is unable to deliver the necessary security and because poor governance and lack of ability to deliver basic services undermine the population's support and trust in the Government. Denmark will continue to push for progress in democracy, progress in human rights as well as the implementation of concrete measures that can repress corruption in accordance with the commitments that the Afghan Government has undertaken in the Afghanistan Compact.

The precondition for success in Afghanistan is a coherent political, military and civilian engagement. This is also the point of departure for the international community's efforts that are carried out in Afghanistan in accordance with UN resolutions, the Afghanistan Compact, NATO strategies and the Afghan Government's development strategies. The Danish efforts are a contribution to the achievement of the goals and objectives contained therein.

In the strategy period, Denmark will through an integrated political, military and development engagement contribute to counter-insurgency aimed at improving the security situation as a precondition for stability, economic development, poverty reduction, and for ensuring respect for the individual. The efforts aim at contributing to building a society that is based on democratic principles and human rights and that moves away from discrimination and violations dictated by fundamentalist, traditional and religious rules of behaviour.

Denmark has chosen to focus its efforts on security, capacity building of Afghan security forces, state building, education and improvement of living conditions. Conditions and rights of women, counter-narcotics and good governance will be included as cross-cutting considerations. Geographically, Denmark will focus part of its efforts in the southern Helmand Province, where the Taliban and other insurgents continue to operate and where the security situation, despite progress, continues to provide a breeding ground for radicalisation and prevents a confrontation with the narcotics industry.

Reports will be submitted annually on the progress of the strategy. If the situation changes significantly, an adjustment of the strategy will be necessary.

THE OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF DENMARK'S ENGAGEMENT

On the basis of an integrated political, military and civilian engagement, Denmark will contribute to security and reconstruction through support to activities aimed at:

- Extending the Afghan Government's authority to the entire country and, as a precondition for this, neutralising the Taliban and other militant groups by political, military and civilian means
- Building the capacity of Afghan security forces
- State building, democracy, promote respect for human rights, and good governance
- Spreading out education and schooling, so that in the long term all children in Afghanistan gain access to education.
- Improving living conditions through support to development of legal economic growth and employment for men and women.

Through its engagement, Denmark will thus contribute to achieving the goals for Afghanistan's future as set out in the Afghanistan Compact:

- That the partnership between the international community and Afghanistan improves the living conditions of the Afghan people and contributes to national, regional and global peace and security.
- That Afghanistan and the international community jointly commit themselves to working for a stable and developed Afghanistan based on good governance, respect for human rights and rule of law.

Framework for the International Engagement

The basis for the international engagement in Afghanistan is UN resolutions, which underlines that the situation in Afghanistan constitutes a threat to international peace and security. The resolutions call on the international community to help the Afghan Government to establish and maintain security and to extend its authority to the entire country, to promote peace and stability in the region and globally, and to contribute to improving the living conditions of the Afghan people. UN resolutions also state that the international efforts are best implemented through close interaction between the political, civilian and military efforts. The mandate for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is laid down in UN Security Council Resolution 1386 from 2001, which was adopted as a result of the terrorist attack on 11 September the same year. NATO took over command of ISAF in 2003. NATO plays a key role in the security and stabilisation efforts, and most recently at the summit in Bucharest in 2008 the organisation emphasised the linkage between the stabilisation and reconstruction efforts in its comprehensive political-military plan for the efforts in Afghanistan.

The Afghanistan Compact from 2006 is the international community's agreement with the Afghan Government, which together with the Afghan development plan - Afghanistan National Development Strategy formulated in 2008 - constitutes the overall framework for the Afghan security, stabilisation and reconstruction efforts. The interaction between political, military and civilian efforts is a key element of the Afghanistan Compact, both at the strategic and operational level, which is

reflected in the Afghanistan Compact's three pillars: (1) Security; (2) Good governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights; and (3) Economic and Social Development. The narcotics industry is highlighted as a special challenge that must be tackled across all three pillars.



The French President Nicolas Sarkozy speaking next to the Afghan President Hamid Karzai at the opening of The Afghanistan Donors Conference in Paris, 12 June 2008 Photo: AP images

Results of the Danish and International Efforts

During the recent years, considerable results have been obtained through the Danish and international efforts in Afghanistan.

Security and stabilisation

- The Danish military efforts are an important element in the overall international efforts, both in terms of establishing security and stability and in terms of building the capacity of the Afghan National Army.
- ISAF works determinedly to realise the goal of building an effective Afghan army of 80,000 troops by 2010, with a gradual transfer of responsibility for security to the Afghan National Army. More than 50,000 troops have already been trained. Denmark supports capacity building of the Afghan National Army with DKK 10 million annually and has, among other things, established training facilities for the Afghan troops stationed in Helmand Province.
- Particularly in Helmand Province, the Danish forces have since 2006 contributed to enhancing security through conducting difficult and demanding combat operations in a complex environment and have thus contributed to creating a security situation that facilitates moderate development and reconstruction in and narrowly around the towns of Lashkar Gah, Gereshk and Sangin in the central part of Helmand Province.
- In addition, the Danish contingent has contributed to a solid expansion of the overall area of Upper Gereshk Valley, where development and reconstruction activities can be implemented.
- A form of division of labour has taken place, where it has primarily been the United Kingdom which, besides contributions to operations, has been able to allocate forces to implement training and capacity building of

the Afghan National Army units stationed in Helmand Province.

- The capacity building efforts have progressed so far as to enable the Afghan National Army units in Helmand to undertake limited operations at battalion level jointly with ISAF. This was evidenced, for example, in connection with the recapture of Musa Qala in December 2007.
- Since 2007, Danish police officers have contributed to capacity building of the Afghan police through EUPOL (EU Police Mission), initially only at centralised level, but as of May 2008 with a total of eight police instructors in Kabul, Helmand, Uruzgan and the Kunduz provinces.

The Afghan National Army is becoming more capable

On 11 December 2007, the Afghan National Army, with support from ISAF forces, recaptured control of the town of Musa Qala in Helmand Province. The operation shows that the Afghan National Army has become more effective and in time will be capable of undertaking security missions in Afghanistan by itself. The Afghan troops have remained in the town and maintain security together with ISAF, so as to ensure that the development and reconstruction work can continue, to the benefit of the town's inhabitants.

- In addition, cooperation between the Danish CIMIC (Civil and Military Cooperation) detachment and civilian advisers has led to the implementation of a number

of small projects in areas where civilian organisations are unable to work. The projects are implemented with the aim of producing quick and visible results and thus increasing the population's backing for ISAF and the Afghan Government.

- So far, more than 400 small projects of this type have been implemented in Afghanistan. The projects have primarily been targeted at education, water supply, health and infrastructure. In addition, the Danish CIM-IC detachment has contributed to the implementation of more than 150 stabilisation projects in Helmand financed by the United Kingdom.

The Danish soldiers establish security and create conditions for reconstruction

The Danish forces carried out, for example, a large-scale operation in January 2008 which established the basis for liberating several areas of the green zone around the Helmand River from the control of militant Taliban groups. The objective of the operation was, among other things, to establish a patrol base called "Armadillo", from where the Danish contingent could monitor and patrol a large area of the Green Zone and thus create conditions for civilian development in the area.



Danish troops on their way to the Green Zone from the Patrol Base Armadillo. The armadillo is part of the logo of the unit that set up the patrol base. Photo: Army Operational Command, Denmark



The head of the Danish CIMIC detachment is handing over the keys and registration documents for the “new” used trucks to the Mayor of Gereshk. Photo: Army Operational Command, Denmark

Reconstruction and development begins with the basic things

The growth in the number of inhabitants in Gereshk in the central part of Helmand Province and a destroyed refuse collection system created problems with waste management in the town. A refuse collection system was built up with waste drop-off points where the local population could deliver their waste instead of throwing the rubbish into the street. It soon became a success, and the quantity of rubbish at the waste drop-off points grew, so much so that the town's refuse workers were unable to keep up. A mechanical solution to the collection problem was needed so as to enable the town's refuse workers to carry out their important work more effectively. The Danish CIMIC detachment, therefore, provided refuse collection trucks, on the condition that the local authorities themselves could maintain them and that spare parts could be obtained locally.



One of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' development advisers negotiating with the local Afghan authorities in Gereshk. Photo: Army Operational Command, Denmark

State building and human rights

- Denmark has supported the implementation of free elections and the efforts to build the capacity of the Independent Election Commission. Through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, Denmark contributes to the implementation of public sector reforms and capacity building of the public sector.
- With Danish support, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) has been established, which works to promote, protect and monitor human rights.
- The beginnings of a pluralistic civil society have been laid with support from, among others, Denmark.

Danish support to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund

Denmark has provided considerable support to the multi-donor trust fund, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, which plays a key role in the endeavour of reforming the public sector. The Trust Fund has built up a system that enhances the state's financial control systems, thus ensuring proper use of the funds. The Trust Fund has played a decisive role in the re-establishment of the Afghan state and provincial administration, which is strategically important as a counter-weight to the local power bases of warlords.

Economic and social development

- In 2001, a total of 900,000 boys attended school. Today, approx. six million children attend school, two million of whom are girls. Denmark has provided a significant contribution through construction of schools, developing the curriculum and printing more than 44 million textbooks.
- Denmark has supported the “National Solidarity Programme” (NSP), in which 18,000 villages have been awarded block grants to implement own development projects. The projects comprise, among others, water supply, sewerage, agriculture, education and health.
- The micro-credit programme, MISFA (Microfinance Investment Support Facility in Afghanistan) – which Denmark has contributed to – has awarded more than 400,000 loans, of which 70 per cent have gone to women. The loans are typically used to establish small businesses.
- Through Danish NGOs, Denmark has contributed to raising the level of public health through hygiene and nutrition training, and five million people have gained access to water and sanitation. This has contributed considerably to raising the proportion of the population with access to safe drinking water, from 13 per cent in 2002 to 36 per cent in 2006.

Humanitarian assistance, incl. support to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons

- Five million refugees have returned to Afghanistan. Denmark has supported their re-integration through, among others, UNHCR.
- Since 2004, Denmark has had a well-functioning agreement with Afghanistan regarding the re-admission of rejected asylum seekers. The cooperation includes, among other things, support to capacity building of Afghanistan's Ministry of Interior Affairs as well as support to reception and re-integration of the returnees.
- A total of 132,000 km² has been cleared of landmines, and many thousands of Afghan mine-sweepers have been trained, partly by means of support provided through Danish NGOs.
- Denmark has contributed to the mitigation of humanitarian crises by means of support to various UN organisations, including WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR.



Boy pumping water – Through Danish support many more people in Afghanistan have gained access to clean water. Photo: Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin

The Challenges

Security

There are large regional differences in the security situation. In the northern and western part of the country, the security situation is relatively stable. However, there are areas where, among other things, activities of criminal groups prevent reconstruction and development activities. The Taliban and the other insurgent and terrorist groups operate primarily in the southern and eastern parts of the country, and here the security situation is critical, although the situation varies considerably at local level.

At the same time, the Taliban and the other insurgent and terrorist groups are not dependent on their ability to confront ISAF and the Afghan National Army militarily, but rather on their ability to use terrorism and propaganda as a way of destabilising Afghanistan, intimidating the population and wearing down the will of the international community. In step with the increasing difficulties that the insurgent groups experience in fighting ISAF and the Afghan National Army, the insurgents therefore endeavour to regain the initiative by means of asymmetrical warfare in the form of, for example, suicide bombers and roadside bombs targeted at international forces, Afghan security forces, NGOs, officials and civilians who support the Afghan Government. Lastly, kidnappings have been carried out on several occasions. This type of warfare has spread to large parts of the country, including the capital Kabul, and contributes to the perception among the population in Afghanistan that the security situation has deteriorated.

Who are the violent insurgent groups?

The violent insurgent groups do not constitute one consolidated actor. Some groups are pure criminal gangs. The largest single grouping is the Taliban. However, the Taliban cannot be described as an organisation with a leadership, but rather as a network. The Taliban's recruitment, primarily from the approx. 40 million Pashtuns in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, is conditioned partly by ideology, but also very much by factors such as poverty, instability and lack of leadership from the Afghan Government. The fight against the Taliban runs along three parallel tracks.

The military efforts reduce the Taliban's operational ability. The development efforts and the establishment of good governance weaken the Taliban's recruiting opportunities and support from the population. Lastly, the political track aims through reconciliation to drive a wedge between the moderates and the hardliners within the Taliban.

State building and human rights

Afghanistan is due to hold presidential and parliamentary elections as well as provincial and district council elections during the strategy period. Both the preparations for and the holding of the elections will have a major influence on the future of Afghanistan's infant democracy. The state and provincial administration are characterised by extremely limited capacity, unresolved questions of competence, weak leadership, low salaries, corruption and abuse of power. In parallel with the public sector there exist local, traditional power structures that continue to exert considerable influence at all levels. This weakens

the Afghan Government's ability in many areas to reach out to the population and contributes to the poor security situation. Afghanistan is one of the most corrupt countries in the world, and a culture of corruption has developed which will take many years to eliminate. Besides a weak state and failing political will to take a direct confrontation with corruption, the powerful narcotics industry presents a particular problem to good governance.

The human rights situation in Afghanistan has improved considerably since 2001. However, there continue to be extensive human rights violations in the country. The Afghan judicial system is extremely weak and does not reach large parts of the country. The legislation is poorly developed, and both the formal and the informal judicial system use Sharia law. Afghanistan's women continue to experience widespread discrimination and marginalisation in all aspects of social life.

Economic and social development

Afghanistan is one of the world's poorest and least developed countries. The people living in rural areas are particularly vulnerable and suffer from, among other things, the lack of food security. A poor level of education combined with limited job opportunities mean that only few are able to lift themselves out of poverty. Over 40 per cent of the male population is unemployed, and for a very large number of people who have a job, the wages are so low that they have difficulty feeding themselves and their families. Even though six million children, of whom two million are girls, attend school, still only a third of young people aged 15-24 are able to read and

write. The development of the Afghan private sector is making very slow progress, and 80-90 per cent of the economic activity takes place in the informal sector. Afghanistan does not produce sufficient food to feed the population, but imports most from abroad, primarily Pakistan. Continued instability, lack of regulation and a weak judicial system slows down private sector development. Also the lack of basic infrastructure and access to electricity are a major impediment.

The narcotics economy

Around 93 per cent of the world's opium is grown in Afghanistan, and opium production has exploded in recent years. This has made the narcotics industry the primary economic activity in Afghanistan. The narcotics industry finances the activities of insurgents, fosters widespread corruption at all levels and undermines general development in Afghanistan.

Refugees

Three million Afghan refugees continue to reside outside the country, primarily in Pakistan and Iran. It is expected that up to one million will return to Afghanistan during the next 3-4 years. The local capacity is inadequate to handle such large groups, who have often been outside the country for decades. Many of the refugees continue to live in temporary shelters, and a renewed increase in pressure on local resources could create frustration, rekindle tensions and thus contribute to social unrest and deteriorated security.

Regional perspectives

Fostering stability and development in Afghanistan is closely tied to the regional situation and Afghanistan's relations to the countries in the region. In the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan, radicalisation and lawlessness are widespread. Similarly, the situation in Pakistan offers insurgents the opportunity to recruit, train and arm new troops. A large proportion of the narcotics smuggling that finances the Taliban's activities in Afghanistan passes through Pakistan. However, Pakistan is at the same time Afghanistan's most important trade partner, and millions of Afghans have strong family and tribal bonds to Pakistan.

Principles for the Danish Engagement in Afghanistan 2008-2012

- The Danish efforts in Afghanistan are consistent with UN resolutions and as a fully integrated political, military and civilian engagement in accordance with the goals set out in the Afghanistan Compact, Afghan national strategies as well as NATO's political-military plan and operational plan.
- The Danish efforts contribute to extending the Afghan Government's authority to the entire country and, as an important precondition for this, to neutralising the Taliban and other militant groups by political, military and civilian means.
- The Danish efforts are implemented in close collaboration and coordination with the Afghan Government and key actors in the international community.
- Protection of civilian Afghans in connection with the Danish efforts is sought by means of, among other things, careful planning and dialogue with local actors.
- The Danish efforts support Afghan ownership, and capacity building is an integral element of all activities conducted in relation to the Afghan security forces, public authorities and civil society.
- The Danish efforts contribute to ensuring that the whole of Afghanistan benefits from the positive development, by ensuring that a substantial part of the assistance goes to the national development programmes, and by working to strengthen the link between central and local level.
- The special Danish development efforts are funded in the areas where the Danish contingent is concentrated, in order to ensure that the Danish political, civilian and military efforts in these areas are fully integrated.
- The Danish efforts incorporate targeted support to the areas where large groups of repatriated refugees return.
- The Danish efforts in Afghanistan are to be focused and targeted. Denmark is a small actor in an Afghan context, but can make a difference by concentrating the efforts on a few selected implementation areas.
- The Danish efforts are planned flexibly with a view to ensuring ongoing adjustment to developments in the security situation and changing needs.

Objectives for the Danish Engagement in Afghanistan 2008-2012

Through an integrated three-stringed engagement – political, military and development – Denmark will contribute to counter-insurgency operations in order to improve the security situation as a precondition for stability, economic development and poverty reduction and ensuring respect for the individual.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE POLITICAL EFFORTS

In the period up to 2012, Denmark will contribute to:

- Strengthening international coordination and securing an integrated strategic approach to stabilisation and development in Afghanistan, including ensuring that the UN fulfils its lead coordinating role and that the UN establishes a presence in the whole of Afghanistan.
- Ensuring that the EU enhances its political and development assistance profile in the country with due consideration for the UN's role, including increasing the support to capacity building in the judicial sector and the police.
- Strengthening the Nordic cooperation within aid effectiveness, human rights and civil society development.
- Maintaining pressure on the Afghan Government to respect human rights and promote democracy and rule of law principles.

- Ensuring that human rights are incorporated as an element in all national strategies.
- Promoting an Afghan-led national reconciliation that has broad international backing.
- Promoting an integrated approach to counter-insurgency and fostering development in the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The UN's important role in Afghanistan

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is responsible for the overall coordination of the international engagement and the extensive development, military and political efforts carried out by major international actors, such as NATO/ISAF, the EU and the USA. The UN operates in almost all areas relating to development assistance and political development in the country. UN organisations support, among other things, returning Afghan refugees from Iran and Pakistan, agricultural development in the poor rural areas, education, holding of elections and efforts ensuring respect for human rights. Furthermore, the UN plays an important role in the political arena as a constructive and at times critical sparring partner for the Afghan Government in relation to difficult issues such as counter-narcotics, anti-corruption and women's rights. Lastly, the UN's offices also in the outlying provinces are an important source for development and provision of basic services in the provinces.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE SECURITY AND STABILISATION EFFORTS

On the basis of the international community's goals for the efforts in Afghanistan and with a point of departure in the Danish Parliament (Folketinget) Resolution B 161 and the Helmand Plan for 2008 ("Denmark in Helmand 2008"), Denmark will continue and concentrate the efforts in southern Afghanistan, on the grounds that ISAF and the Afghan authorities expect the following results to be gradually achieved within the strategy period:

- Around the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009, the preconditions will be in place for the implementation of small-scale development and reconstruction projects in and around the towns of Lashkar Gah, Gereshk and Sangin, which the Afghan authorities have partial control over. The Afghan security forces will be in a position to conduct operations at battalion level together with ISAF in Helmand. The population in Helmand will be less susceptible to intimidation by the Taliban and the other insurgent and terrorist groups, and the voluntary or coerced support for these violent groups will decline.
- By the middle of 2011, the preconditions will be in place for the Afghan security forces to conduct operations at brigade level together with ISAF and to enforce the Afghan Government's authority in the central part of the province, where preconditions will be in place for implementing more long-term

development and reconstruction projects. Only a minority of the population will be susceptible to intimidation by the Taliban and the other insurgent and terrorist groups or will support these voluntarily.

- By the end of 2012, the preconditions will be in place for the Afghan security forces to conduct operations independently at brigade level and to enforce the Afghan Government's authority in the key parts of the province and here support the exercise of civilian Afghan authority. In general, it will be possible to implement long-term development and reconstruction projects in those parts of the province that the Afghan security forces have responsibility for patrolling. A majority of the population in Helmand Province will in general support the authorities and only a small minority will be susceptible to intimidation by the Taliban and the other insurgent and terrorist groups.

Denmark will also contribute to:

- Supporting capacity building of the Afghan National Army. By the middle of 2008, Denmark will engage in dialogue with the British military authorities on setting quantitative targets for training the Afghan National Army in Helmand with a view to setting specific targets for the Danish efforts.
- Supporting capacity building of the Afghan National Police through contributions to EUPOL.

- Building an effective and independent police force of high integrity under Afghan ownership and in accordance with international standards.
- Supporting in general the population's endorsement of the Afghan authorities and ISAF's presence.

In relation to promoting integrated civilian-military efforts in Helmand in the period up to 2012, Denmark will contribute to:

- Further developing the integrated approach to counter-insurgency and stabilisation in Helmand, including through joint planning and implementation of activities within the PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team).
- Implementing more quick-impact projects (QIPs) as and when the need and opportunities arise.
- Evaluating and, where necessary, adjusting the pre-mission training of both civilian and military actors in Helmand in the light of experience and lessons learned.



A Danish soldier patrolling – the children curiously follows. Photo: Army Operational Command, Denmark

The human barometer

Danish and allied troops often patrol in the town of Gereshk, which with its approx. 50,000 inhabitants is one of the larger towns in Helmand Province. The patrols are conducted in open-top vehicles that make it easier to come into contact with the local population. It is important to gauge the atmosphere in the town, and the troops at the same time get the opportunity to show that ISAF and the Afghan security forces engage in concerted efforts to increase security. The personal contact with the local population in Gereshk has importance for the entire Danish effort in Helmand Province. Through daily dialogue, the inhabitants can, among other things, assist the troops with information about hostile movements and activity in and around the town, which is a sign of trust in the ISAF forces.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

OBJECTIVES for the Danish state-building efforts

In the period up to 2012, Denmark will contribute to:

- Consolidating democracy in Afghanistan by supporting the holding of free elections.
- Strengthening the public sector's ability to deliver results through promoting good governance at centralised and decentralised level.
- Enhancing the Afghan Government's ability to reach out to the population – both men and women – through the process of decentralising tasks and powers from central to local level as well as strengthening capacity in all provinces.
- Strengthening respect for human rights in Afghanistan, in particular by supporting the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC).
- Improving women's access to the judicial system.
- Creating a strong and pluralistic civil society as an essential building block of a sustainable Afghan democracy, partly through the Nordic cooperation.

Legal assistance to women in Afghanistan

Two decades of violence and conflict as well as social, political and economic exclusion have had serious and far-reaching consequences for Afghan women and girls.

Despite achievement of considerable progress since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, violence inflicted against women is still very widespread in Afghanistan.

Denmark provides extensive support to ensure women's access to legal assistance in Afghanistan. Denmark supports, for example, an organisation in Herat that has opened a shelter for battered women as well as women who have been forced into marriage. The shelter provides women with a safe place to stay, legal assistance, medical help, negotiation with the family, counselling, and help to move on with their life. The shelter helps approx. 100 women a year, and several thousand women benefit from the organisation's information initiatives.

OBJECTIVES for the Danish education efforts

In the period up to 2012, Denmark will contribute to:

- Ensuring that in the long term all children attend school and that 7.7 million children attend primary school by 2012, with an increasing proportion of girls (2008: 6.1 million children and 35.5 per cent girls).
- Ensuring the existence of a tried and tested modern curriculum for all class levels in the Afghan primary school, based on values that are consistent with national and international standards.

- Ensuring that all school children have access to the necessary textbooks at the beginning of the new academic year.
- Ensuring that a minimum of 70 per cent of the Afghan teachers have passed a competency test.
- Ensuring that the Afghan Ministry of Education has undergone an administrative reform that enhances the Ministry's performance at both centralised and district/provincial level.
- Ensuring that children from returned refugee families are integrated in the education system.
- Increasing the number of pupils in the state schools in accordance with the Helmand Plan.



*Girl practising in writing - education is an important priority for the Danish engagement in Afghanistan
Photo: Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin*

Successful education drive in Helmand

In December, upon Danish initiative, the Afghan Minister for Education held a successful Education Jirga (assembly of locals) in Helmand. The Jirga aimed at paving the way for a Danish-supported education drive in Helmand Province. More than 200 local district leaders participated in the Jirga and brought forward specific proposals for how to reverse the negative development in enrolment in the province. The Minister of Education promised the participants that the Afghan Government was ready to build 100 new schools in Helmand provided the population itself showed initiative and reopened the existing schools first. The outcome of the Jirga was unequivocal backing from the participants for the education drive in Helmand Province. The mobilisation of the districts is crucial for establishing confidence in relation to the educational content and for removing the education sector from the immediate conflict between the Taliban and the Central Government.

Less than a day after Musa Qala was recaptured in December 2007, the Afghan Minister of Education launched an education drive in the area with Danish support. Through a rapid and visible civilian effort, the Afghan Government was able to build on its military success and thereby strengthen the reconciliation process in the area. Denmark has given a commitment to support the initiative with approx. DKK 3 million in 2008.

The conditions for the schools in Gereshk are totally dependent on the security situation in the town. It has been important for the Afghan authorities that the local population, the school teachers and the children help the local police to enhance security by contacting the authorities if they are subjected to harassment. Together with Danish forces, an emergency hotline that the locals can call 24 hours a day has therefore been established.

OBJECTIVES

for the Danish efforts to improve living conditions

In the period up to 2012, Denmark will contribute to:

- Combating poverty through promotion of legal economic growth and employment for women and men, including enhancing economic activity in rural areas.
- Supporting alternative income opportunities to the narcotics industry through providing support to development of the legal productive sectors, including in Helmand.
- Ensuring that 800,000 households, including single mothers, have access to financial services, including micro-credits.
- Repatriating and reintegrating of up to one million refugees through targeted efforts in the home areas of the refugees.



Foto: Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin

Rural development and access to micro-credits

The National Solidarity Programme (NSP), which is a national programme supported by Denmark, provides grants directly to Afghan villages, which – via democratically elected village councils – prioritises and implement their own small projects. The programme is one of the greatest development successes to date in Afghanistan and has so far reached over 18,000 villages.

The village of Mir Bacha Kot, which lies 20 km north of Kabul, is one of the villages that have access to micro-financing facilities under the MISFA programme. This means that the local inhabitants can take out small loans for setting up, for example, businesses that in the long term can stimulate the local economy. One of the women in the village was therefore pleased to be able to receive her first loan of AFA 10,000, which she used for starting a small workshop, where she produced children's clothes. She has, since then received additional loans that have enabled her

to expand the business. Hence, she now has 10 women employed in her business. The business is now selling the products, not just on the local market, but also in other provinces such as Marzar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan.

Danish support to refugee returnees

In 2001, more than six million people had fled Afghanistan, primarily to the neighbouring countries. Today, more than 4.8 million refugees have returned home to Afghanistan. Some have nothing to return to, and in 2007 alone the Afghan Government awarded 30,000 plots of land to refugee returnees. Denmark has supported the return of refugees through, among others, UNHCR and IOM. Denmark has also contributed to their reintegration through support to schools and other facilities in the areas where the refugees return to.

Preconditions and risk factors

A precondition for achieving the desired results is that the Afghan Government honours the commitments that the country has undertaken in conformity with the Afghanistan Compact and as the primary body responsible for implementing ANDS (Afghanistan National Development Strategy). Similarly, it is a precondition that the international community maintains its focus on Afghanistan and honours its commitments, for example regarding coordination and good donor practice.

Among the key risk factors are:

- A deteriorated security situation, for example, in the lead up to the elections in 2009, or if the result of the election is seriously questioned, or if elections can only be held in parts of the country where there is security, thereby leading to a marginalisation of the Pashtun section of the population.
- A complex threat picture and complicated ethnic, clan and regional structures. There is a risk that the international community will become involuntarily involved in local and regional power struggles.
- Declining international support could undermine security and reduce the effect of development, which in turn will contribute to a further deterioration of the security situation.
- Considerable resources are invested in developing capacity. However, the lack of human and institutional capacity at all levels sets an absolute limit for how fast the Afghan capacity can be built up.

- Corruption, inadequate political leadership or democratic regression, which undermines the opportunity for building strong and stable institutions and for re-establishing trust in the Central Government, especially in a population that is distrustful of centralised power structures.
- The narcotics industry's negative influence on the security situation, on good governance and on selected population groups' interest in supporting the Government actively in the counter-insurgency struggles.
- A deteriorated situation in Pakistan, where gradually increased instability and, in the worse case, a collapse of the state could significantly destabilise Afghanistan.

Denmark will in the implementation of the tangible efforts seek to counter these challenges. However, if there are extremely dramatic changes in the preconditions and risk factors, it may become necessary to formulate a new strategy for the Danish efforts.

Communication

Communication of the Danish efforts in Afghanistan is crucial – partly in relation to ensuring that the Danish public and politicians have a proper basis on which to evaluate the efforts, and partly in relation to improving the Afghan population's knowledge about the international efforts and the Afghan Government's actions. In the coming strategy period, there is need to step up efforts in both areas.

Communication in Denmark

Denmark will:

- Ensure that the Danish population has access to a qualified picture of the international and Danish efforts in Afghanistan, this will include communicating and documenting progress and results that promote an engaged and balanced public debate in Denmark.
- Increase the communication about developments in the geographical areas where Denmark contributes through military and civilian means.
- Increase the communication about developments in the technical sectors where Denmark contributes through civilian means.
- Increase the dialogue within professional circles and with the general public about the efforts in Afghanistan.

Communication in Afghanistan

Denmark will:

- Support the Afghan Government's ability to communicate its goals and efforts, particularly with the aim of supporting counter-insurgency operations.
- Enhance the Afghan media's coverage of the Danish political, military and civilian efforts.
- Enhance the Afghan media's coverage of the insurgents' attacks against civilians and terrorist acts.
- Proactively counter the insurgents' attempts to use misinformation to undermine the positive impacts of the Danish efforts.
- Actively use the new NATO channel to contribute to ensuring a balanced picture of the situation in Afghanistan.
- Mobilise Afghan advocates to set focus on and use communication for countering insurgents' continued attacks on schools, pupils and teachers.
- Actively support and defend the independence of the Afghan press.

If you would like to know more

Please find below useful links if you would like to know more about the situation in Afghanistan and the Danish and international efforts:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website about the Danish engagement in Afghanistan: <http://www.afghanistan.um.dk>

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website: <http://www.um.dk/da>

The Ministry of Defence's website: <http://forsvaret.dk/fmn/eng/>

The NATO ISAF website <http://www.nato.int/isaf/index.html>

The Danish Defence's website: <http://forsvaret.dk/FKO/eng/>

The Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS): <http://www.diis.dk>

The Royal Danish Defence College (RDDC): <http://forsvaret.dk/FAK/eng/>

The Danish Institute for Military Studies (DIFMS): <http://www.difms.dk/>

The Afghan Presidential Office's website (contains, among other things, information about the Government's composi-

tion, the Afghan constitution, etc.): <http://www.president.gov.af/>

The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) (including links to information about, for example, Afghanistan's Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the Joint Monitoring and Coordination Body (JCMB), the Afghanistan Compact): <http://www.and.s.gov.af/>

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC): <http://www.aihrc.org.af/>

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)'s website: <http://www.unama-afg.org/>

The UNDP Human Development Report for Afghanistan 2007/2008: http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_AFG.html

The World Bank's website on Afghanistan (including information about the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF)): <http://www.worldbank.org.af/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/AFGHANISTANEXTN/0,,menuPK:305990~pagePK:141159~piPK:141110~theSitePK:305985,00.html>

The National Solidarity Program (NSP)'s website: <http://www.nspafghanistan.org/>



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