



ANNUAL REPORT 2015



Norwegian Afghanistan Committee



Although 2015 has been a year of insecurity and uncertainty in Afghanistan and many other parts of the world, for NAC, 2015 has also been a year of looking forward while reflecting on the past 35 years of solidarity between the Afghan and Norwegian people. NAC has expanded, innovated and more deeply integrated our programs in governance, civil society, education, health, food security, livelihoods, and disaster risk reduction:

- Established Playgroups which focus on children's early learning and development and free their mothers to build their own micro businesses to support their families and communities. **Page 11**
- Developed a new, 3-year education program for physiotherapists to meet the urgent need to improve rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities in the country. **Page 18**
- Promoted the voices of Afghan villagers in Ghazni province by working with 6 civil society organizations to support them in defining their own development needs and solutions, and in seeking support from the government, but on their own terms. **Page 23**

- Increased the economic and social empowerment of Afghan women through supporting 57 women's Self Help Groups in: gaining self-confidence, literacy, numeracy and entrepreneurial skills, developing micro businesses, earning and saving money, and being able to participate more actively in civil society. **Page 25**

- Pioneered research, alongside American and German partners, into Global Positioning System mapping of earthquake risk areas in Badakhshan, to help save lives in future. **Page 35**

- Provided more than 4700 victims of the October-2015 earthquake in Badakhshan with financial support for shelter during the harsh winter. **Page 39**

- Encouraged Norwegian-Afghan youth to share their powerful stories of their lives. **Page 41**

Hope for a better future

NAC marked its 35th anniversary in 2015. Working together in a spirit of solidarity for three and a half decades, NAC has shared the struggles, aspirations and hopes of the Afghan people.

Over the years, moods have shifted between optimism and concerns about Afghanistan's future. Unfortunately, we are now at a time in history when the security situation is becoming gradually worse in many of the places where we work. So, is there still hope?

The answer is a resounding yes! And we see this through the lived experiences of the people we work with in Afghanistan and Norway.

When all 30 midwives from Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar and Nuristan who started their studies two years back graduated from IHS Jalalabad early-2015, there is hope. When 235 midwives and community health nursing students from schools in Kapisa, Khost, Laghman, Nangarhar and Wardak continue their education despite having to study and travel in highly insecure areas, there is hope.

When local communities organized and managed search and rescue operations themselves after the October 2015 earthquake that hit Badakhshan; when no children were hurt in the schools that had been trained in DRR; when children knew what to do and helped bring their younger siblings to safety, there is hope.

When grassroots organizations are now able to monitor and hold their community service providers accountable, there is hope.

When women have been empowered to leave their homes and participate more actively in public life, it speaks not only to their own personal development, but to wider positive impacts on their communities' perception of women's roles in society, there is hope. When 128 out of 130 schools built or reconstructed over the past 15 years are operational and filled with more than 105,000 students - girls and boys, there is hope.

NAC as an organization is stronger than ever, both in Afghanistan and in Norway. The volunteers in Norway continue to spend much of their free time in the Project and Information Committees, and in the different projects in Afghanistan through the 'Solidarity in Action' initiative. The Local Committee in Bergen, together with Krohnengen School, organized a Christmas Market for the 17th consecutive year in support of the Friendship Schools in Afghanistan. Children and parents from Vinderen and Sulitjelma Schools rallied support for the different NAC Education initiatives, while midwives in Hordaland launched the 'Run for Life' initiative in support of Afghan midwifery students. Many young Afghans living in Norway have joined NAC in recent years, adding important dimensions to our solidarity work. In Afghanistan, NAC is composed of strong, motivated and highly qualified teams. With dedication and enthusiasm, NAC colleagues demonstrate how women and men from different ethnic groups can work together to support development in rural communities throughout country.

35 years is a good point to reflect on our vision – 'The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) shall contribute to an Afghanistan free of poverty where equality, democracy, human rights and respect serve as the bases for political action and development.' And it is through realizing this vision in big and small ways, everyday for the past 35 years that we also look forward. NAC is strong in our commitment to stand by Afghanistan for the next decades with continued solidarity and dedication, and further increased professionalism and inclusiveness in all our efforts.

On the basis of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the different national and international commitments made by the Afghan Government, NAC also urges our partners to continue their development support to Afghanistan.

When we see how hard NAC colleagues and partners in rural Afghanistan work, and the results they achieve during these challenging times, there is hope for the future of Afghanistan.

Liv Kjølseth
Secretary General



Terje Watterdal
Country Director



This is NAC

Our organization

The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) is a member-based solidarity organization, doing development and humanitarian work in Afghanistan and information and advocacy in Norway. We strive to improve the quality of life of Afghans in rural and hard-to-reach areas through our focus on integrated rural development and the education of female health workers.

NAC shall contribute to an Afghanistan free of poverty where equality, democracy, human rights and respect serve as the bases for political action and development. The cornerstone of our organization is the fundamental belief in freedom, independence, democracy, human rights and a better life for all. NAC operates with a head office in Oslo, a country office in Kabul and regional offices in Badakhshan and Ghazni, provincial office in Faryab, and project offices in Kapisa, Khost, Laghman and Wardak.

We have 289 short- and long-term employees in Afghanistan. Our staff possess the experience, knowledge, skills and commitment to make the organization grow. 99% of our staff in Afghanistan are Afghan nationals. The head office in Oslo has 3 employees, who are aided in their work by teams of dedicated and experienced volunteers.

Our approach to development work

The Afghan people work every day to improve their living standards – and NAC is their partner in that work. We operate with a needs-based approach.

Which means that we develop our programs and projects based on the diverse needs of the rural Afghan communities we support. To identify these our staff continuously consult government departments and institutions, civil society organizations and grassroots movements, and with children, youth, women and men in the communities we serve.

We make sure that our activities are based on community priorities where we aim to support those who have the biggest needs. We focus our work on rural and hard-to-reach areas, targeting the groups that are most vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization, particularly women and children.

We aim to support community-based development in different districts and provinces throughout Afghanistan, ensuring that all main ethnic groups in Afghanistan benefit from our interventions. Our programs are therefore designed to contribute to greater cooperation between communities and people with diverse ethnic, social and religious backgrounds.

We work for rural development, using an integrated approach. We believe that progress in one area of life can also lead to progress in other fields. Our projects support the UN Sustainable Development Goals and are in line with Afghan development priorities.



Our history

NAC was established in Norway in 1980 in response to the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan. Local committees immediately rallied public opinion against the invasion and called for solidarity for the Afghan population caught in the middle of the conflict. Fundraising, advocacy and information work became the core member activities.

In 1983 NAC opened its first office. Due to the poor security situation in Afghanistan it was placed in Peshawar, Pakistan. The first field office was established in Ghazni in 1986 and in Badakhshan in 1991. In 1997, a liaison office was opened in Kabul. In 2002 this became NAC's country office. Today NAC is still a solidarity organization with active members working for the well-being of the Afghan population. But it is also a professional organisation with international donors and a large receiver of the Norwegian aid budget for Afghanistan.

Sustainable Development Goals

Conflict; inequality of access to food and water, shelter, healthcare, education, employment, political representation; and environmental degradation and climate change – these are pressing and interconnected development challenges not only in Afghanistan, but around the world and have led to recent global increases in instability and migration.

As a response, through building and improving on the previous 'Millennium Development Goals', a set of 'Sustainable Development Goals' have been formulated and been officially adopted by the UN in September 2015 as part of the '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. The Sustainable Development Goals have been designed to offer a holistic approach to addressing global development

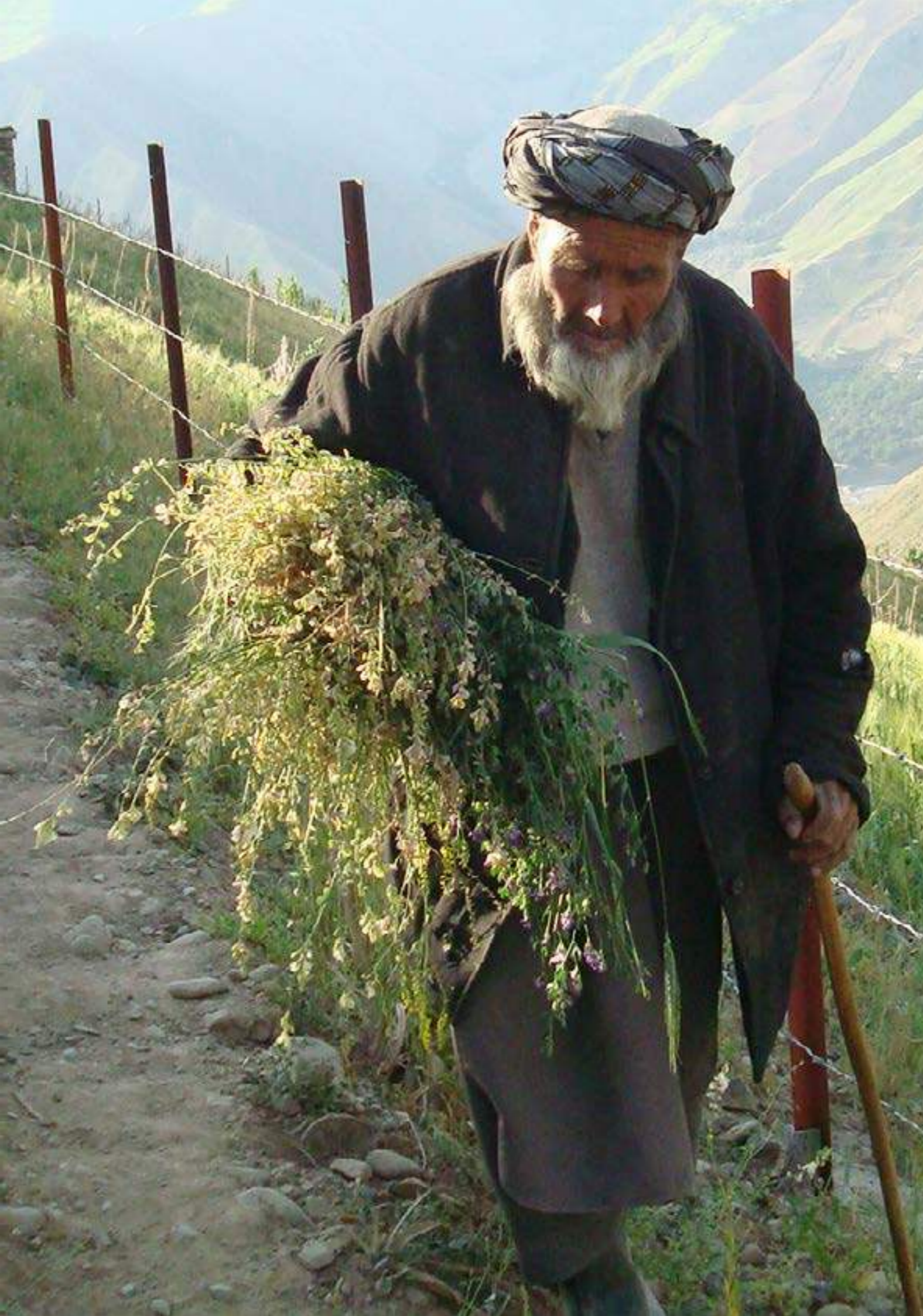
challenges with an emphasis on sustainability, conservation, and resilience – dynamics which are central to NAC's work.

It is helpful to look 'through the lens' of the Sustainable Development Goals to better understand how NAC contributes to addressing the formidable set of development challenges which have critical impacts in Afghanistan, but affect us all in an increasingly globalized world.

At different points in this report we flag the Sustainable Development Goals which are particularly relevant to NAC's work. The full set of goals are:

Sustainable Development Goals

- Goal 1.** End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2.** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3.** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4.** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5.** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6.** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7.** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8.** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9.** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10.** Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11.** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12.** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13.** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 14.** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15.** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16.** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17.** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development



Our work:

Education

Sustainable Development

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

NAC's approach to education seeks to develop and nurture a more equitable, healthy and inclusive society. This acknowledges that a sustainable education system is not just about formal schooling, but a continuum of lifelong learning from birth through adulthood in which opportunities for access to education of good quality are found both in and outside of classrooms. In this way, NAC's education programs focus on everything from early childhood development, primary and secondary schooling, higher education, adult literacy and numeracy, to a variety of technical, vocational and professional development learning opportunities.

Inclusive education = inclusive societies

Inclusive education is about ensuring that a high quality, learner centered and relevant education is accessible for all – from young children to adults, regardless of gender, ethnicity, language, rural or urban location, income, ability or disability. Inclusivity in education is an important part of moving towards a more genuinely inclusive society. Although some forms of inclusive education practices have existed in Afghanistan for many years, a wider program of inclusive education has been a focus for the Afghan government since 2008. NAC has been and continues to be a leader and innovator in inclusive education and all of our education programs work towards the goals of providing the best education for all and ultimately developing a more inclusive Afghanistan.

Practical inclusion - learning together

NAC has designed and implemented inclusive education trainings for a diverse group of educators in Badakhshan, Faryab, Ghazni and Kabul. These trainings move beyond theory with a practical focus on what can be done in Afghan schools and teacher training colleges. As much as possible, NAC's trainings intentionally bring education managers together with teacher educators and trainers, school teachers, Ministry of Education staff and education activists from NGOs so that shared understandings and better relationships can be developed between practitioners from different parts of the education system. This supports reciprocal, meaningful and sustainable changes at both teacher education and school levels.

The practical focus of NAC's education work is important in making inclusive education relevant and realizable in Afghanistan. A representative from the Ministry of Education who attended one of NAC's inclusive education trainings explained, 'We at the Ministry conduct a lot of trainings, but we always train people on theory, but now I understand that we need practical training too – and we got that through this five-day training.'

Child development through play

In connection with NAC's work with women in rural Badakhshan, Faryab and Ghazni, NAC has developed Playgroups for the children of women involved in Self Help Groups. These Playgroups provide young children with childcare focused on stimulating and engaging learning and development opportunities to prepare them for future schooling and life.

Overall support for schools

NAC recognizes that directly supporting rural schools is essential for improving education in Afghanistan. This year, NAC marks its 35th year of support for schools with a variety of infrastructure and training initiatives. For more see page 14.

Bonding schools and communities

In 2015, NAC continued its work with School Shuras (similar to Parent Teacher Associations) to support them in better understanding the value of education for all children and inclusive education practices, such as learner centered approaches to teaching. Alongside this, NAC has worked to develop common understandings and strengthen relationships between Shuras and teachers in order to ensure that schools are responsive to the needs of their communities and that they can better support each other.

The head mistress of Fatima Zahra Girls High School in Angori Village, Ghazni province explained, 'NAC has contributed a lot to the quality of education in our school. Now we have regular meetings at school with the Shura and Teachers and we have different committees and better trained teachers.'

Making education real

NAC has pioneered an exciting and innovative program of project-based learning with our 'Friendship Schools' where students and their teachers have been supported to link different subjects, knowledge and skills together in the form of a practical project that has real meaning in their lives. For more see page 45.

Making schooling relevant, engaging and stimulating for students and teachers is critical in ensuring that education is both accessible and meaningful in Afghanistan, particularly in rural areas where support for education is more difficult. Project-based learning takes account of the disconnect between actual life experience – in which the challenges we face are interlinked and require a combined set of skills and knowledge to address – and the typical experience of school in which different subjects and sets of knowledge are taught in isolation from one another, often abstractly, and not linked to life outside the classroom. This means that in project-based learning, students are supported to link different subjects, knowledge and skills together in the form of a practical project that has real meaning in their lives.

NAC utilized the long winter break to give teachers intensive training in this method of working and was then able to support them in piloting this approach with students in six schools in Badakhshan, Faryab, Ghazni and Kabul. NAC has also been using this method of working with the School for the Deaf in Kabul, bringing deaf and hearing teachers together in project-based learning training and activities.

Projects have been child-led, fitting their group and individual abilities and interests, but linked directly to the curriculum through teachers' facilitation and support. Working in this way has shown a number of benefits: engaging students in making connections between learning inside and outside of classrooms;

supporting students to work together constructively; building students' confidence, autonomy in directing their own learning, and critical thinking skills; and supporting teachers to work together and find linkages between their different subject areas. Additionally, NAC has found that project-based learning improves relationships between students and teachers and strengthens understanding and relationships between schools and families, as family members have been encouraged to bring their own knowledge and experience into actively supporting projects.

Health and hygiene through education

When students are healthy, they are better able to reach their education potentials. NAC has found that promoting good health and hygiene practices through school-based education initiatives is an important way of raising awareness and improving the health of students, teachers and parents.

NAC conducted health and hygiene training for school teachers and students, and also identified and trained health promoters in schools. School Shura members were also trained and participated in health and hygiene campaigns. Alongside this, NAC has offered related infrastructural support, providing dustbins for classrooms, constructing safe sanitation facilities and providing facilities for safe drinking water.

As a result of NAC's support: teachers are now focusing on health and hygiene in their lessons; and school managers are conducting routine health and hygiene checks in classrooms, and other school areas. Now, sick students are often taken to the nearest health facility. Also, teachers are now supporting good hygiene practices. Students are demonstrating improved hand washing behavior, proper waste disposal, and are engaged in initiating hygiene awareness campaigns in schools.

Women's literacy and numeracy

NAC has specifically focused on working with women in rural communities, many of whom have had little or no opportunities for formal education in their lives, to gain literacy and numeracy skills. Higher levels of literacy and numeracy improve women's independence, self-confidence and abilities to earn an income and support their families and communities. Through providing women's Self Help Groups with literacy and numeracy training, NAC has seen a tremendous increase in women's skill levels in these areas. At the start of this initiative only just over 19% of women NAC worked with could pass a literacy test, whereas now more than 84% have passed the test. With numeracy, at the start, just over 2% of women could pass a numeracy test, whereas now, more than 53% have passed. These numbers translate to real, practical improvements in women's lives.

Inclusion through higher education

2015 marks the midpoint in NAC's first Master's Degree Program in Inclusive Education, a collaborative initiative between Afghanistan, Indonesia and Norway. This 2-year program, sponsored by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Jakarta and done in partnership with the Kabul Education University and the Indonesian University of Education in Bandung, is the first of its kind in the world. The program has received attention and appreciation from both the First Lady of Afghanistan, the President of Indonesia and the Prime Minister of Norway.

The gender balanced full-time group of Master's Degree students are all dedicated education professionals – lecturers and directors of Teacher Training Colleges, lecturers at Kabul Education University and education activists from NGOs – who are committed to using their Master's Degree to improve the quality and inclusivity of the Afghan

education system. Additional part-time students also include Provincial Department of Education school inspectors. Students come from a range of places across the country including: Badakhshan, Balkh, Faryab, Ghazni, Kabul and Kapisa.

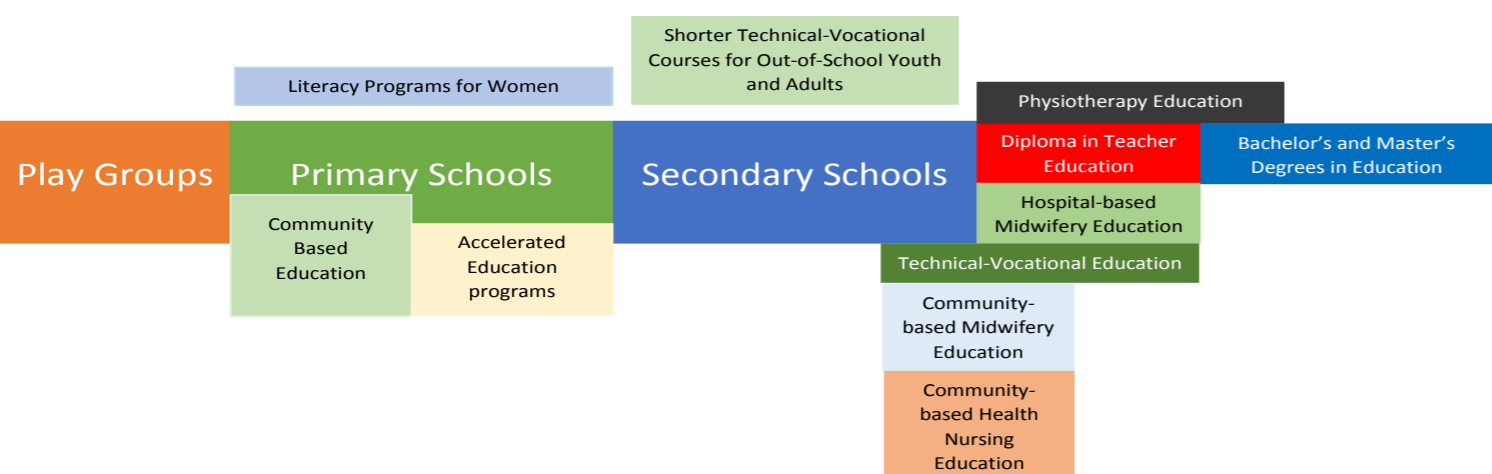
Drawing on the expertise of Norwegian, British, Indonesian and Afghan academics and practitioners, the Master's Degree program gives Afghan educators a solid grounding in inclusive education concepts and methods, alongside a practical orientation. It supports actual changes towards inclusion through students' 'action research' projects, in which they trial and research the impacts of inclusive education innovations in their own work environments.

By recruiting gender balanced cohort of fulltime students who are key Afghan education professionals, NAC helps to ensure that the learning from the program directly influences the Afghan education system, now and in the future.

Waheeda, a chemistry lecturer at the Teacher Training College in Mazar-i-Sharif, Balkh and fulltime Master's Degree student shared what the program means for her, saying, 'This program has helped me to trust myself and I am really happy for joining. The system of education in Afghanistan needs to be high quality and answerable to everyone's needs and that is my goal and the goal of this program too. All the things which we have learned in this program are very important but especially the concept of 'inclusion' which was very new for us – this helps us link the broader concept of inclusion with the different aspects of education to really implement inclusion in Afghanistan against discrimination.'

PROVINCES: Badakhshan, Balkh, Faryab, Ghazni, Kabul and Kapisa
NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES: 66,000

- 65,000 students benefitted from various interventions, including 580 children and youth with disabilities
- 480 members of school shuras trained to better manage schools
- 100 women learned how to read and write
- 263 teachers trained on inclusive education and project based learning
- 381 teacher-trainers and student teachers received training on inclusive education
- Kabul Education University and 6 Teacher Training Colleges (TTC) received support



NAC long-term support:

Over 30 years of school development and support

Support for schooling has been an important part of NAC's history and continues to be an essential cornerstone of our support for education and ultimately working towards a brighter future for Afghanistan. In looking back to look forward, we consider the sustainability of NACs more than 30 years of involvement in schooling in Badakhshan and Ghazni and ask two key questions: 1) How have NAC schools fared over the years? 2) What has been the significance of NAC schools to the lives of the students who attended them?

NAC's development and support for schooling has involved a number of initiatives. These include: infrastructure - school building and reconstruction, development of health and sanitation facilities, such as access to safe drinking water and toilets, the development of playgrounds; and capacity building for teachers, students and school communities in - teaching and learning, health and sanitation, and disaster risk reduction and management.

Sustainable schools

NAC first started developing and supporting schools in the 1980s - a very difficult time for schooling in Afghanistan, particularly from the 1990s during the Taliban's years in government. Despite the challenges, then and now, almost all NAC schools that were developed from that time and more recently, continue to function as valuable centers for education in their respective communities and beyond.

NAC has built more than 130 schools in Badakhshan between 1986 and 2015. All but two of these schools - due to ongoing armed conflict in Warduj district - remain fully functioning as schools today. This is very significant in the context of Afghanistan, where many schools have either ceased to function, or are on the books but never really existed - so called 'ghost schools'. When schools are imposed on communities from outside, without their collaboration in planning and development, there is always a risk that these schools will not be sustainable. The fact that so many NAC schools still function as schools today is a testament to the way NAC has worked in partnership with local Afghan communities to plan, develop and support the schooling they desire.

A legacy of support for young Afghans

To understand the full value of NAC schools in the lives of Afghans it helps to look beyond the numbers and listen to the voices of former students who benefitted from a NAC supported education.

Ehsanullah's story

Ehsanullah is a member of the NAC team, working as a Civil Society Officer in Badakhshan.

'I grew up in Wakhunda, a mountain village in Badakhshan located 100 kilometers away from the nearest city. Wakhunda can be reached after 4 hours travel by car, or 8 hours travelling by horseback during the winter season.

In 1995 there were not any schools operating in my district except for the school in my village - the Wakhunda village primary school for boys. In 1996, NAC began working in my district and village. NAC's Community Mobilizer was very impressed with my community's interest in and commitment to education. Because of this, NAC promised the community to build a secondary school in our area. This was a dream for me and for other young children, that we could get a secondary school education in a well-equipped school. NAC understood that developing a school was not just about the construction of a school building, but also meant paying the salaries of teachers and establishing a library, laboratory, and providing stationery, and food for students on a monthly basis.

The school was completed and handed over to the community by the spring of 1998 and the first class of 15 students was established. I was a student in our community's NAC school for all of elementary and high school. I worked hard and when I became top of my class, the NAC office appreciated me, and provided me with a gift - a stationary kit - and inspired, empowered and encouraged me to try do my best.

I was inspired by attending a NAC school, and had a dream that when I completed my education, I could work with this organization and provide services to the community, keeping the chain of support alive and never giving up. I am always remembering this in my mind - 'if you can dream it you can do it'.

So now I'm in this position, working with NAC, realizing my dream. This is the visible and tangible impact and outcome from the contribution of NAC in building and supporting my school 17 years ago.

Aziz's story

Aziz Fayez is Head of Education for Aga Khan Education Services, based in Kabul.

I was born in Zebak district, Badakhshan. Zebak is located near the border of Pakistan.

I attended and completed school in Zebak up until grade 11 and then went to Faizabad for grade 12.

When I was studying in secondary between 1994 - 1997, in most parts of the country, schools were shut down because the Taliban was in control. But, a very limited part of the country including my area was under control of the Mujahideen.

We didn't have any resources to support the schools. The schools were run by former government teachers and they were very committed, working even without salaries sometimes for months or even years.

At that time, I remember that NAC provided our teachers with some training, some materials, such as stationary, and salaries. Although this support

and resources were limited, it meant a lot. It was like medicine to give a patient. By one dose of medicine you can give the life back to that person - it was exactly the same. It was a little support, but very timely and effective. It supported the school and encouraged the teachers to continue in education and was the only factor that gave them some hope to run the school and keep the school open. If this level of support was not given by NAC at that time, I am certain that the school would have been closed and me and my generation wouldn't have received the type of education that we did.

That support that our community and our school received from NAC back in 1994 helped me and transformed my life dramatically. For that reason when I later got the opportunity to go and study in the UK, I chose to study education.

Now, when I travel and support education in those rural areas of Afghanistan, sometimes my colleagues are saying 'This is very little support, it does not make any sense.' And I can say that the place that I am in now is because of that small support we received from NAC. I think from that time it is because of that I started devoting my career and my life to education.



Our work:

Health

Sustainable Development Goals:

Goal 03. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Reducing maternal and infant mortality

Midwives and nurses play critical roles in ensuring the health and safety of mothers, children, and other community members, especially in rural and hard-to-reach areas of Afghanistan where access to hospitals and doctors is limited.

Improving access to skilled midwives and nurses is a NAC priority, as this provides life-saving support for rural community members and empowers and employs women. Almost 15% of all Afghan midwives have been trained by NAC and its Afghan government partners. Maternal mortality rates have dropped from 1400 per 100,000 live births to under 400 in less than 15 years. Although improving, the stark reality is that in Afghanistan, the mortality rates for children under five years old and for mothers are among the highest in the world, underscoring the importance of NAC's work in this area.

Without intensifying efforts over the next few years to educate more midwives and health-nurses, mortality rates will rise again.

Building competencies

In promoting the development of midwifery and nursing in Afghanistan, NAC works with the support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) and the Norwegian Association of Midwives (Dnj) in educating and supporting midwifery and health-nursing students and trainers; with provincial health authorities; and in supporting the Ghazanfar Institute of Health Sciences (GIHS), the Afghan Midwifery and Nursing Education Accreditation Board (AMNEAB) and the Afghan Midwives Association (AMA). Working across all these areas with diverse partners ensures that NAC is able to offer support where it is most needed and most likely to ensure affordable healthcare to mothers, children and families in rural and hard-to-reach communities.

NAC supported the Ghazanfar Institute of Health Sciences (GIHS) in providing comprehensive faculty

development programs for trainers in community-health nursing schools throughout Afghanistan. In supporting these schools, NAC also helped in the preparation of the curriculum, teaching resources, development of monitoring and evaluation systems and in providing equipment and materials to schools in the program provinces.

Educating midwives and health-nurses

NAC supports the education of 236 midwifery and health-nursing students in Kapisa, Khost, Laghman, Nangarhar and Wardak provinces, offering a combination of theoretical and practical training. The demand in Afghanistan for midwifery and nursing education is enormous and the interest among young women is incredible, as more than 1300 young women from mostly traditional and conservative communities applied for these study programs. This is proof of the increasing importance Afghan communities place on girls' and women's education and the pressing need for midwives and nurses in the country. But this is also testament to NAC's more than 30 years of promoting and supporting community-based healthcare services in Afghanistan. By carefully addressing traditional, conservative views and working directly with elders and other community members, NAC has witnessed many positive changes in attitudes about education for girls and women and the key roles they can play in improving the access to quality community healthcare. Midwives and health-nurses are pioneers for women within the workforce and role-models for girls and young women throughout Afghanistan.

Salma, a recent graduate of the midwifery school in Jalalabad highlighted the importance of her future work with her community: *'During the last few years my community has faced a lack of a midwife and doctor in our village clinic. Because of this, I decided to become a midwife. Now after two years, I have graduated and I'm so happy and I heard from my father that all our villagers are waiting for me. Now it is the time for me to serve my people and save lives.'*

Better health and sanitation

Access to water is a necessity for the survival and health of Afghan communities. NAC supports communities in digging wells and supplies children, women and men with fresh drinking water facilities.

To raise awareness about health, sanitation and nutrition within rural and hard-to-reach communities and to support them in living healthier lives, NAC has been active in providing health education at the community level in Badakhshan, Faryab and Ghazni. By focusing on schools and working directly with teachers, students, parents and families, NAC has provided training and support on health and sanitation which has led to tangible improvements in community members' health.

A related issue is that many children in rural Afghanistan suffer from intestinal parasites, which negatively affect their overall health and attendance in school. NAC has been working with more than 200 school communities in deworming awareness raising campaigns and in providing deworming treatments to eradicate intestinal parasites.

Improving rehabilitation services

In 2015, NAC entered into a consortium with Handicap International (HI) and SCA on an EU funded program designed to meet the urgent need for improved rehabilitation services in Afghanistan for

people with disabilities. 'Towards Improved Quality Rehabilitation Services in Afghanistan' (TIQRA), is a three-year program, with a focus on disability, for physiotherapists from district hospitals and health centers from all 34 provinces in Afghanistan. The consortium will run seven physiotherapy schools throughout the country. NAC will be responsible for two schools, one in Kabul and one in Kapisa for students from 11 provinces.

The NAC schools will have 70 students, be gender balanced and offer teaching in 'mother tongue' languages, with instruction in Pashtu offered in Kabul and Dari in Kapisa. This program works to address the critical shortage of trained professionals in physical rehabilitation services in Afghanistan so that students, when they graduate, can return to their communities and support people with disabilities to lead full and rich lives.

The program will be implemented in close collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Physiotherapy Institute (PTI) at the Ghazanfar Institute of Health Sciences (GIHS), Ministry of Public Health.

Results – NAC supported midwifery and health nursing programs get high marks

Despite being located in some of the most challenging and insecure provinces in Afghanistan, NAC supported midwifery and health nursing schools have been rated by Afghanistan's Midwifery and Nursing Education Accreditation Board (AMNEAB), in 2015 mid-term assessments, as being some of the best in the country.

The results, out of 100 % as the highest score possible are as follows:

- 94% - Kapisa Community Midwifery Education School
- 96% - Kapisa Community Health Nursing Education school
- 99% - Laghman Community Midwifery Education School
- 96% - Laghman Community Health Nursing Education school
- 93% - Wardak Community Midwifery Education School

The results show that there have been significant improvements in the management and implementation of NAC supported Community Midwifery Education and Community Health Nursing Education schools.



PROVINCES: Badakhshan, Faryab, Ghazni, Kabul, Kapisa, Khost, Laghman, Nangarhar, Wardak

- 15% of all Afghan midwives have been educated with NAC support
- 236 Health-nursing and Midwifery students supported - up 12.5% from 2014
- NAC supported Health-nursing and Midwifery students have a 96.7% completion rate
- Out of 23 graduates from the Community Health Nursing Education course in Laghman, 21 are now employed as nurses
- 16,823 children received deworming treatment



Our work:

Governance and civil society

Sustainable Development Goals:

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

The need for strong, equitable leadership and participation in development at the community, district and provincial levels in Afghanistan is more important now than ever. Empowering rural community members as actors in and drivers of change in the key areas that affect their lives, such as food production, livelihoods, disaster risk reduction, health and education is essential in developing healthy inclusive and self-reliant communities. Developing productive relationships and accountability between civil society and governmental organizations is also an important part of this process. These are crucial areas of NACs support for governance and civil society.

Capacity building for Governance and Civil Society actors

Community Development Councils are responsible for governance at the village level and should play a central role in the provision of services and overall wellbeing of the communities they serve. However, in many rural and hard-to-reach communities in Afghanistan, Community Development Councils lack key capacities and experience which would make them effective in serving their communities; including: assessing community needs, planning, implementing projects, monitoring and evaluation, and working together with provincial and district level government authorities. Supporting Community Development Councils in strengthening their capacities in these areas is a primary focus of NACs work and is being provided through workshops, trainings and meetings at the district and community levels in Badakhshan, Faryab and Ghazni.

Ultimately, NAC supports Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in rural communities to participate in local decision-making and to promote and strengthen community voice and accountability, particularly in

the delivery of basic services. To this end, NAC has conducted and consolidated trainings for local CSOs, emphasizing rights, responsibilities, and potential areas for citizen participation in local governance, and effective monitoring and evaluation of government service providers.

Participation in local governance

NAC has been working closely with the Badakhshan Civil Society Forum to mentor them on civil society network coordination, particularly in mobilizing its members to participate in the Forum's activities. In this way, NAC has also provided assistance to the Badakhshan Civil Society Forum in designing and conducting a membership orientation workshop for local organizations interested in joining the Forum.

Example from practice – civil society planning in Ghazni

NAC organised a three-day workshop in Jaghori and Malistan districts of Ghazni province. The 6 CSOs who participated, were able to formulate their strategic plans for 2015 - 2018, which are now guiding them in the development and implementation of their annual work plans. During the workshops the CSOs were supported to identify their opportunities and threats and able to outline vision, mission and values statements for their organizations. Participating CSOs printed their strategic three-year plans onto banners and hung these in their offices.

To further support local Civil Society Organizations in being actively involved in local governance, NAC has designed and organized an ongoing 'CSO Provincial Forum on Local Governance'; a series of lectures and discussions with key players in local governance in Badakhshan, in coordination with the Forum.

A similar approach was also used towards CSOs in Faryab and Ghazni provinces, encouraging community based and grassroots organizations to take more active roles in governance.

Reaching out beyond its main focal provinces, NAC has also organized and helped facilitate knowledge



Examples from practice – Community Development Councils in Badakhshan

When a Community Development Council (CDC) was initially established several years ago in Seyab Dash village, Badakhshan province, two community members, Mohammad Akram and Bay Mohammad, were elected to this council and both were eager to serve their community, but apprehensive about the new roles they would need to play, considering that they lacked both knowledge and experience on leading their fellow villagers in this new approach to community development.

While some capacity interventions were provided to them in the past, both Mohammad Akram and Bay Mohammad felt that these were not enough, and had not raised their confidence in effectively serving in their new roles in the community development process.

'We were told a lot about democratic structures, development plans and community participation, but we really could not show something tangible to the community', Mohammad Akram explained.

It was at this point that NAC came to Seyab Dash to reinforce previous capacity building interventions. The NAC training workshop began with a thorough explanation of the roles and responsibilities of the CDC members, to help them truly understand the practicalities and importance of their newly-held positions. This was followed by further training workshops on participatory development planning, community conflict resolution, and common resource management.

These NAC trainings proved to be pivotal in kick-starting the work of the CDC as leaders in their village's development. 'Through the common-resource management training given by NAC, we were able to persuade our community to undertake important water conservation infrastructure work, like building small dams to prevent erosion', proudly claimed Bay Mohammad. The CDC also organized a community water management committee to ensure the sustainable use of the village's natural water resources. Additionally, pastoralists in the village were guided by the CDC to organize a forage and pasture committee to manage community rangelands, and implement an alfalfa production project to increase forage production for village livestock.

The Seyab Dash experience shows that when provided with appropriate knowledge and skills, communities in the remotest areas can also be transformed into active participants in their own development.

and experience exchange meetings between the Badakhshan Civil Society Forum and the Civil Society Forum in Balkh province. Similarly, civil society organizations in Ghazni and Bamiyan provinces have been paired to develop cross linkages and support the development of a wider civil society network in Afghanistan.

The Voices of Afghan Villagers initiative

For a more empowered, diverse and dynamic civil society movement in Afghanistan to take root, the voices of rural and hard-to-reach community members must be heard. NAC has been pioneering an initiative in Jaghori, Ghazni province, working with five community-based CSOs to support them in articulating the issues and concerns that matter to them. Afghan villagers have discussed the challenges they face, conducted research and gathered evidence themselves and interpreted their findings and worked together with district and provincial authorities to develop locally relevant solutions.

Bridging the gaps

In intensively promoting civil society, NAC does not forget the importance of involving provincial and district level government organizations in working towards a better, more inclusive Afghanistan.

There is often a lack of balance between executive and legislative branches of government in Afghanistan, both on the provincial and district levels, and working solely with Civil Society Organizations can disempower and disconnect the Afghan government from the processes of development. It is therefore crucial to NAC that everything we do is coordinated with provincial and district assemblies – this helps lay the foundation for a stronger democracy.

NAC does this in Badakhshan, Faryab and Ghazni, through involving representatives from provincial and district government, alongside civil society actors in assessing needs, planning and implementing humanitarian response and development work. By facilitating coordination and cooperation between these different groups, NAC plays a central role in redressing imbalances and bridging the gaps between government and civil society.

'Twinning' with local NGOs

Another important aspect of developing civil society in Afghanistan involves building the capacities of local NGOs in addressing the many challenges faced in the country and in supporting these NGOs in surviving and thriving in an environment of increasing competition for limited donor funds.

In this effort, NAC has been working with the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR) on a UK Department for International Development (DFID) funded program that partners

international NGOs and local Afghan NGOs together to foster mutual learning and support local NGOs in strengthening their capacities in working effectively and transparently in their areas of humanitarian response and development. In this program, local NGOs are treated as genuine partners, not sub-contractors. NAC is now 'twinning' with two Afghan NGOs; AREA (Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation in Afghanistan) and SAF (Solidarity for Afghan Families). This five-year commitment will help AREA and SAF in strengthening their organizations to, amongst other things, access Common Humanitarian Funding (CHF) - a rigorous process which requires organizations to demonstrate their maturity, transparency and funding sustainability.

To ensure that 'twinning' goes beyond meetings and theory, to actually provide practical, on the ground experience, NAC has pioneered an initiative in which local NGO partners work together with NAC in providing humanitarian response and development in the field. This offers NAC and local partner NGOs opportunities to learn with and about each other through action. In practice, this has meant that NAC's local NGO partners were directly involved in NAC's response to the October-2015 earthquake, which devastated parts of Badakhshan and other parts of the region. Through this, AREA and SAF have gained invaluable experience in disaster response, relief and management and in related monitoring and evaluation.

This successful innovation makes practical sense and has since been adopted by ACBAR as a way of working with all the international NGOs and the local NGO twinning-partners it supports.

Women's participation in civil society

In 2015, NAC continued its support for women's Self Help Groups in Badakhshan, Faryab and Ghazni in order to empower women and equip them with key skills, in developing micro-businesses. Self Help Groups have proven to be popular and productive and have contributed towards increasing participants' self-confidence and self-esteem alongside their social standing with their families and communities in conjunction with their capacities to make decisions and contribute financially. For more see page 25.

PROVINCES: Badakhshan, Faryab, Ghazni, Kabul

- 140 Community Development Councils and District Development Associations had their capacities built
- 264 colleagues from UN agencies and NGOs trained

Our work:

Empowering women

Sustainable Development Goals:

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Opportunities for Afghan women

Afghan women, especially those living in rural areas, are often isolated from their peers and have limited opportunities to earn money and make decisions for themselves, their families and wider communities. To address these challenges, NAC has been working closely with women and communities in Badakhshan and Ghazni to establish and support Self Help Groups – groups of 10-15 women who work together to generate income through micro business initiatives. This is a part of NACs overall commitment to strengthen Civil Society Organisations and support communities to become more inclusive and sustainable.

Self Help Groups work in three ways: 1) empowering Afghan women – challenging conservative and repressive gender stereotypes, strengthening women's positions in society and promoting their independence, both socially and economically; 2) supporting women in developing valuable knowledge and skills, such as numeracy and entrepreneurship, which they can use in different areas of their lives, and; 3) increasing sustainability by focusing on locally-based micro businesses; local products, including agricultural products; and traditional knowledge and cultural practices such as weaving and sewing.

Economic and social empowerment

Speaking to the long-term economic benefits of the program, a member of a Self Help Group from Ghazni explained: 'We didn't know about savings before, but now we have learned and this will help us to find work and continue to develop our businesses.'

Alongside providing Self Help Groups with a small initial investment of between USD 200 – 350, NAC has given the groups ongoing training and support in basic numeracy and how to manage and grow micro businesses.

A Self Help Group member from Badakhshan explained: 'Before I joined the group, I didn't know

about numbers, how to count, add and subtract, and now I can count without a calculator and manage my money'.

The groups have proven to be remarkably successful, both economically and socially. For example, one Self Help Group in Ghazni having received an initial investment of USD 350, managed to end up with a surplus of almost USD 1000 in only a few months. On average, Self Help Groups have managed to save over USD 500 per year.

Economic benefits are also strongly linked with social benefits. As a Self Help Group member from Badakhshan explained: 'I learned to support my children by saving money. I borrowed money, used that to make more money and then could use my savings to buy stationary and books to support my children to go to school'. Further, Self Help Group members have gained greater independence to travel and work outside of their homes and gained respect within their families and wider communities as their small businesses have grown and become successful. Another Self Help Group member from Badakhshan said: 'Now we have freedom to go out of our homes, go to the meetings and even have our own money.'

Through membership in Self Help Groups, women have also gained knowledge and confidence in communication and cooperation. A leader of a Self Help Group in Badakhshan said: 'I learned how to solve differences and problems in the group. At first we didn't trust each other but I learned how to improve communication and build bridges.'

PROVINCES: Badakhshan, Ghazni

- 57 Self Help Groups established
- 823 women involved
- 86% of Self Help Groups have the support of their communities
- 96.7% of Self Help Group members now decision makers in their families



NAC in 2015

279 staff in Afghanistan, 3 in Norway. 99% Afghan nationals, 35% women

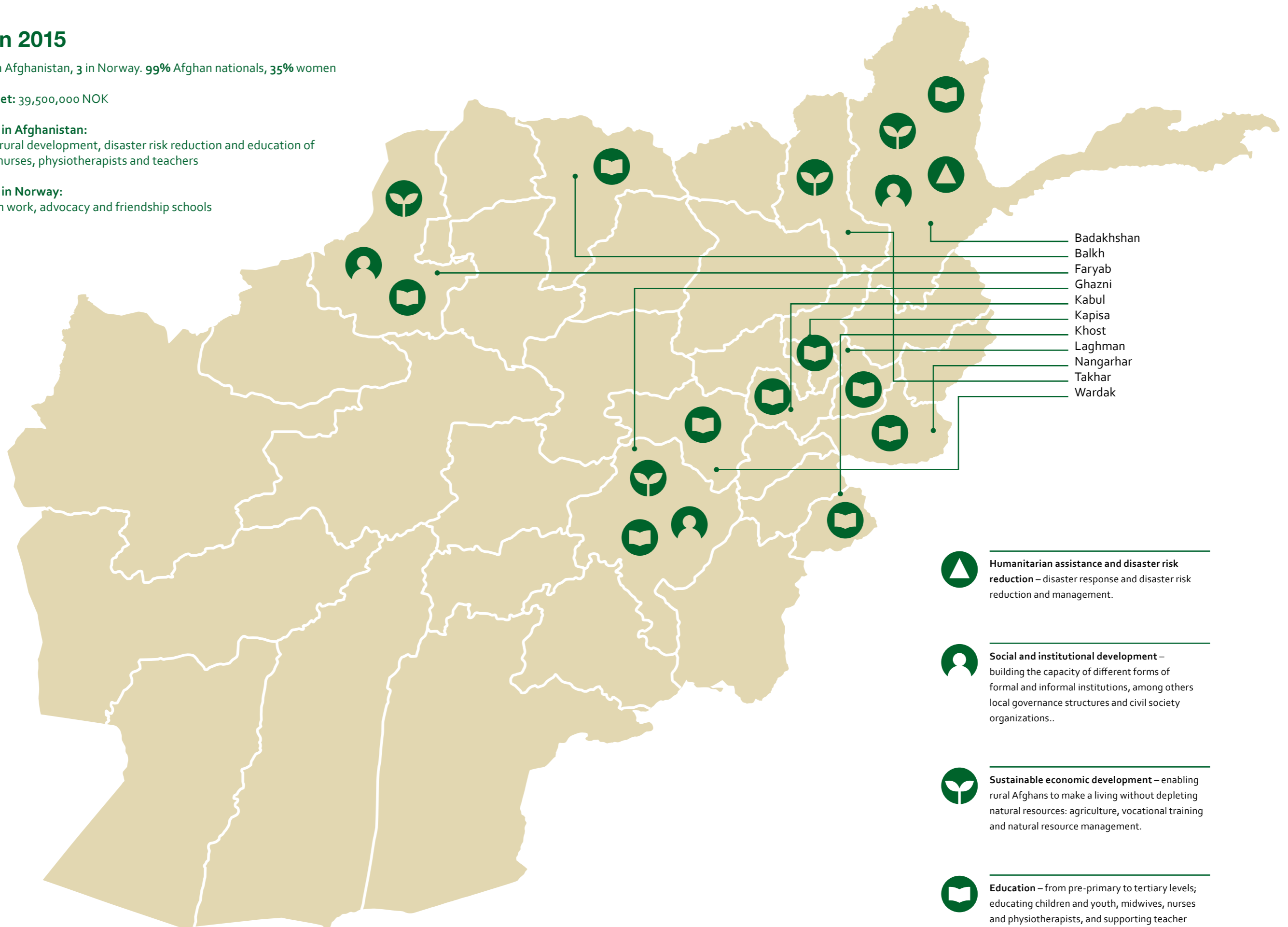
Total budget: 39,500,000 NOK


Main work in Afghanistan:


integrated rural development, disaster risk reduction and education of midwives, nurses, physiotherapists and teachers


Main work in Norway:


information work, advocacy and friendship schools



 **Humanitarian assistance and disaster risk reduction** – disaster response and disaster risk reduction and management.

 **Social and institutional development** – building the capacity of different forms of formal and informal institutions, among others local governance structures and civil society organizations..

 **Sustainable economic development** – enabling rural Afghans to make a living without depleting natural resources: agriculture, vocational training and natural resource management.

 **Education** – from pre-primary to tertiary levels; educating children and youth, midwives, nurses and physiotherapists, and supporting teacher education and training.



Our work:

Food and work

Sustainable Development Goals:

- Goal 1.** End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2.** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 5.** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 8.** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 12.** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13.** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 15.** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Managing natural resources

The problem of overgrazing and degradation of pastureland in Afghanistan is a key environmental and food security issue which threatens many communities' long-term survival. There are similar challenges in regards to water, which is often scarce and contested, and forests, which have been exploited and degraded for decades, in part due to protracted war in the country. These problems are interconnected with wider challenges posed by natural disasters and climate change. For more see page 37.

Sustainable futures for rural and hard-to-reach communities depend on good local stewardship of shared natural resources including pastureland, water, and forests. NAC has been working intensively at the community level to support the development of community-based natural resource management committees and other grassroots initiatives with responsibility for protecting and maintaining their communities' natural resources. Forestry, Pastureland and Water Management Committees have been established and trained on sustainable management practices in NAC supported communities. NAC works by strengthening, or re-introducing traditional, sustainable methods of natural resource management which may have been weakened or lost due to war, alongside new, low-cost technologies adapted to fit community needs and resources. NAC's support for these committees also involves conflict resolution and equitable sharing of natural resources within and between communities. These committees are further empowered through education on Afghanistan's natural resource management laws and legislation, enabling them

to understand their rights and responsibilities and advocate with the government for the support they are legally entitled to. At the same time, NAC brings provincial and district government agencies, including the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) and the National Environmental Protection Agency Afghanistan (NEPA), together with grassroots movements to strengthen cooperation and collaboration between government and civil society actors.

Working with farmers

With more than 60% of Afghans working in farming, often on small-hold and subsistence farms, proper support and development of agriculture and livestock farming is paramount.

A key aspect of NAC's work is making sure that Afghan communities have sufficient access to healthy and affordable food and that farming practices are local, sustainable and resilient to natural disasters and climate change.

NAC's initiatives in agriculture and livestock involve working collaboratively with local communities and government departments to ensure that capacities are built on all sides and that better relationships are developed between rural and hard-to-reach communities and the government.



Producing the food communities need

Recognizing that many Afghan farmers lack knowledge and experience of sound and sustainable farming practices, NAC has established a program of 'farmers' field schools' which promotes best agricultural practices. Farmers' field schools provide farmers with practical and experiential training, focusing on key agricultural practices including: crop rotation, use of good quality seeds, soil tilling, management and maintenance of irrigation systems, integrated pest management, composting, and orchard management. Participants in this program learn by doing. This is a part of NAC's overall approach to natural resource management and involves training farmers in their communities, in regional agriculture schools and universities, and 'model' farms and orchards.

Additionally, NAC works with communities, providing good quality seeds and supporting the planting and sustainable management of crops with high nutritional value as well as high-yield fruit trees. NAC is also invested in supporting women to grow kitchen gardens which provide needed nutritional supplement to their families' diets, as well as excess produce which can be sold to boost incomes. NAC natural resource management and health and education teams work together to link this support with nutrition and health education for communities. For more see page 32.

NAC has also worked with the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) and local communities to help farmers grow fodder for their livestock and promote and provide support for livestock vaccinations. To address existing gaps in veterinary services for rural and hard-to-reach communities, NAC has further supported the training of para-veterinary workers (who have veterinary training, but are not fully accredited veterinarians) at

the village level, who are now able to run their own businesses and support their communities in having adequate supplies of healthy livestock.

Example from practice

NAC conducted a short, intensive training for 34 farmers and 26 agriculture students from Ghazni Province, at the Jaghori Agriculture School and Research Center in Sang-e-Masha.

This practical training focused on mulching, compost preparation and drip irrigation - all valuable techniques for implementing sustainable farming.

Participants experienced the benefits of NAC's practically focused training, which is more directly useful and engaging than theoretical approaches. This training also helped build the capacity of the Jaghori Agriculture School and Research Center, a valuable regional resource, in supporting area farmers.

Fakhrudin, a training participant from Sabz Chob Village, an area with limited access to water, explained, 'The training was very useful for me and I learned different methods and techniques about agriculture and cultivation. I learned how to strategically use small amounts of water for cultivation. Now I understand that even though I have very little water, I can still cultivate vegetables.'

Moving beyond food production

Sustainable methods of food production are essential for survival, but in recognition that production is only part of what is needed, NAC also supports rural and hard-to-reach communities in processing and marketing the food they produce. NAC gives training and support for communities in vegetable and fruit processing, for example by supporting women's Self Help Groups in preserving and selling vegetables and related micro-business opportunities.

Natural disasters and climate change have adversely affected many rural and hard-to-reach communities in Afghanistan, particularly in the parts of Badakhshan that were affected by the devastating 2015 earthquake. For more see page 38. These communities suffer acutely from a lack of food and work. In 2015, NAC, in partnership with the World Food Program, worked to address these challenges through a combination of humanitarian relief and long-term development support in the Yawan, Kohistan, Raghistan and Khwahan districts of Badakhshan. Support was provided through two linked programs - 'Asset Creation' and support for 'Economically Stressed Rural Populations'. As a result, communities received food for work in the form of food packages including staples such as wheat, pulses, oil and salt for over 6500 families. In exchange for food, community members were employed as laborers in agriculture, reforestation, and rehabilitation and construction of essential community access roads.

As well as providing food for work, NAC addressed communities' needs for sustainable development through: the provision of seeds and cultivation support for livestock fodder; establishment and training of forestry committees; and support with forestry rehabilitation of over 300 acres in the seven most vulnerable communities. This combination of short-term relief and long-term development is an innovative way of supporting communities' survival and resilience in the face of natural disasters and climate change.

Work by and for local communities

Alongside training and capacity building, much of the work necessary to ensuring overall sustainable development in rural and hard-to-reach communities depends on the labor needed to develop related infrastructure projects such as community access roads and water supplies.

Instead of bringing in outside contractors, NAC contracts and works together with local community members to provide the necessary labor for these

invaluable projects. All of NAC's infrastructure projects have been done in partnership with communities, so that community members themselves have been directly involved every step of the way in assessing needs, training, planning, and doing the work. NAC's overall approach to community contracting means that infrastructure projects are not just driven from outside, but are relevant to community needs, cost-effective, and are ultimately able to be maintained and further developed at the community level with minimal outside support. This is about ownership and about building local capacity to take responsibility for development in local communities.



PROVINCES: Badakhshan, Faryab, Ghazni and Takhar

- 280 kilometers of road constructed or rehabilitated
- 6500 community members benefitting from wells
- 64,640 trees planted



Education ↔ Health ↔ Civil Society Organization

The place: Layaba, Faizabad, Badakhshan

The challenges: Women in Layaba, as in many other parts of Afghanistan, often lack autonomy and opportunities to travel outside of their homes, develop their knowledge, interests and skills, earn money and make decisions within their families and communities. Crucially, even when such opportunities are available, many women cannot take advantage of them because of the demands of childcare on their time and energy. Additionally, there are few opportunities for children to access good quality pre-schooling which could support their physical, social and educational development, providing them with a solid foundation for their future lives.

The action: As part of NAC's establishment of Self Help Groups for women there has been a related development of Playgroups for children. Together, NAC's Governance, Education and Health teams have worked with Self Help Groups in establishing Playgroups, and the group in Layaba is one example. The Layaba Playgroup supports 22 children and 15 women - the members of the local Self Help Group. The Playgroups work as informal kindergartens, providing children with opportunities for supervised play and learning. As part of NAC's training for Playgroup facilitators, facilitators were taught about how to work with children using games and local stories, fitting with NAC's overall approach to promoting learner-centered teaching. The Playgroups have also given NAC an opportunity to provide mothers and children with important, practical knowledge and guidance about health and sanitation. Playgroups offer a practical way of addressing key issues in education and health and promoting civil society organizations and women's empowerment all together at the same time - truly an integrated approach.

The impacts: Although the Playgroups are a relatively recent development, there have already been positive impacts. Children are receiving a good foundation for future development and education and mothers are being freed to focus on developing micro businesses, gaining knowledge, skills and confidence, and earning money to support their families and communities. Women have been trained as Playgroup facilitators, gaining knowledge and skills in early childhood development. Mothers are reporting that their children are enjoying the Playgroup. They've also noted that as a result, their children's health and cleanliness has improved. Alongside the benefits for children, the role of Playgroups in empowering women has been highlighted by members of the Self Help Groups. The facilitator of the Layaba Playgroup, who had been running a women's literacy course for the Group, explained, 'I want to do this work for two reasons, first because of my own children and also because the Playgroup gives mothers a chance to participate in the Group. I've seen the changes in the attitudes of the women in the Self Help Group who were trained in literacy - in the beginning the women were not so happy to attend, but now they are so happy and learn a lot.'

Our work:

Integrated rural development

Complex challenges - interlinking responses

In our increasingly complex and interconnected world, it makes sense to look at the challenges we face in developing a healthy, peaceful and inclusive Afghanistan not as a set of one sided, isolated problems to solve one by one, but as multifaceted and interlinking parts of bigger issues related to inequality, poverty, conflict and environmental degradation. This fits the reality on the ground, where a rural villager should not need to make a distinction, or prioritize between having a basic education, supporting her family, providing healthy food and ensuring sustainability by protecting her natural environment – because these needs are all linked together.

This philosophy is at the heart of NAC's approach to Integrated Rural Development – where our programs in governance and civil society, gender and human rights, education, health, food and work, and disaster risk reduction and management find common ground.

Putting ideas into practice

Of course, it's one thing to talk about the idea of integrated approaches to development, but even more important to show how this works in actual practice. The following example highlights how NAC puts Integrated Rural Development into action.

Natural Resource Management ↔ Disaster Risk Reduction

The place: Yawan District, Badakhshan

The challenges: Sari village in Yawan had been experiencing the destruction of their forests and pastureland and the risk of destruction of their homes from natural disasters such as flooding, landslides and avalanches. This damage and future risks were exacerbated by the overharvesting of trees for firewood and to make space for new agricultural land, and the overgrazing of animals in sensitive areas where they damage slow growing, indigenous vegetation. A combination of issues were at play here including climate change, and a lack of awareness and capacity in the community around good natural resource management and disaster preparedness.

The action: In 2014 NAC's Natural Resource Management and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management teams worked together with the community, taking an integrated approach by providing a combination of awareness raising and training for community members on: rehabilitating pasture and forest lands; reducing natural disasters risks and hazards; protecting indigenous trees and other vegetation; planting fast growing trees for use as building materials and firewood; and making hay for feeding livestock. Training also involved the reduction of soil erosion and overall good natural resource management. To ensure the training and awareness raising led to action, NAC supported the community in establishing water and forest committees and provided seeds and tools.

The impacts: By the end of 2015, two years after NAC's initial training and support, the village has reported many positive impacts. There is much greater awareness in the community about the need for sound natural resource management linked with disaster risk reduction and an increased capacity to work towards these goals. The village also reported a general improvement in their economic situation. There has been marked, new growth of indigenous trees and bushes such as pistachio, pine and red bud. One villager said, 'After years without, we can see once again the fruits on the pistachio trees.' Also, community members noted that wild animals, such as birds and rabbits were returning to village lands. But even more significant for the village's long-term survival, there has been an 80% reduction of flooding in the community since the project started.



Our work:

New and innovative programs

Researching earthquakes using the latest technology

The Pamir mountain range in Northern Afghanistan is very seismically active with large earthquakes (of magnitude seven and higher) occurring at least every decade and smaller, but still devastating earthquakes occurring much more frequently. These earthquakes cause massive loss of lives and extensive damage to infrastructure – such as houses, roads, power lines, bridges and communication networks – and are especially devastating for rural and hard-to-reach communities. One of the most prominent seismic hazards in the Pamir region are landslides, which can bury whole villages and destroy homes and essential infrastructure, as happened both in April-2014 and October-2015.

Research which identifies areas where there is high risk of seismic hazards in advance of devastating earthquakes is key to providing effective disaster risk reduction and management. In 2015, NAC, in collaboration with the University of Montana, and the German Department of Geosciences, began an innovative research program in Badakhshan in collaboration with Afghanistan Geological Survey (AGS), establishing Global Positioning Stations to fill the current gaps in seismic maps of the region. This research, which is the first of its kind in Afghanistan, will be used to investigate the seismic potential of currently active earthquake faults in the Pamir in order to better protect at-risk communities in the region.

Building meso level relationships through teacher education

Working with the Maimana Teacher Training College (TTC) in Faryab province, in 2015, NAC supported TTC lecturers in developing and implementing a training program for local school teachers on subject knowledge, resource development and learner-centered teaching methods – all part of NAC's focus on moving Afghanistan towards a more inclusive system of education.

The training, which took place over fifteen days in two districts, included twenty school teachers and was very well received. NAC has observed that as a result of the training, participants have shared their new knowledge and skills with other teachers in their schools and are adapting and using local resources in their daily lessons. The training has had an added benefit of fostering a new relationship between the teachers and TTC lecturers. This relationship has proven to be mutually beneficial, as it has continued to develop, beyond NAC's direct involvement. School teachers are now visiting the TTC regularly for support with the challenges they face in the classroom. In addition, regular, district level, meetings are now taking place between teachers and TTC staff in which both groups gain insights into each others' experiences – this had not happened in the past. Meaningful connections between teacher education and school teaching go beyond a specific training intervention and speak to NAC's success in making sustainable links between institutions and individuals at the meso level.



Our humanitarian work:

Disaster risk reduction

Sustainable Development Goals:

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Coordinated planning and response

Given the frequency and severity of impacts of natural disasters in Afghanistan, attention to planning for and response to disasters is essential. Focusing on Badakhshan, one of the most disaster prone provinces in Afghanistan, NAC has taken a holistic approach, engaging communities and district, provincial and national departments and institutions, and international agencies in monthly Disaster Risk Reduction and Management meetings. This builds a coordinated approach to preparing for and responding to disasters, making the best use of resources at all levels and avoiding unnecessary duplication of efforts in the field.

Developing capacities at all levels

Improving the capacities of disaster responders at different levels of the system is a NAC priority. NAC has engaged in regular training of disaster response teams in assessing risks and hazards, including Geographical Information System (GIS) hazard mapping, rapid disaster assessment and reporting, and search and rescue. Trainings have been inclusive of members of Provincial and District Management Committees as well as Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authorities (ANDMA), which has helped develop more collaboration and better coordination between national, provincial and district agencies.

At the community level, NAC has worked in training and strengthening Community-based Disaster Response and Management Teams (CBDRMTs) in: identifying risks and hazards, such as landslides and erosion; designating safe areas in the event of disasters; evacuation; search and rescue; and basic first aid. NAC has also worked with community-based teams in developing better communication between different communities and disaster response and management actors at the district, provincial and national levels. The community-based teams are gender balanced, helping to develop more inclusive

communities and in recognition of the important roles women can and do play in disaster risk reduction.

NAC has focused particularly on schools, placing these important community institutions at the center of disaster risk reduction efforts. Through NAC's establishment and training of gender balanced, School-based Emergency Response Teams, students and teachers, alongside other community members, have demonstrated their appropriate disaster response capacities. They have done so, both in disaster simulation drills, and in the face of actual disaster during the 2015 earthquake which devastated parts of Badakhshan.

Alongside training, NAC has upgraded four of Badakhshan's district disaster response centres (these had been constructed by NAC in the past) by providing essential disaster response equipment including, blankets, tarpaulins, and first aid boxes, as well as search and rescue tools, such as pickaxes, stretchers, torches, gloves, and loud speakers. Based on needs, additional technological equipment such as GPS trackers and computers have also been provided.

Learning from the 2014 Ab-e-Barik landslide disaster, it was important for the Provincial Government to have access to rescue equipment on-site. And so, to improve response capacities of provincial authorities, NAC constructed a stock-pile for non-food items in the Governor's compound in Faizabad, Badakhshan's provincial capital.

Integrated environmental protection

Rural and hard-to-reach communities in Afghanistan face linked problems posed by natural disasters and climate change which threaten their very survival. Supporting communities to gain knowledge about these issues and in taking practical steps to combat natural disasters and climate change, NAC has been running environmental awareness campaigns

in communities with the support of national, provincial and district government organizations and agencies. These campaigns cover: pollution, reforestation and sustainable management of natural resources, and also provide communities with simple equipment to start improving waste management, such as trash receptacles for community bazars, wheelbarrows and shovels. Environmental awareness campaigns are linked directly to schooling through engaging children and teachers in school-supported environmental projects with activities such as tree planting, gardening, and waste management. This initiative is central to NAC's integrated approach to disaster risk reduction, natural resource management and education.

Flood and drought protection

On the one hand, too much water in the wrong place in the form of flooding and on the other, too little water in the form of droughts are both hazards which have disastrous consequences for many Afghan communities. By focusing on root causes and employing community-based solutions, NAC works to mitigate the impacts of flooding and drought on rural and hard-to-reach communities.

One of the biggest environmental challenges in Afghanistan is deforestation which has exacerbated the damage caused by natural disasters and climate change, such as flooding and landslides. To combat this, NAC is working with communities in tree planting initiatives, which focus particularly on engaging women in the process of growing and nursing saplings. Over the years, more than one million trees have been planted by NAC to protect the environment in Badakhshan and Ghazni.

In response to the increasing frequency of summer droughts, NAC has been working with vulnerable communities to mitigate the impacts with a range of infrastructure projects. Through projects such as building aqueducts, digging irrigation canals, construction of gabion walls (which protect against erosion and flooding), communities are seeing tangible results with more available water and increased agricultural productivity during drought seasons.

Response put to the test



Preparing communities to face disasters is a key part of NAC's work. But how effective have the NAC disaster preparedness programs been? When a massive earthquake hit Afghanistan in October 2015, NAC's work was truly put to the test. The 7.5 magnitude earthquake, left 107 people dead, 451 injured, and caused the total destruction of 5,612 houses with a further 9,703 damaged. Badakhshan, where NAC has an on-going Disaster Risk Reduction program, was particularly hard hit.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, NAC dispatched assessment teams to establish the effectiveness of the provincial, district, community and school level disaster management teams in managing the earthquake response, and to collect lessons learned. The assessment provided compelling evidence that NAC's program had been genuinely effective in preparing communities to face disasters.

Increased effectiveness at all levels

The Provincial Disaster Management Committee reported that NAC's support had strengthened its capacity to provide oversight on disaster response to the earthquake and that coordination had improved significantly. The sub-committee for

search and rescue had a better understanding of its responsibilities and was able to play an active role in supporting earthquake affected districts.

District Disaster Management Committees indicated that, in the past, disaster responses were poorly coordinated, but that the trainings conducted by NAC had enhanced their capacities to coordinate and respond more effectively. Communities confirmed that the distribution of aid to affected families was well coordinated and managed in a transparent manner.

Within earthquake affected communities, designated teams led rescue operations and gave first aid to affected community members; children were evacuated to safer places; and loud speakers were used to warn community members about possible dangers. Community-based Disaster Management Teams expressed how useful the trainings and drills facilitated by NAC had been both during and after the earthquake.

Children are prepared to face disasters

The earthquake had particularly tragic consequences for children. In one school in the neighbouring province of Takhar, 13 children died and more than 30 were injured, not because of the earthquake itself, but because of the panic afterwards. However, in schools where NAC had conducted trainings, no children died and none were severely injured, evidence that trainings had direct, positive impacts.

Children who had taken part in the trainings were grateful for the support they received from NAC, especially the drills. They said they had learned a lot about natural disasters and specifically about the importance of moving to designated safe-places, and avoiding using bridges and ladders during an earthquake. They had also been taught how to provide first-aid. As expected, they were frightened when they felt the earthquake, but without panicking, they immediately moved away from walls. Some children hid under tables and others stayed away from windows. Many children worked together with the rescue teams, provided first-aid, and helped to evacuate other children. One girl, Saliha, explained that she held a pillow to her head just in case if something fell, she wouldn't get hurt.

Preparedness is about sustainability

It is clear, high quality training and preparation for disasters, such as NAC provides, genuinely reduces risks and save lives when disasters strike. Preparing communities and enabling individuals to face disasters strengthens their resilience leading to safer, more sustainable futures.

With support of the UN Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) NAC provided financial support to 4,707 community members in Arghanjkhwa, Argo, Keshem, Kohistan and Yawan districts of Badakhshan, including 2,637 children in the aftermath of the earthquake. The support enabled affected families to find shelter over the harsh winter. The initiative was implemented in close collaboration with provincial and district authorities and local community leaders. Nazar Mohammad of Dasht-e-Ping Village, Arghanjkhwa District, expressed his gratitude to the program for enabling him to provide safe and warm housing for his family during the winter months. When spring comes the hard work of rebuilding their lives will require much additional support by NAC and other national and international partners.



PROVINCE: BADAKHSHAN
NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES: 95,000

- 4,707 victims of the October 2015 earthquake received shelter
- 4 district disaster response centers supplied with lifesaving equipment
- 1 provincial stockpile constructed
- 60 community-based response teams trained in search and rescue, evacuation and first-aid
- 114 district disaster management committee members trained to better respond to disasters
- 1470 children equal numbers of boys and girls, trained in disaster risk reduction



Our work:

Afghan youth tell their stories

Afghans are master storytellers, who have honed their skills over centuries. We know that those Afghans who come to Norway have strong stories, beautiful stories, moving stories. We just wish that the rest of Norway could hear them too! How can we make that happen?

Helping Afghan voices be heard

If the Norwegian public and politicians are informed and understand what it feels like to be Afghan, they are more likely to show solidarity with the Afghan people. The challenge is: how do we help Afghans in Norway reach out through cultural differences, language barriers and common prejudices? How can we help Afghans tell their own stories?

Balancing act between two cultures

NAC had previously hosted public speaking and advocacy courses for Afghan Norwegian youth, in cooperation with the Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue. Through this we heard many powerful stories. Raw, unpolished, personal. Stories of joy and sadness; stories of a dangerous journey to a promised land; of everyday racism; but also of the kindness of strangers and a warm welcome to a new country.

We asked these brave young people whether they would be willing to share their stories with a larger audience. The answer, after careful consideration, was yes.

Taking the stage

To develop their stories and bring them to a wider public, these young people would need the best

assistance along the way. We got in touch with the experts at the Norwegian Storytelling Festival, who immediately loved the idea and took the young Afghan Norwegians under their wing. Together, they trained, and rehearsed, and discussed, getting emotional and sometimes even angry at each other, but always became friends again.

The big night was planned for Afghanistan Week, in March 2015. The young Afghans were nervous, but excited. The large conference room filled up with people, Afghans and Norwegians, both dear friends and total strangers. That night, they moved us all with their stories. There was laughter, and there were tears. But above all, there was empathy and understanding - a bridge across the cultural gap.

Since then, these talented storytellers have performed in several places, moving audiences across the country. In May 2016, they will even be performing at Norway's biggest literature festival, in Lillehammer.

Sogra Soltani, one of the young storytellers, explained what the experience of storytelling was like for her, *'At first I was sceptical about the storytelling, because I didn't know if I could tell something about myself. But afterwards, when I did tell my story, I felt like people were listening to me and it gave me other feelings, like more confidence and I felt like I was someone.'*





Our work:

Advocacy and information

In Norway, media coverage on Afghanistan has been waning for the past few years. Other places and other issues have captured the headlines. But we at NAC won't let the rest of Norway forget about Afghanistan or our Afghan friends.

Informed national debate

Although the work day in Norway is different from Afghanistan, the end goal is the same: a better life for the people of Afghanistan. We work from the theory that information and understanding leads to solidarity. In Norway, employees and volunteer members work to inform the population about Afghan conditions and to nudge Norwegian politicians to maintain a conscientious policy on Afghanistan.

The most effective way to reach out to the Norwegian public, is to work with and inform media, to help them write balanced and informed stories on Afghanistan. In 2015, we have sought to shed a light on what life is really like in Afghanistan, now that the international assistance to Afghanistan is only a shadow of what it used to be. In cooperation with the experts and researchers of the Afghanistan Analysts Network, NAC published a series of articles on different themes, such as maternal health and the state of the education sector. It was a sobering read. So much money has been spent by the international community without a focus on sustainable results.

NAC's web page and social media accounts are also key channels of communication.

Keeping the pressure on politicians

Afghanistan has made some real steps in a good direction, but needs continued support. Norway needs to keep up the good work of supporting Afghanistan. NAC will make sure that Norwegian politicians are reminded of Norway's responsibility for future development in Afghanistan owing to Norway's civil and military engagement in the country since 2001. To that end, NAC keeps regular contact with politicians in key positions and officials working on Afghanistan.

Even after all these years, some politicians are still advocating for short-term funding for development work. Even worse, the Norwegian government has

signalled that it will break its pledge to Afghanistan. Norway had promised to maintain a steady inflow of 750 million NOK in aid to Afghanistan until 2017. It is a paradox, when everyone knows that Afghanistan needs predictable finances in order to keep building a better life for all Afghans. NAC strives to remind Norwegian politicians of their promises.

Helping Afghan voices be heard

The best way to strengthen solidarity is to connect people with people. Therefore, NAC assists Afghans in Norway in raising their voices and being heard. One of our proudest moments in 2015, was seeing a handful of Norwegian Afghans tell their compelling personal stories on stage. Their stories ranged from humorous anecdotes on their first experiences with Norway, to accounts of everyday racism, or even of frightful experiences on the perilous journey to reach Norway as asylum seekers.

The performance 'Unpolished' was a cooperation between NAC and the professional storytellers of Fortellerfestivalen, who helped the Afghans hone their stories. For more see page 41.

Midwives in Norway in solidarity with midwives in Afghanistan

Since 2009, NAC has cooperated with The Norwegian Association of Midwives (Dnj) in our program for education midwives for rural Afghanistan. Dnj's engagement includes professional and pedagogical assistance and financial support.

On May 5 2015, the International Day of the Midwife, The Norwegian Association of Midwives' local chapter in Hordaland organized the fundraiser event 'Run for Life' in Bergen. 38 participating midwives ran a total of 250 km in solidarity with Afghan midwives, raising an astonishing NOK 82,086 for our program. This inspiring event has encouraged the Dnj to work towards making 'Run for Life' a nationwide solidarity campaign in 2016.

Raising public awareness

NAC hosts regular events that are open for all who are interested in Afghanistan. The flagship event was Afghanistan Week in March 2015. Working together with a host of Norwegian research institutions and other NGOs, we provided a whole week of seminars,

debates, documentary nights and cultural events focusing on Afghanistan. It is the perfect example and showcase for NAC's networking capabilities. When NAC takes the initiative, other actors are happy to join forces, leading to an outcome that far exceeds the individual contributions.

In the spring of 2015, NAC put the focus on women's rights in Afghanistan through a series of evening courses. The courses culminated in an activist training during Afghanistan Week with Afghan human rights activist Horia Mosadiq, who is an inspiration and a great source of good advice. The best outcome of the series of courses is a reinvigorated NAC women's

rights group, where Norwegian and Afghan volunteer activists work together for women's rights in Afghanistan.

With a more informal and laid back ambiance, NAC occasionally hosts an Afghan tea, a series of more

informal gatherings, where a shorter presentation is followed by a hearty conversation over several cups of sweet Afghan tea.

Last but not least, school children are a key audience. NAC has produced teaching programs for students of all ages, from the very beginning of elementary school and up through high school. These are very helpful pedagogical aids for teachers explaining themes such as poverty and war to school children, but also include more joyous topics, such as Afghan food and festivities.



Our work:

Friendship schools

The 'Friendship School Projects' was established in 1998 and is organized and implemented with generous support and funding from the children, teachers and parents in three Friendship Schools in Norway, namely; Krohnengen, Sulitjelma, and Vinderen. The three Norwegian schools are partnering with three schools in Badakhshan (Ganda Cheshma Girls' School in Argu and Girls High School No. 2 in Faizabad) and Kabul (Guldara Girls' High School). They are also supporting another four schools in Faryab, Ghazni and Kabul, including two new Afghan schools who joined the Friendship School Projects in 2015 – the Karte Solh Girls' High School in Faryab, and the Afghan National Association of the Deaf (ANAD) School for the Deaf in Kabul.

Through their friendship day in June, Vinderen raised NOK 101,871, while Krohnengen raised NOK 98,796. The money is used to make needed improvements in the Afghan friendship schools - arranging children's camps, building sports grounds,

buying books, stationary and equipment for learning, and upgrading classrooms. The friendship between Afghan and Norwegian schools also makes the school day more fun for all the children.

Cultural exchange and learning

Exchanging letters, experiences, hopes and dreams, students at NAC's friendship schools are building solidarity and learning about a world that exists far from their school, and yet so close. The funds raised by the Norwegian children make a huge difference for their friends, and have enabled the Afghan schools to expand and provide secondary education for even more children.

A main goal of our friendship schools program is for children to engage in cultural exchange and learning. The children exchange letters, pictures, drawings and handicrafts. Experience and knowledge about each other's countries and cultures are shared through parallel teaching programs.



Teacher using sign language during activities for the children in the School for the Deaf



The children in Guldara School in Kabul are happy about their friendship with children in Norway. "We are proud of our Norwegian friends and their support for our schools and our education. We have become more open-eyed after getting support from our siblings in Norway - we learn to support each other here in our home land, and also think about others."

NAC's volunteers

The board of management

NAC's board of management stakes out the organization's strategic direction and is involved in taking all major decisions regarding NAC's work.

Anne S. Hertzberg, Chair of the Board

A trained psychologist and physiotherapist, Anne has worked with aid and project development within health and rehabilitation and the social sector since 1995, focusing on Afghanistan since 2002.

Gry Synnevåg, Deputy Chair of the Board

Currently an academic at the Norwegian University for Life Sciences, Gry also has long experience managing complex development projects in Afghanistan. Her research interests include agricultural livelihoods in developing countries. Gry is also the project committee representative.

Yahya Najafzada, Information Committee Representative

Masooda Dostyar, Women's Committee Representative

Solveig Sandalsnes, Bergen Committee Representative

Norunn Grande, Board Member

Elisabet Palerud, Board Member

Farid Ghiami, Board Member

Sverre Hjelset, Board Member

Brittina Berg, Deputy Representative of the Project Committee

Terje Skaufjord, Deputy Representative of the Information Committee

Helge Liland, Deputy Representative of the Bergen Committee

Farshad Tami, Deputy Board Member



Volunteerism

NAC has 279 employees in Afghanistan, but in Norway, where most major decisions are made, it has only three staff members. This is because, ever since its founding in 1980, NAC's volunteer members have always been the organization's core resource.

For many years, NAC sent volunteer medical and technical staff from Norway to work in Afghanistan.

Today the board of management consists of volunteers: academics, medical personnel, civil servants, journalists and pensioners. They develop policy, negotiate with donors, take decisions, participate in debates and travel to Afghanistan, all on their own time. Only the Chair receives a token remuneration.

NAC's current body of active volunteers consists of hard-working Norwegians, Afghans and others. They constitute a unique resource in implementing a complex development program in difficult conditions, sharing Afghanistan-related information in Norway and advocating for more solidarity with the Afghan people.



Solidarity in Action

NAC's volunteers are a unique asset. Apart from the many who donate their time on activities in Norway, we are also so lucky to have a number of specialists who travel to Afghanistan giving expert advice on project implementation and other support. Where other organizations hire expensive consultants, NAC merely refunds the salary for time lost at these expert volunteers' regular workplaces. The money we save in this way allows the organization to do more to help our Afghan friends, which is everybody's ultimate goal.

The Bergen Local Committee

The Bergen local committee traces its history back to the very beginning of the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee. Some of its volunteers have been faithful members from the organization's start in 1980. The Bergen committee shares information on Afghanistan in and around Bergen and encourages the local population, from school children to local politicians, to support the development of Afghanistan. The Bergen local committee also contributes actively to the fundraising work of NAC's friendship school in Bergen, Krohnengen School. At the annual Christmas market, the school displayed Afghan artefacts and committee members teamed up with sixth graders to produce traditional Afghan food. Through the Christmas market, the students raised NOK 98,796, which will go to support the education of Afghan youth in NAC's Afghan friendship schools.



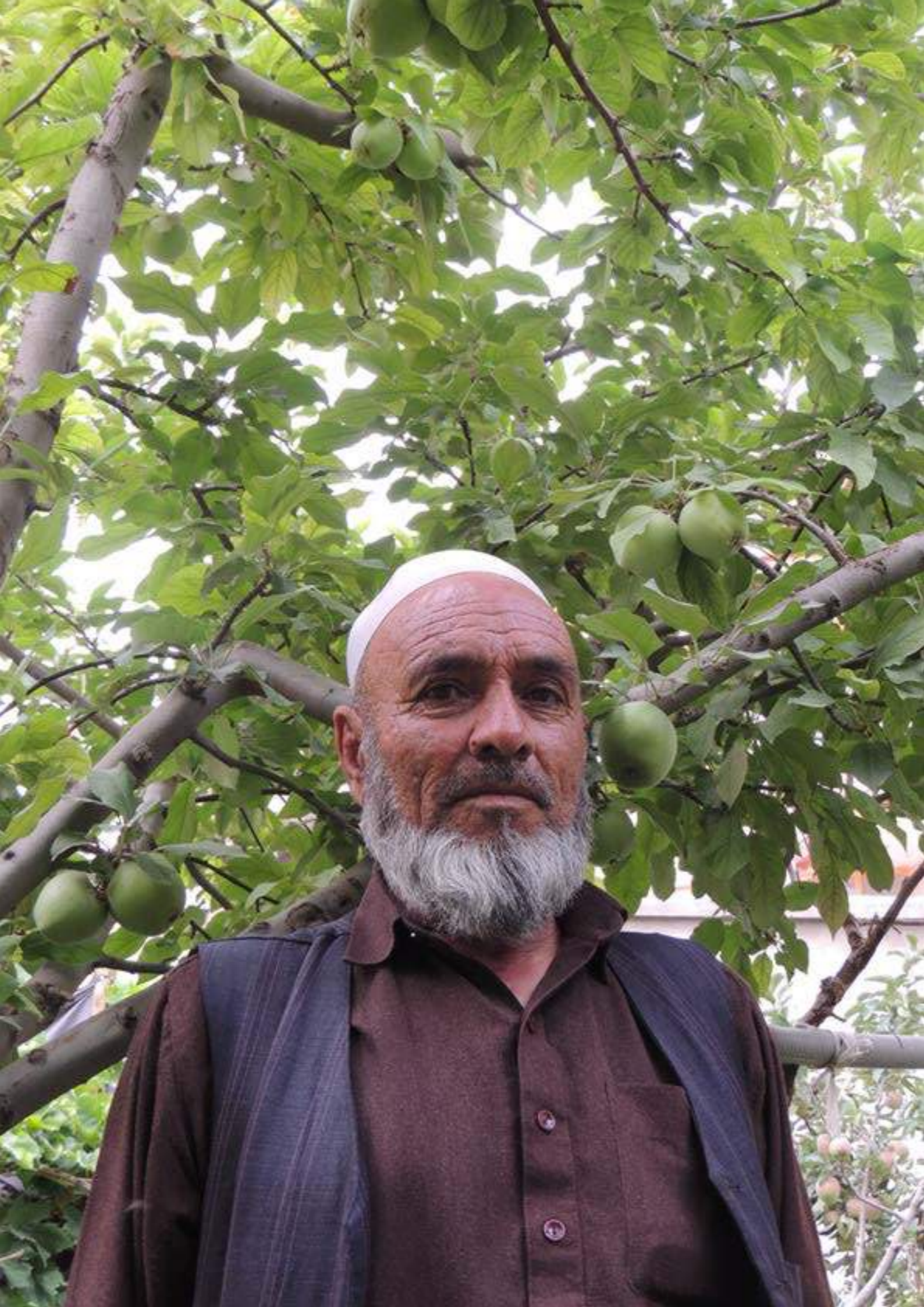
New volunteer groups and projects

During 2015, two new volunteer groups were established in Oslo – the Women Rights Group and the Youth Group. These groups were created to be an arena for those interested in working in solidarity with people in Afghanistan. Together with the 'Tell-tale Festival' NAC has also established the storytelling project 'Unpolished', in which a group of mostly young, Afghan-Norwegian volunteers created the show Afghan Dreams, and did a series of storytelling performances during the year.

Spontaneous assistance

NAC also enjoys the assistance of friends, members and volunteers who are always willing to make Afghan tea, help prepare events and make things happen - even baking cakes.





Our NAC Team:

35 years of dedication

NAC has 282 dedicated staff members, three in Norway and 279 in Afghanistan. 99% of our colleagues in Afghanistan are Afghans; Hazaras, Pashtuns, Tajiks, Turkmen and Uzbeks, who are all working hard, together, to rebuild and develop their country. 35% of our Afghan staff are women.

NAC has a national office in Kabul, which is also responsible for the Central and Eastern regions, a regional office for Northern Afghanistan in Faizabad, Badakhshan and regional offices for Southern Afghanistan in Ghazni City and Jaghori. In addition, NAC has a provincial office in Maimana, Faryab, seasonal field offices in Malistan and Yawan, and project offices in Kapisa, Khost, Laghman and Wardak.

At NAC, we recently celebrated our 35th anniversary. As we look back and reflect on our work in Afghanistan, we appreciate the commitment and dedication of our Afghan team, some of whom have been with us for most of our history. At the same time, we look forward to the future and recognise that as our NAC team grows and develops, our newest members of staff bring with them fresh hope and vision for the future of Afghanistan. To celebrate both our long-serving and newer members of the NAC team, we share some of their thoughts about their experiences of working with NAC.

Abdul Baqi: 'I've been working as a guard with NAC since 1988 and I'm currently working in the Kabul office. I have nice memories of my work over the last 28 years. I have always tried my best. Now NAC is part of my family - I love my job and I love my family.'

Abdul Qadir: 'I have served NAC as a driver for more than 30 years. In 1986, I was the first to bring Norwegian volunteers from Pakistan to Ghazni. At that time they were travelling from Peshawar to Quetta by plane and from Quetta to Ghazni by car and I was their driver. NAC has been like a family for me and I have appreciated the way NAC's management has always worked honestly and transparently.'

Latifa: 'I am happy and very proud of working with NAC. As a head of my household, I really needed to work to support my seven daughters and two small sons to go to school after their father left us alone a long time ago. I succeeded, and since 2010, I have

been working in the NAC office in Jaghori, Ghazni and supporting my family and children. I have a good life!'

Matiullah: 'I'm proud of working with NAC for 30 years. I was hired as a guard in 1986. But since then, based on NAC's needs, I have worked in different positions and I'm currently working as a senior procurement officer. I have seen and experienced many difficult situations during the last 30 years, but we should not give - we should try our best to serve the people who need our support.'

Nasima: 'I have been with NAC since November, 2006. During this time, I have enjoyed working with NAC a lot and am deeply thankful to my NAC family. I have learned much and really developed in my career, starting as a receptionist and now working as a senior personnel officer. I am so happy that NAC's work has helped reduce poverty in Afghanistan.'

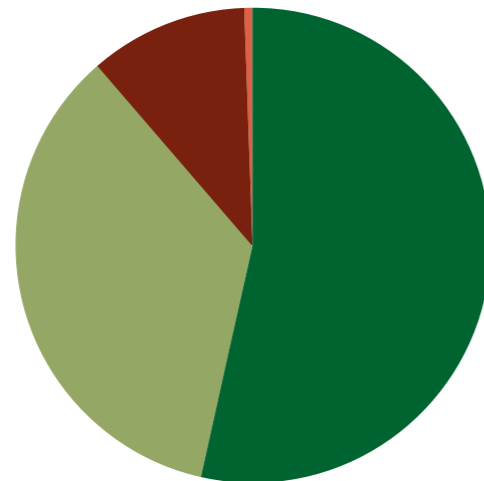
Simin: 'I joined NAC, Badakhshan in January, 2011. I have worked with community based health; nutrition; monitoring and evaluation; gender and human resources. All these experiences have matured my knowledge and understanding. Working with grassroots and community based groups in rural Afghanistan is challenging. But, NAC has succeeded to work effectively with and build connections between grassroots and government partners. My work gives me motivation to keep working with NAC for years to come. Also, NAC's focus on gender equity and equality has played a role in encouraging me and keeping me committed to the organization.'

Emam Nazar: 'I am the first Turkmen working in NAC. I joined as guard and since late 2015, I've worked as a community mobilizer and trainer in the Faryab office. NAC has paved the way for me to support my family, and to build my professional capacities. I am happy with this learning environment, and that NAC is there to serve the people in need, especially in rural Afghanistan.'

Nooria: 'I am a widow and the mother of five children. I am the only breadwinner in my family and support my children to continue their life and education. I joined NAC in 2014, as a cleaner in the Faryab office. I am happy with my job and with NAC. NAC is a good organization to work with and gives me warm family feelings and a sound environment.'

EXPENDITURE BY SECTORS

Professional education (health nurses, midwives, physiotherapists and teachers)	Humanitarian assistance and disaster risk reduction	Friendship school programme	Integrated rural development
1,647,619 USD	437,620 USD	13,641 USD	2,425,441 USD



TOTAL: 4,524,321 USD

Our finances in 2015

In 2015 NAC worked in Norway and eleven Afghan provinces: Badakhshan, Balkh, Faryab, Ghazni, Kabul, Kapisa, Khost, Laghman, Nangarhar, Takhar and Wardak. In addition, our innovation project on teacher education, was part of a triangular collaboration between Afghanistan, Indonesia and Norway. Norad and the Norwegian government remains our largest donor. NAC also received funds from members and individual donors, the Norwegian friendship schools in Bergen, Oslo and Sulitjelma, and a number of other national and international partner organizations.

NAC receives a majority of its funding in Norwegian Kroner (NOK) while expenses are in US Dollars (USD) and Afghanis (AFS). Funding for NAC's programs in Afghanistan in NOK has increased over 7% from 2014. However due to the strengthening of the USD compared to the NOK, funding in USD has decreased from 2014 levels. The continued volatility of the currency market has increasingly affected our operations in Afghanistan. NAC's management and finance teams monitor the situation continuously and have implemented wide ranging measures to further reduce operational costs.

The outlook for 2016 is positive as new donors, including the European Union and UN OCHA are

now supporting NAC programs and initiatives.

The collaboration with the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) is continuing, while support from the World Food Program (WFP) has been further reduced due to lack of funding for their humanitarian operations in Afghanistan. The 2nd phase of the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRD II) was completed in early 2016 while a contract for the 3rd phase of the program was approved by Norad at the end of March 2016, securing a continuation of key program activities in Badakhshan, Faryab and Ghazni provinces.

Children in the friendship schools in Norway raised over USD 37,500 to improve education in the seven Afghan friendship schools. Through fundraising campaigns NAC received more than USD 80,000 from the Norwegian Association of Midwives and from individual donors in both Afghanistan and Norway. These funds were used for the Norad-funded programs where NAC has to match the funding with up to 10% of the total budget, and community-based infrastructure in Ghazni and for humanitarian response in Badakhshan.

NAC spends 3.9% of funds received from Norwegian donors on administration costs, while more than 96 out of 100 Kroner donated to NAC is spent directly on development aid.

FUNDING FOR PROJECTS IN AFGHANISTAN BY DONOR

Donor	Funding in 2015 in USD
NORAD - Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation	3,458,186
SCA- Swedish Committee for Afghanistan	573,604
Royal Norwegian Embassy in Jakarta	294,909
Norwegian Friendship Schools	37,375
UN OCHA - CHF (Common Humanitarian Fund)	36,273
GIZ - German Development Cooperation	17,648
WFP - World Food Programme	14,628
DNJ - Norwegian Association of Midwives	10,145
ACBAR	4,780
GFZ - German Department of Geosciences	3,360
University of Montana	500
Smaller instutional and private donors	45,362
TOTAL	4,496,770

EXPENDITURE BY PROVINCE

Geographical area	Expenditure in 2015 in USD
Badakhshan (and Takhar)	1,614,845
Ghazni	928,815
Kapisa	377,124
Khost	372,538
Faryab	321,441
Laghman	299,616
Kabul	288,928
Wardak	198,508
Nangarhar	122,505
TOTAL	4,524,321

This is important to us!

Maintain aid levels to Afghanistan

The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee encourages the Norwegian government to maintain the current aid level to Afghanistan and to channel the support to where the poverty and needs are the greatest.

Serving the needs of the Afghan population

Development aid should be distributed according to the Afghan population's needs. All development work should be guided by a holistic development strategy, with the aim to fight poverty and promote human rights. Development aid must not be used to obtain diplomatic or military objectives.

Sustainable development

Sustainability must be the basis for all development aid. Quick fixes give short-lived results. Spreading knowledge and building capacity, using local workers and materials, gives the local population the possibility to take over and maintain the results of successful aid projects.

Local ownership

The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee has always worked closely with the local population and let their needs define the focus for our work. This is a prerequisite for sustainable development. Working with local authorities is crucial to building their capacity to serve the needs of the people.

Ensure the participation of women and youth

Women and youth must be included in decision-making at all levels. This is a prerequisite for equitable priorities that benefit everyone. Afghan civil society plays an important role in ensuring that all Afghan voices are heard and deserves our full and active support.

The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee has been working for Afghanistan since 1980 and will continue to help Afghans build a better life.

We have a heart for Afghanistan!

NAC offers

- 35 years of experience and commitment
- Acceptance in communities where we work
- A long-term holistic approach to sustainable development
- Cost-efficient high quality projects
- Focus on the people who are most in need, including women
- Ability to adapt to changing circumstances

The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) is a member-based solidarity organisation. NAC aims to support the Afghan people's rights to independence and democracy, and to contribute to the reconstruction and development of the country. Our work builds on knowledge, experience and a mutual friendship between the Afghan and Norwegian peoples.

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