

ANNUAL REPORT 2016



Norwegian Afghanistan Committee



This has been another busy year - our 36th - of solidarity between NAC and the Afghan people. In 2016 NAC:

- **Worked to empower women and realize the human rights of all Afghans - these issues are at the heart of who we are and what we do. Page 9**
- **Empowered children to support their communities in responding to disasters through the establishment of 90 School-based Emergency Response Teams in Badakhshan and Ghazni. Page 28**
- **Countered youth unemployment and disaffection with Activity & Learning Centers, giving 269 young Afghans access to meaningful knowledge and skills in a practical and engaging learning environment. Page 14**
- **Trained and supported local, Afghan NGOs in analyzing community needs and in working in a participatory way to improve the lives of their community members. Page 33**
- **Helped Afghan communities reduce conflicts over valuable natural resources, and to become more self sufficient through developing aqueducts and other small-scale infrastructure projects. Page 19**
- **Ensured Afghan and Afghan-Norwegian voices are heard in Norway through organizing public debates, open meetings and storytelling events. Page 38**
- **Educated 15% of Afghanistan's professional midwives and health nurses and scored top marks in national evaluations of our Midwifery and Health Nursing Education programs. Page 23**

Solidarity, peace and development

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals provide a comprehensive framework for all development efforts of the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) in Afghanistan and for its work in Norway. The 17 goals are interconnected, and show us just how complex the development agenda is especially for a country like Afghanistan that has suffered almost four decades of conflict and war. For Afghanistan to succeed, the Afghan government, the people of Afghanistan and civil society must work together, honestly and transparently, towards the common goals of peace, justice and sustainable development. And we, the international community must continue our support to ensure that all Afghans, regardless of gender, abilities, disabilities, and social, ethnic, language and religious backgrounds are included in the development process.

NAC takes an integrated approach to rural development. Our programs are designed to address the underlying causes of poverty in rural and hard-to-reach communities throughout Afghanistan; good governance; strong, just and effective state institutions; a vibrant civil society; respect for human rights; gender equity and equality; equitable access to health, education and other basic community services; access for all for to food and work; and development of resilient communities towards the natural and man-made disasters that continue to haunt Afghanistan. In other words; a future where Afghanistan is peaceful and free from poverty, and where equality, democracy, human rights and respect serve as the bases for political action and development.

The reforestation programs in Badakhshan and Ghazni, where millions of trees have greened barren hills and helped to secure riverbanks, are strong symbols of NAC's long term development perspective.

Building local and provincial capacity in disaster risk management and preparedness, and conducting research on landslides and earthquakes together with Afghan government and international partners, stand as examples of organizational learning, growth and professional development.

The education of midwives and health nurses has helped save lives and contributed to a reduction in maternal and infant mortality rates in Afghanistan. Education efforts in playgroups, primary and secondary schools, physiotherapy schools, colleges and universities, benefitting almost 200,000 children and youth will help provide future generations of Afghans with the knowledge and skills needed to develop the country, and bring about peace and stability. The support to female and male farmers provides livelihoods to families in rural Afghanistan. The orchards with almonds, pistachios and apples provide income to communities at the same time as they offer protection from avalanches and landslides. The work with community-based governance structures and civil society organizations helps anchor progress to ensure strong local ownership of development processes. The support from Norwegian volunteers, from school children to midwives, teachers and other experienced professionals, enables NAC to develop and implement quality programs to support the development of Afghanistan.

The work of NAC, in Afghanistan and Norway, is rooted in long-term commitment, and the successes we have achieved depend on the hard work of hundreds of dedicated and professional staff and volunteers, and on committed Norwegian and international donors. This continued solidarity gives hope in a time of great uncertainty.

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 315 short- and long-term employees in Afghanistan. Our staff possesses 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 works 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.



Gender and human rights

Doing development without principles is to work without moral structure - there is nothing that binds, shapes or guides. NAC bases all of its work on principles of human rights, and gender equity and equality. A key aspect of this is championing the rights of Afghan women and girls to participate equally in all aspects of Afghan society. This runs like a thread through everything NAC is and does, with women being central to the running and management of the organization, the messages we send and the activities we do in Afghanistan and Norway.

Women's empowerment

NAC supports women's empowerment and active participation in Afghan society in a number of ways:

Our Self Help Groups for women in Badakhshan and Ghazni build women's skills and confidence in developing and managing small businesses, to earn money and working to positively change community attitudes towards women. For more on Self Help Groups see page 31.

The women-led Playgroup initiative, implemented by Self Help Group members, is another example on how women take community development concerns into their own hands with only limited financial support from NAC. Playgroups nurture young girls' and boys' social, emotional, physical and cognitive development, supporting them to better succeed when they start primary education, which in turn will help them to complete schooling. For more on Playgroups see page 13.

Working with Community Development Councils (CDCs) to engage more women and support them in: developing skills and experience in public speaking; facilitation and negotiation; doing advocacy on gender equity and equality and gender sensitive planning; budgeting and service delivery, especially related to pre-primary, primary and secondary education. As one female CDC member from Ghazni said, 'I have joined in every CDC meeting together with men and I don't have problems in giving my ideas. I am proud that I can solve our people's problems, especially problems for women'.

The training of female disaster responders was part of the Community-based Disaster Risk Management Team (CBDRMT) initiative. This was the first time women actively participated in responding to disasters in their home communities. In the past

women have depended on the male community members to be 'rescued' in case of a disaster. After training women became a genuine resource for the community. For example: There was a car accident in a village where one of our female trainees lived. She was called to the site of the accident and she managed to organize getting passengers out of the vehicle, then she conducted first aid, called for help and arranged for all the wounded to be transported to the nearest hospital. This helped community members understand what women are capable of, and helped build their confidence in women's abilities – leading to greater empowerment of the female trainees and other women in the village!

NAC supports female health workers through our work with midwives and midwifery and health nursing education programs. The training and education of female health workers leads to improved access for women to quality health services in community health facilities and district clinics. Our graduates also work in a non-formal capacity in their communities, such as in helping neighbors get necessary medicines, and their advice is sought on a wide range of health issues. These women will also be natural choices as members of Community Development Councils (CDCs) and Cluster Community Development Councils (CCDCs) as well as related Sub-Committees on Health under the new Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project (CCAP) – This gives women access to real influence in sub-national governance structures.

Midwives and nurses are also powerful advocates for peaceful co-existence and women's rights within their communities and beyond. To support these valuable professionals, NAC and the Nansen Center For Peace and Dialogue have provided training for midwives and midwifery and nursing students in dialogue and non-violent conflict resolution, alongside training in women's rights from an Islamic perspective. For more on NAC's support for midwifery and nursing see page 23.

NAC has linked with the US-funded 'Promote Program' in which 12 female professionals (with Diplomas or a Bachelor's Degree) are provided job-opportunities in NAC and with NAC partner organizations. This collaboration will be expanded in Badakhshan and to new provinces, such as Kapisa and Khost, where female health professionals who struggle to find employment will be mobilized to support understaffed clinics and health facilities



Sustainable Development Goals

A set of 'Sustainable Development Goals' have been 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.

At different points in this report we flag the Sustainable Development Goals which are particularly relevant to NAC's initiatives.

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under the BPHS (Basic Package of Health Services) and EPHS (Essential Package of Health Services).

NAC also supports women to be actively involved in critical health and infrastructure decision-making bodies within communities. A key example of this is our support for women to be active members of Social Water Management Committees (including as chairs, co-chairs, and cashiers). This is in line with Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) guidelines. As these Committees are community-based, it is easier to ensure that women are actively participating. There are few water management issues within communities that cannot be solved amicably by these committees. For more on our work with Social Water Management Committees see page 32.

NAC staff engaged in critical gender research

Alongside NAC's core work, our staff are also supported and encouraged in doing research for their higher education degrees, focused on gender and women's rights.

Our senior national education specialist has been conducting an action research project on gender and women's empowerment with NAC supported Self Help Groups, as part of her inclusive education Master's degree.

One of the key members of our monitoring and evaluation team is looking at gender discrimination in the workplace for her Bachelor's degree research and thesis. She explains, 'As I've seen in Faizabad, Badakhshan, where I come from, many women have higher education and better skills than men, but they receive less salaries than men and face discrimination and sexual harassment, especially in government departments. Because of this, I wanted to do this research to better understand how to improve the situation for women. I have made arrangements to share my research findings with the Badakhshan Department of Women's Affairs.'

Our communication officer has been researching into the negative impacts of early and forced marriage for his Master's degree thesis.

Human rights through education and training

Rights-based approaches to education are a key aspect of NAC's work in education, both in formal and informal settings. NAC has given training and support to teacher educators, student teachers, school administrators, teachers and school Shura (committee) members in: inclusive and rights based approaches to education. Our trainings cover

women's and children's rights, counseling, and dialogue and non-violent conflict resolution, amongst other topics.

In a related initiative, NAC is training traditional leaders and elders on key knowledge and skills to promote human rights and peaceful, inclusive communities. Too often, traditional leaders and elders have been left out of community development initiatives, but NAC recognizes the importance of these influential community members and their potential as advocates for bringing positive changes to their communities.

Activity & Learning Centers

NAC has established Activity & Learning Centers in Badakhshan, Faryab, Ghazni and Kabul, in collaboration with the Departments of Women Affairs, Community Development Councils and grassroots community organizations. Participants are aged between 14 and 30 and gender balanced. The Activity & Learning Center curriculum covers women's and children's rights, alongside citizenship, health, nutrition, entrepreneurship, literacy and numeracy, language, IT and vocational skills. This program positions human rights and citizenship as the hub to which the technical and vocational spokes are connected, ensuring that the acquisition of knowledge and skills is oriented around an understanding of participants' rights and responsibilities in society. For more on our work with Activity & Learning Centers, see page 14.

- 30 midwives from insecure areas in Central and Eastern Afghanistan trained in dialogue and non-violent conflict resolution
- 239 midwifery and health-nursing students trained in Islamic Women's Rights, peace and dialogue
- 1,728 teachers, school administrators and school Shura members trained on gender and rights-based approaches to education, inclusive education, dialogue and non-violent conflict resolution
- 269 youth enrolled in Activity & Learning Centres in Badakhshan, Faryab, Ghazni and Kabul
- 108 Self Help Groups for women established in Badakhshan and Ghazni
- 241 male and 42 female community elders and leaders trained in democracy, human rights, dialogue and non-violent conflict resolution

New and innovative programs

Investigating corruption in education

Corruption is a problem affecting all areas of governance and social service provision in Afghanistan, but corruption in education is especially troubling because of its destructive impacts on the lives and future prospects for young Afghans.

In 2016, NAC signed an MoU with Afghanistan's Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC), to partner with them in conducting a comprehensive, national evaluation into vulnerabilities to corruption in the Afghan education system, which was commissioned by the Minister of Education. NAC's main role will be to work with school communities in Badakhshan, Balkh, Faryab, Herat, Ghazni, Kabul, and Khost, to better understand their experiences of corruption in education, as well as their strategies and solutions for overcoming the corruption they face.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities

NAC is serious about ensuring the social and educational inclusion of persons with disabilities in Afghanistan. Through advocacy and other program interventions, we promote the rights of persons with disabilities and support them in being engaged and active members of their communities. Towards these goals, NAC staff are involved with innovations including:

Our senior national education specialist is working together with the Shaheed Professor Rabani Education University in Kabul on a Sign language dictionary. This will be the first of its kind for Afghan Sign language.



Our provincial program coordinator in Faryab, with sponsorship from CBM, is participating in a two-year, in-depth training in orientation and mobility for persons who have visual impairments. The theoretical part of the training has been conducted in Amman, Jordan, in combination with practical work in schools and homes in Afghanistan.

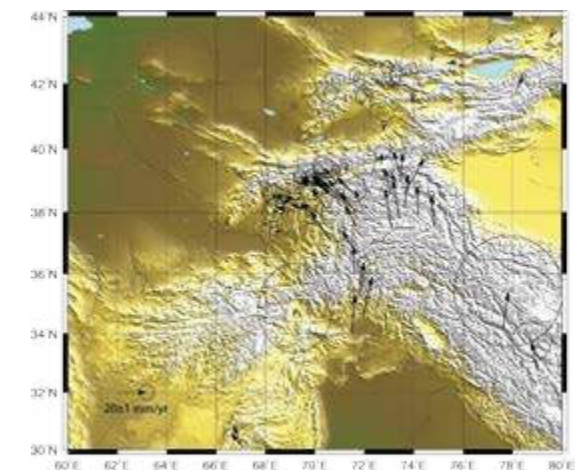
Pioneering in seismology

Afghanistan and its neighbors straddle a highly volatile geologic fault zone – the 10th most hazardous in the world – and suffer all too regularly from devastating earthquakes.

To better understand and map the earthquake hazards Afghanistan faces, NAC is involved in a project to establish a seismic network, consisting of 15 seismometers and recorders across the Northeast of the country, in partnership with the German Research Center for Geosciences (GFZ) – a first for Afghanistan.

Currently there are no seismology departments in Afghan universities, and so, to ensure that Afghans are able to learn critical skills in seismology, NAC is working together with Kabul University to establish a Department of Seismology, under the Faculty of Geosciences. GFZ is also supporting this program and will provide Kabul University staff with specialized training in seismology and help them to develop a curriculum.

NAC's Geographical Information Systems specialist, who has been leading all of our work in seismology, recently presented a paper at the 31st General Assembly of the European Seismological Commission in Italy.





Our work: Education



Education defines us

Education is central to everything NAC does: it is explicit in many of our programs, such as our children's Playgroups and support for schools and Teacher Training Colleges; but, it also grounds our advocacy and awareness raising efforts in Afghanistan and Norway. Through education we help rural and hard-to-reach Afghan communities become more equitable, healthy and sustainable. Education shapes our support for agriculture, entrepreneurship and community-engaged infrastructure development. Education is the basis of our capacity building with women's Self Help Groups, Community Development Councils, civil society groups, as well as colleges, universities and government ministries. Education defines our work in midwifery, nursing and physiotherapy. Education is how we prepare communities to face disasters. And, education is one of the main mechanisms through which we work to realize the rights of girls and women, ethnic and linguistic minorities, persons with disabilities and other groups vulnerable to marginalization.

Education, learning and development – along the lifecycle

Education involves all the knowledge and experience we gain in our lives, not only in schools, but also in our families, our communities, our fields, shops, factories, forests, mountains and rivers; through hearing, sight, sound touch, taste and smell, through conversations, observations, books, art, music and poetry. And the energy which drives all of this is the process of learning. To understand what learning truly means for education, we need to recognize how learning and development are intertwined – as humans, we develop through learning. As we learn, we grow and develop physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively. In a parallel way, societies also develop through learning. Our societies can grow healthier, gain a better quality of life, become more peaceful, grow together to value different members' commonalities and differences. This full definition of learning is at the heart of what NAC does in Afghanistan and Norway and guides our education work as we strive to support Afghanistan to develop to its full potential.

NAC's work in education follows the life cycle...

From early childhood...

Playing and learning together

In 2016, NAC continued in our support of Playgroups for the children of women in Self Help Groups in Badakhshan, Faryab and Ghazni. Playgroups offer children a safe space to play, learn and grow. In Playgroups, volunteer facilitators support children to develop their physical, social, emotional and cognitive potentials through a combination of structured games and activities and free play. In Playgroups, children are engaged in fun and creative activities including traditional Afghan stories and games, riddles and rhymes, role-playing to increase their self-confidence, and making simple toys from local resources. Playgroups also stimulate curiosity and help develop critical thinking. As one mother of a child attending a Playgroup said, 'The Playgroup increased my daughter's sense of curiosity – now she's asking a lot of questions.' Crucially, the Playgroups also support children to live well together and get along with each other through sharing and working out their differences – foundational towards building a more peaceful and inclusive Afghan society. One boy from a Playgroup said, 'Before I didn't like Maryam (a girl in the Playgroup), but now she is kind to me and lets me play with her toys.'

...to formal and informal education for children and youth...

Supporting school communities

NAC continues to support education in Afghanistan through our work with formal government schools and non-formal community-based schools in promoting inclusive practices such as: learner-centered approaches to teaching; girls' education; the inclusion of learners with disabilities and from minority ethnic and linguistic groups; adapting local resources to fit the curriculum; improving relationships between teachers, students and parents; and, community ownership of their schools.

NAC also works with school management and school Shuras in empowering them to take greater responsibility for education alongside developing their capacities to manage and improve their schools.

NAC continues to position schools as centers of community knowledge and technical support in hygiene and nutrition and disaster risk reduction and response. For more on the connections between schooling, health and disaster risk reduction and response see pages 25 and 28.

Engaging Afghan youth through Activity & Learning Centers

Youth unemployment is a serious problem in Afghanistan with an ever increasing number of youth being un- or underemployed. On top of this, many Afghan youth have given up on the education system. Without meaningful education and prospects for work, many young people are bored and unhappy. This poses a threat to all Afghans, as disaffected youth are far more likely to turn to crime, join armed opposition groups, or try and leave the country altogether.

In response to this challenge, NAC has been developing Activity & Learning Centers, giving Afghan youth, aged 14-30, access to key knowledge and skills in a practically focused and stimulating learning environment. Unlike some of the more formal Technical and Vocational Education and Training programs available in Afghanistan, Activity & Learning Centers are shorter in duration (3 – 6 months), more flexible and prioritize practical, hands-on approaches to learning over theoretical knowledge. Importantly, instead of a set of disconnected, skills based trainings, the Activity & Learning Centers offer all participants core training in gender and human rights, alongside conflict resolution, solidarity and advocacy. This core training is a form of citizenship education, which supports participants in understanding their rights and responsibilities towards building a more peaceful, equitable and inclusive Afghanistan. The program's approach to teaching and learning relies on a combination of lecturing, peer-to-peer and group work, development of questioning skills, role-playing and other learner-centered activities to ensure that learning is dynamic and that students actively participate, build self-confidence and self-motivation, improve their time management skills and learn how to work together.

Building on our successful pilot project in Kabul in early 2016, NAC has gone on to develop Activity & Learning Centers in Badakhshan, Faryab and Ghazni as well. Alongside the core component of citizenship education for all participants, these centers offer participants training in skills which include: IT, English

language, hygiene, and nutrition. Participants' views about the quality and relevance of the program and what additional areas of training they would like are actively solicited and being used to improve the curriculum and to develop future Activity & Learning Centers. This is still a new program, but it is already proving popular and relevant to participants' needs.

Sima's experience: 'My Name is Sima, and I'm an Activity & Learning Center student from Jaghori in Ghazni. I graduated from school last year. I joined this program because I wasn't able to go to university and I had nothing to do. I have been on the program for five months now, studying English, life skills and computers.'

I am very happy to have joined the Activity & Learning Center - it is a unique opportunity in my district that girls can safely come and learn skills which are needed for our everyday lives. I learn many good things which we haven't learned in school. In school, we had IT as a subject, but it was only theory from the books, we didn't even have a computer.

NAC provides good facilities and a good environment. There is also a solid package of courses which are connected to the real needs of youth. Here, teachers are not only lecturing, but they support us to solve the challenges by ourselves and we have implemented many projects to learn the English language and computers practically.

Learning is different here because we are also leading the activities and working and supporting each other. I really appreciate that NAC has programs for youth. We are all thankful that NAC is here!

...to adult education

Learning to 'master' inclusive education

Since 2014, NAC has piloted an innovative and pioneering Master's degree program focused on inclusive education for Afghan education professionals as a collaboration between Afghanistan, Indonesia and Norway. On the 14th of December 2016, at the Indonesian University of Education in Bandung, Indonesia, 11 Master's degree students (5 women and 6 men) graduated, receiving a Master's with a focus on Inclusive Education. The Afghan and Norwegian embassies to Indonesia were represented by senior diplomats at the ceremony. The graduates had attended classes in Afghanistan, at NAC and the Shaheed Professor Rabbani Education University in Kabul, and at the university in Bandung. In order to develop a more sustainable inclusive Afghan education system, each of the Master's degree students conducted an action research project to foster real change towards inclusion in Afghanistan.

Their projects ranged from fostering better relationships between teachers and students in Teacher Training Colleges, to promoting women's empowerment through NAC's Self Help Groups and Playgroups, to involving deaf sign language speakers in university teaching, with many other worthwhile projects in between. The head of the Teacher Training College (TTC) in Mazar-i-Sharif, Balkh province – where two graduates of our Master's Degree Program and two part-time graduate students work as lecturers – recognized the value and impact of the Master's degree students' action research projects, saying, 'These days our TTC students and lecturers have better relationships. In the past, students would complain to me directly if they had problems with the lecturers and the teaching, but because of our lecturers' action research, now students feel comfortable to go directly to the lecturers themselves to work out their problems together.'

This first, pilot Master's Degree Program has led to the development of a new Master's Degree Program in Inclusion and Diversity in Education, which will be based at the Shaheed Professor Rabbani Education University, with an anticipated start date of late 2017. This program will give more Afghan educators an opportunity to learn about and practice inclusion and build capacity in higher education, supporting university faculty in innovative, change oriented teaching, learning and research. This initiative is an example of NAC's long-term approach to improving the quality of education in Afghanistan, which is already yielding benefits for Afghan further education and higher education institutions.

Inclusive education – building futures

Inclusive education in Afghanistan is a long-term project which seeks to build better futures for Afghan people. Through our education programs, NAC has worked to instill the ideals and practices that embody inclusive education – the basis of which is the right of all Afghan's to access, participate and achieve in quality education in Afghanistan. For example, the recently completed Master's Degree Program provided an opportunity for our Master's students to conduct workshops in inclusive education for over 650 staff from Teacher Training Colleges, a university, and Departments of Education in Badakhshan, Balkh, Faryab, Ghazni, and the Ministry of Education in Kabul – and to follow up the workshops by including staff and students in ongoing action research projects which put inclusion into practice. Our NAC education teams have also worked to involve a range of teachers, school administrators, school Shura members, parents and students in training on rights-based approaches to education, inclusive education, school management and resource mobilization.

Education for under-qualified teachers

One of Afghanistan's greatest education challenges is the high number of under-qualified teachers teaching in Afghan schools. Many teachers have lacked access to formal teacher education and this has negatively affected the quality and relevance of their teaching, and limited their professional development opportunities. To address this problem, NAC has been working in partnership with Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) in Badakhshan, Faryab, Ghazni and Kabul to support 224 under-qualified teachers in a three-year, part-time, in-service teacher education program to upgrade them to diploma level. Through this innovative program, in which participants study intensively during winter school holidays, they gain new knowledge, skills and ultimately a formal qualification, without having to leave their classrooms and deprive schools of much needed teachers.

- 14 Playgroups with more than 200 children have been established in Badakhshan, Faryab, Ghazni and Kabul
- 166,027 children and youth (including over 1,000 children and youth with disabilities) are benefitting from NAC supported education programs
- 1,728 teachers, school administrators and school shura members are trained on rights-based approaches to education, inclusive education, school management and resource mobilization
- 224 teachers are being upgraded to Diploma level together with Afghan Teacher Training Colleges
- 269 youth engaged as participants in Activity & Learning Centers in Badakhshan, Faryab, Ghazni and Kabul



Our work:

Food and work



Food security and job creation is about sustaining life. Access to sufficient, healthy food, employment and vital infrastructure is essential towards developing a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan.

NAC's initiatives in these areas go beyond short-term relief to support rural and hard-to-reach Afghan communities to be resilient in the long-term.

Understanding the context and responding appropriately – a collaborative process

Planning and conducting relevant and effective interventions depends on a clear understanding of the real situations Afghans experience and a careful analysis of communities' needs as well as their strengths. NAC's assessment of food and work related needs and opportunities, alongside the planning, implementation and monitoring of our programs depends on a participatory process which directly involves Afghan institutional and individual stakeholders. For example, in planning our work in agriculture in Ghazni province, NAC engaged in a process of market analysis, focused on the demand for almond and dried curd, in collaboration with agriculture students from the University of Ghazni's Agriculture Faculty and the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL).

This collaborative assessment builds the capacity of Afghans to conduct their own analyses in future. To support this, NAC involves relevant stakeholders in regular consultation meetings, where accomplishments are shared, challenges discussed and collaborative solutions developed.

Leading in farming

NAC's lead farmer extension program supports communities to develop sustainable agricultural practices. NAC gives senior, female and male 'lead farmers' additional training and support to work with and mentor other farmers in their communities. Lead farmers have consulted on and supported in the development of fruit, vegetable and nut orchards – with practical training on irrigation, orchard

management, pest management, composting, grafting and pruning, developing greenhouses, and fruit and vegetable processing.

Mohammad Ali, a farmer from Jaghori district, Ghazni province established an orchard on his land after training conducted by NAC. He is very hopeful about the future and said, 'Now farmers are more aware of how to establish and design orchards on their land, farmers like me know how to take care of their orchards and how to improve them.'

NAC's practically oriented support for farmers improves farmers' planning and maintenance of their orchards and leads to significant improvements in harvests, as our agriculture teams help Afghan farmers in choosing the most relevant and sustainable crops for their land. Abdul Hamid, a farmer from Keshem district in Badakhshan explained, 'I was growing wheat every year, and I was never getting satisfactory harvests. After getting advice and participating in NAC trainings, I started to grow mung beans because my land was not actually well suited for growing wheat. From the 21kg of seeds I was provided with this year, I produced 630kg of mung beans! I am very happy with this harvest and it will help my family and community a lot'.

Sustainable approaches to agriculture are not just about the practices of individual farmers, but are also dependent on reliable value-chains from seed to market. For example in 2016, NAC facilitated the connection of 785 small-hold farmers in Badakhshan and Ghazni with seed providers to ensure they have dependable access to quality seeds now and in the future.

Qurt, a culinary treat made of dried and drained yogurt, is popular throughout Central and South Asia



As with assessments, NAC's long-term vision is to use agriculture training and program implementation processes as a way of strengthening relationships between Afghan institutions and communities.

To this end, in Badakhshan and Ghazni, a range of institutional stakeholders including participants from DAIL, the Department of Women Affairs (DoWA), university agriculture faculties, agriculture schools, District Development Assemblies (DDAs), and the National Horticulture and Livestock Program (NHLP) have been included in trainings to develop shared understandings of sustainable farming practices and better support the farmers in their communities.

Looking after the land - everyone's responsibility

NAC's fostering of environmentally sound stewardship of the land supports Afghan communities in reducing the prevalence and impacts of disasters such as flooding, droughts and landslides, while at the same time producing healthy and sustainable sources of food.

In both Badakhshan and Ghazni, NAC trains members of rural and hard-to-reach communities as well as agriculture school faculty and students, university faculty members, and relevant government

ministerial staff, in sustainable forestry and watershed management.

To support better, and more sustainable land management and agricultural practices, NAC also focuses on making agriculture education more practical.

For example, in Ghazni City, NAC organized exposure visits for students and staff from the University of Ghazni's Agriculture Faculty to visit the Rawza watershed and nature park and get practical experience in sustainable watershed management. Through this, participants learned how to prepare the land for planting and about the types of trees planted, as well as irrigation and other technical skills, such as the use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS). These exposure visits also resulted in the development of a small, community park surrounded by a pristine reforested area where turtles, foxes and other wildlife have returned after decades of deforestation.

Another way NAC has made agriculture studies more practical, has been through the development of model farms for the agriculture faculties of the Universities of Badakhshan and Ghazni. These farms offer students and faculty opportunities to do participatory research and get hands-on experience of farming, applying their more theoretical classroom-based knowledge in practice. For a more detailed story about this, see page 20.

Building Afghan futures brick by brick

NAC supports communities in developing key infrastructure projects. On the one hand, these projects enable communities to survive and be more self-sufficient through small, but vital infrastructure such as wells and toilets, and on the other hand,

they support communities to be connected with the outside world through larger scale initiatives such as the development and rehabilitation of roads.

NAC's diverse infrastructure projects cover everything from laying irrigation pipes and rehabilitating canals to the development of school playgrounds, but they all seek to increase community engagement through involving local communities directly in planning and implementation. This both gives community members employment, and fosters a sense of ownership that leads to greater sustainability.

- 785 farmers and gardeners (50% women) benefitting from NAC extension services
- 90 students and lecturers in university Faculties of Agriculture benefitting from NAC technical support
- 135 students in secondary agriculture schools benefitting from NAC technical support
- 17,000 animals vaccinated
- Over 2,000,000 tree saplings planted in communities
- A 960 square meters agriculture demonstration farm developed in Badakhshan
- 400 kilometers of roads rehabilitated to provide access for 60 communities to district centers
- 6418 meters of irrigation pipes laid in Badakhshan
- 8,400,000 square meters of land terraced in Badakhshan – 931 jobs created
- 5 schools renovated in Badakhshan and Ghazni
- 6 school wells provided in Ghazni
- 4 school toilet blocks developed in Ghazni
- 12 playgrounds/sports fields developed in Badakhshan and Ghazni
- 1220 temporary infrastructure development jobs created in Badakhshan and Ghazni
- More than 3000 beneficiaries of infrastructure projects

Future impact:

A greener, safer and more productive environment in Pasha Dara village

'We are happy that our future generations will have a greener and cleaner environment and that we can benefit from cultivating pistachio and almond trees', Wali Mohammad says. He is the community leader of Pasha Dara Village which is located 13 kilometers from the district center of Keshem, Badakhshan Province. He is happy about a reforestation project which has been implemented with the support of NAC and the World Food Program. Through this project more than 100,000 tree-saplings (almonds, pistachios, walnuts and many other trees) have already been cultivated on 64 hectares of land and irrigated through a new gravity pipe irrigation system. In addition to temporary job-creation for more than 600 villagers, the project will reduce the risk of landslides threatening the homes and livelihoods of more than 2000 people in Pasha Dara and 450 people in neighboring Alochali Village. And, after a few short years, Wali Mohammad and his neighbors, will reap the benefits of the nuts harvested from the trees planted this past autumn.

Example from practice:

Infrastructure development reduces conflict and improves harvests in Nawrak village

Mr. Ibrahim is a farmer from Nawrak village, in Ghazni's Jaghori district. He explained that in his village, 'In the past we had many problems because we didn't have good irrigation. This led to low yields when we harvested our crops. We put in a lot of effort repairing our main irrigation canal, but every year it would flood again and get damaged. Because of this we had many conflicts over water in the community. In 2013, NAC helped us to survey our land and assess the situation. We realised that the old irrigation canal was not sustainable and NAC supported us in constructing an aqueduct and bridge to replace it. Now, three years later, there are no conflicts in our community over water usage, and we don't waste our time and energy trying to fix an irreparable canal. Fortunately, our quantity of irrigated land and crop yields have increased over the past three years. This new system helps us a lot. If our farmers do not harvest enough crops they will become disheartened and eventually they will migrate. But, when our farmers have sufficient harvests they can provide enough local crops to the markets and reduce the need to import agriculture products from foreign countries as well'.

Empowering communities is also about letting go - the Dashut-i-Qurogh farm handover

Sustainable change – a long term process

We are facing a global shift in funding from long-term development work, to short-term humanitarian response. Although humanitarian response is important, an overemphasis on this type of funding and support works against longer-term, sustainable development, especially in countries like Afghanistan that are experiencing protracted conflict and recurrent disasters. The result on the ground is an increasing pressure to implement 'quick fix' solutions for complex challenges.

As a counter point, NAC supports long-term sustainable approaches to development through micro, macro and meso-level interventions. The following 'success story' highlights an example of NAC's endeavors in this area.

For more than a decade, NAC has been working to build the capacities of government and community partners in sustainable greening and gardening initiatives. This has been rewarding, but challenging work! The true test of sustainability is if NAC's Afghan partners manage to continue these initiatives after they are handed over.

Handing over Dashut-i-Qurogh farm to the University of Badakhshan

In 2005, NAC worked with local government in Faizabad, Badakhshan, and the University of Badakhshan, on a farm development initiative. The University has more than 4,000 ethnically diverse students, mostly from Badakhshan and nearby provinces. Students study in faculties of Agriculture, Literature, Economics, Social Sciences, Computer Science and Journalism.

The Dashut-i-Qurogh farm initiative was designed to:

- improve the environment to support a greener, healthier community;
- raise awareness and positively change people's attitudes about environmental issues;
- promote new, adaptable agriculture technologies;
- reduce risks of natural disasters;
- be sustainably developed after handover to Afghan partners.

To reach these goals, NAC entered into lengthy negotiations with local government authorities and in 2005, secured 114,000 square meters of land for the initiative in Faizabad City.

At first, the land was dry like a desert and so NAC trained and supported a local farmer and gardener (who is still working there) to turn this barren land into a working farm. During NAC's management of the project from 2005 to 2014, the following activities and developments took place:

- 305 people were employed (as day laborers and engineers);
- each year, NAC brought thousands of new trees, of many different varieties from other provinces – these trees were planted on the farm and also distributed to other districts;
- yearly, an average of 20,000 saplings (fruit and non-fruit) were planted – saplings matured within three years;
- after maturation, the trees were distributed to local government institutions in different districts;
- in addition, NAC's agriculture expert trained relevant local community members in agriculture and community farming practices;
- the community-based nursery and gardens were expanded;
- the farm became popular as a community picnic area and community members were able to use the fruit produced by the trees.

In 2014, seeking to empower local partners in line with our integrated approach to rural development, NAC handed over the management of the farm to the University of Badakhshan, although we have continued to support the initiative.

Dashut-i-Qurogh farm after the handover

Today when we visit the Dashut-i-Qurogh farm to see how things are developing, we are pleased to find a thriving farm which is at the heart of the university community.

Reflecting on the benefits of the farm, the head farmer, Mr. Ghani explained, 'This farm has not only benefitted agriculture students. One day I met a student from the Faculty of Literature who was

walking in the farm. We became friendly and he began helping me regularly with my farming activities. He gave me a lot of support and gained practical farming experience in the process. After he completed his studies, I heard he had successfully passed an interview for a government agriculture job in another district in Badakhshan. I was so happy for him and found it amazing that this former literature student is now working in agriculture. We are still in touch and recently, he sent me a few pear trees for the farm.'

Strong links have been established between the university's Agriculture Faculty and Mr. Ghani, the NAC trained farmer. 'We all benefit from Mr. Ghani's experience and practices', says Mr. Amin, who has been working as the head of the Agriculture Faculty for the past five years. Mr. Amin continued, 'I am very optimistic about the future of this farm. It is an important place for agricultural research and practical experience, but also an important community space, where students and staff from different ethnic groups, languages and with different ideas come together and learn from each other. I greatly appreciate NAC's philosophy and practice of partnership with the Afghan community and its successful handing over of this project'.

The farm has become an important green, community space which is highly valued by the local community and a model of environmental sustainability. As, Mr. Salem, a 4th year economics student explained, 'It's great having such a green,

clean and peaceful place so close to where we live and study. This is so rare to have as cities get more urbanized in our country.'

The sustainable benefits of this initiative extend beyond the borders of the farm, as highlighted by Ms. Parwana, a 4th year agriculture student. She explained, 'I am one of only 14 women in our faculty of 70, and it's important that I've gotten practical experience on the farm. Working on the farm, I've learned adaptable agriculture techniques like pruning and grafting. I've applied this knowledge and experience in my home village by training our local farmers. The farm plays a huge role in our university faculty because the Afghan government lacks funding to support this kind of practical fieldwork'.

Community ownership is key to sustainability

The handover of the Dashut-i-Qurogh farm is an important example of the positive impacts of a long-term approach to development which hinges on the step-by-step capacity building of NAC's Afghan partners to carry forward development initiatives. This process fosters genuine community ownership without which such initiatives are likely to fold when outside support is reduced.





Our work: Health



Without access to the resources that promote and sustain good health, Afghans will struggle to survive. Through a combination of education, infrastructure development and health interventions, NAC works to ensure a healthier future for Afghanistan.

Over 15 years educating Afghan midwives and nurses

Despite recent improvements, Afghanistan still struggles to provide essential healthcare services to its citizens. Many communities have limited access to healthcare and there is a critical shortage of trained midwives and nurses in the country. Particularly in rural and hard-to-reach communities, where clinics or hospitals may be many hours of travel away, the intervention of a trained midwife or health nurse can mean the difference between life and death for mothers and babies.

NAC has focused, for more than a decade, on training midwives and nurses to meet Afghanistan's need for healthcare professionals and NAC is now the largest educator of midwives and health nurses in the country. NAC does this in partnership with the Afghan Ministry of Public Health, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) and Norwegian Association of Midwives (Dnj) to ensure that together, we build the capacity of health education institutions to provide the highest quality of education to the greatest number of Afghanistan's midwives and nurses.

Although there is still much work to be done, NAC is proud to note that the Afghan Midwifery, Nursing, Education Accreditation Board (AMNEAB) has rated NAC supported midwifery and health nursing schools among the very best in Afghanistan. In 2016, the health nursing school in Laghman province received a score of 100% when it was evaluated by AMNEAB - in fact, all NAC midwifery and health nursing programs received scores of 93% and above. The Afghan Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) values NAC's competence and experience, and when the MoPH's Ghazanfar Institute of Health Sciences recently invited health experts to conduct a review of Afghanistan's health curriculum and resources, 25%

of the invited experts were from NAC's community health nursing schools.

The experiences of our students are equally as important as assessment scores. Zahida, a health nursing student from Nuristan, highlighted the benefits of the program for her, explaining, 'The teaching has been very good and practical and the teachers are motivated to teach us. Since I joined this program, I have felt much change in myself, for example, before I didn't know about vaccines, sanitation, and medicines and now I know much more. I am pregnant and because of what I've learned on the program, I'm paying more attention to the process of my pregnancy and also supporting others with their pregnancies'.

Advocacy – working together with the Afghan Midwives Association (AMA)

It is not enough to provide a quality education for Afghan midwives and nurses – these healthcare professionals also need jobs when they graduate. It is increasingly difficult for midwifery and health nursing graduates to find jobs post-graduation, despite the great need for their services, as the Afghan healthcare system is notoriously underfunded. On top of this, a large number of people have returned from Europe, Iran and Pakistan, putting additional strain on the system.

AMA is one of the strongest unions of female health workers and a powerful advocate for the rights of women to have access to skilled midwives in Afghanistan. Together with AMA in 2016, NAC introduced the first ombudsman service for midwives in Afghanistan, with the purpose of improving support for midwives who often work in isolation in the field and are at risk of leaving the profession.

Also in 2016, Shakila Bidar, NAC project manager and AMA executive board member, won the International Council of Midwives (ICM) and the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Midwife of the Year award, for her contributions in reducing infant and maternal mortality rates in Afghanistan.

Long-term impacts:

More trained midwives entering the workforce in Afghanistan

In January, 2016, 30 hospital midwives graduated from the Institute of Health Sciences (IHS) in Jalalabad, Nangarhar province, marking almost 15 years of partnership with NAC, during which time over 300 midwives have graduated. Also in 2016, an additional 175 midwives and health nurses graduated from NAC supported midwifery and health nursing schools in Kapisa, Khost, Laghman, and Wardak.

These schools educate many students from Afghanistan's Central and Eastern provinces, (Kapisa, Khost, Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, Nuristan and Wardak). These are some of the most populous, conflict-prone and conservative areas in the country, where too many mothers and infants lose their lives due to a lack of midwives and other health workers.

Personal, familial and community impacts

The graduation of a new class of professionally trained midwives will undoubtedly lead to positive health impacts in the Afghan communities that ultimately get their support, but graduation also affects the lives and families of the graduates themselves.

Breshna, who is 28 years old, is one of the new graduates from IHS Jalalabad. Breshna expressed her feelings on graduation day, discussing the significance of her graduation for herself and her community: 'It has always been one of my dreams that I become a doctor or a midwife. I'm really happy today. I'm happy because I can help my community. I'm from Aliengar district in Laghman province. We have a small clinic in our area, but only one midwife, which is not enough'.

The support of families is critical to the participation and success of midwifery students in these programs. As Breshna continued, 'I'm thankful to my husband for supporting me over the last two-years'. Breshna's husband, Hafizullah, added, 'Although I'm a farmer and didn't get formal education, I'm happy that I could help my wife to finish her studies and become a midwife. Although there were some challenges in the beginning as most of our relatives didn't want her to come to Jalalabad to study, I continued to support her over their opposition and now, I'm sure they are also happy to have a midwife in our family and in our village. I'm very proud of her.'

'I think being a midwife is the best job in world!'

Graduation is important, but graduates need employment in order for midwifery education to have truly sustainable impacts.

Arzu was one of the 25 young and motivated community midwives who graduated from the NAC and SCA community midwifery school in Laghman province in September 2016. She is 22 year old, from Ambar village, Qarghayi district and now works in her village clinic. She explained that after her graduation, 'I came back to our village and was quickly recruited as a midwife for our clinic. Now I see and feel how our job is vital and important'. Arzu continued, 'When you are a midwife in a remote area of Afghanistan, you need to be tireless because we don't have enough health workers and we have large numbers of patients. In our clinic we only have two health workers, which is definitely not enough. Although it's not easy, I'm extremely happy about my job. Every day, I visit around 20 to 30 patients and I assist them with childbirth as well as pre- and post-natal care. On average, we have three childbirths daily, so I can say that during the past six months that I've been working in the clinic, I've assisted with around 150 deliveries! In our area, because of cultural and attitude barriers, many families don't allow their pregnant women to come to the clinic to give birth. So, I am asked to go to these women's homes, and I do go to help save lives. Even when I'm in my own home, during days off or holidays, or at midnight, people come and ask me for help and I'm always happy to assist them. One day, when I was at home, a man came and said "Please, please help my wife!". I asked where she was and he said she was at home. I took my delivery kit and rushed off to see the patient. She had delivered her baby before I arrived, but when I got there, she was bleeding and in a critical condition. With my training, I was able to stop her bleeding and help her, and thankfully she recovered. At the end, her husband was very regretful about putting her at risk by not bringing her to the clinic'. To sum it up, Arzu said, 'I'm extremely happy with my job. I think being a midwife is the best job in the world! If we want to decrease the maternal mortality rate, definitely we will need to train more skilled midwives and health workers, especially in rural and hard-to-reach areas of Afghanistan'.

Improving the lives of persons with disability through physiotherapy

Alongside partnering with the Ministry of Public Health Physiotherapy Institute, NAC also works together with civil society organizations to meet Afghanistan's healthcare needs. This promotes a culture of collaboration, as opposed to competition, taking seriously the understanding that sustainable development depends on different organizations working together towards shared goals.

An important example of this is, 'Towards Improved Quality Rehabilitation Services In Afghanistan' (TIQRA), an EU funded physiotherapy program run by a consortium between NAC, SCA and Handicap International, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and the International Committee of the Red Cross. This program, now into its first year, is designed to address the need for professional physical rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities in Afghanistan. Such physiotherapy services are vital towards improving quality of life and social inclusion for persons with disabilities. The TIQRA program trains physiotherapists from all of Afghanistan's 34 provinces on a three-year diploma course. Out of the seven physiotherapy schools supported through this program, NAC has particular responsibility for two – one in Kabul and one in Kapisa – training students from 11 Afghan provinces: Bamiyan, Ghazni, Kabul, Kapisa, Khost, Logar, Paktika, Paktiya, Pansjir, Parwan, and Wardak.

Healthy schools and healthy communities

By positioning schools, as health focal points within communities, NAC recognizes the important roles children and teachers play in raising awareness around key health issues and advocating for healthier lifestyles within their communities. NAC educates students, teachers and parents on important topics which directly impact the health and wellbeing of community members, including: basic hygiene and sanitation; nutrition and healthy eating; and first aid.

Commenting on the impacts of health and sanitation training for his community, Mohammed Ali, a teacher from Jaghori district in Ghazni province said, 'Three months after the first round of health and sanitation training in this area, I see that my students are no longer drinking unsafe water from the lake near our village and also they are no longer throwing rubbish out the windows. This training prevents children from getting ill and has been helpful for my students and their families.'

Alongside health education, NAC has Water Sanitation and Health (WASH) initiatives which provide schools with access to safe drinking water; and agriculture initiatives which increase access to nutritious food – such as fresh vegetables grown in

farms and kitchen gardens. In this way, our programs in health, education, and food and work are truly integrated in improving overall health within Afghan communities.

Another aspect of NAC's health work in communities is providing deworming treatments to children. Deworming eradicates intestinal parasites which negatively affect children's nutrition, their performance in school, and can lead to serious and chronic health problems. As with other community health initiatives, schools are the focal points for NAC's deworming campaigns, serving as centers for awareness raising and treatment.



- 15% of all registered Afghan midwives and health nurses educated
- 239 young women enrolled in community health nursing and community and hospital-based midwifery education programs
- 209 midwives and health nurses graduated from NAC supported Midwifery and Health Nursing schools in Kapisa, Khost, Laghman, Nangarhar and Wardak
- 65 young men and women enrolled in NAC Physiotherapy Schools in Kabul and Kapisa
- 35628 children received deworming treatments in school in Badakhshan, Faryab and Ghazni



Our humanitarian work:

Disaster risk reduction



An effective Afghan state must care for the safety and wellbeing of all its citizens. Preparation for and resilience in response to disasters is an important part of this as Afghanistan faces so many disasters on such a regular basis. Earthquakes, flooding, landslides, avalanches and droughts are endemic to Afghanistan and worsening in intensity and impact as the effects of climate change compound. In response, NAC combines education with practical interventions in supporting communities and responsible state institutions in their resilience against disasters.

Planning for disaster

With disasters, good preparation is key to effective response. This is true when it comes to disaster responses from government and NGOs, but even more importantly for rural and hard-to-reach communities where the impacts of disasters are often most severe. These communities need to be prepared for the potential impacts of the disasters they are at risk of, and trained in how to respond quickly, effectively and in good coordination with government authorities and civil society organizations, when disasters occur.

An important part of NAC's awareness raising with communities is to help them understand how their behaviors can either contribute to, or protect against disasters. For example, NAC helps communities to see how activities such as cutting down forests and livestock over-grazing can cause, or worsen, flooding, lead to soil erosion and trigger landslides; and at the same time we support these communities in taking responsibility and positive actions like reforestation and sustainably managing of pasturelands.

NAC also does pioneering work with the Afghan government in earthquake risk reduction. We are working in collaboration with the Afghan Geological Survey (AGS) and other national and international partners in establishing seismic measurement stations across, earthquake prone, Northern and Eastern parts of the country and in developing a comprehensive seismic hazard map for Afghanistan.

Good advanced planning can make all the difference when disasters strike, ultimately saving lives. To this end, NAC supports disaster prone communities in Badakhshan and Ghazni in preparing Village Disaster Management Plans (VDMPs).

Example from practice:

A mother responds in an emergency

Disasters can strike at any time and being prepared can make all the difference, as one mother from Nowabad Balal village in Badakhshan found.

It was 11:00 am on an ordinary day and Begum was busy cooking at home when she heard a loud noise coming from outside her house. Moments later, some children from the village appeared and told Begum that her son had been trapped under a neighboring house which had suddenly fallen down. She ran to the scene and managed to pull her son from under the rubble of the collapsed house, but soon realized he was in shock and had stopped breathing. Without hesitating, Begum began Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) on her son and after repeating the compressions over and over, she managed to get her son's breathing started again and get him stabilized. She was then able to take her son the long distance to the district hospital for further examination and treatment. Begum learned search and rescue, and first aid from participating in one of NAC's Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) trainings, through her Community-based Disaster Risk Management Team.

After the traumatic incident with her son, she explained, 'I would not have been able to do search and rescue and pull my son safely from the rubble, or do CPR to save his life without participating in NAC's DRR training. Now I feel I have enough knowledge to handle any type of basic first aid and search and rescue. I thank NAC for the wonderful DRR program. This kind of training is really necessary for people, like those in my community, who live in remote areas of Badakhshan without easy access to health facilities'.

Communities' responses to disasters can be better coordinated and more effective when emanating from a central location, and NAC works to ensure that disaster preparedness and response is based in schools, at the heart of communities. Through the establishment of School-based Emergency Response Teams (SERTs), NAC facilitates the training of children and teachers in crucial Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) knowledge and skills. When children and teachers learn about DRR, they are able to raise awareness and share knowledge with their families and other community members, extending the circle of disaster preparedness and response within their communities.

Empowering children as key DRR actors, builds their confidence and has increased communities' resilience in the face of disasters, as we have seen in 2015, when NAC trained school students, in one village, responded to the devastating earthquake in Badakhshan, calmly and efficiently; safely exiting their school and assisting their community with search and rescue and first aid. No children died in schools in Badakhshan, as most of them had been trained in disaster response, while in neighboring provinces, students died and were injured in stampedes when evacuating school buildings; they had never received this vital training.

Mawlawi Sayed Azam, the principal of a girls' school in Badakhshan, discussed the benefits of basing DRR in his school, saying, 'After working with NAC, we established a child-led SERT for the first time in our school. Members of this team now understand how to assist others during and after a disaster. Together, we identified a safe area within our school compound, and in case of a disaster, such as an earthquake, all students and teachers will gather there'.

In addition, throughout the winter of 2016, NAC provided, with support from Common Humanitarian Funding (CHF), much needed humanitarian support for Badakhshan families who had lost their homes in the 2015 earthquake.

Alongside providing support within communities, NAC works to strengthen Afghan institutional organizations, both governmental and NGO, in their capacities to prepare for, respond to, and manage disasters. This helps develop and secure Afghanistan's disaster resilience, and is crucial in ensuring Afghan government and civil society institutions are pro-active and accountable to the citizens they support – an important step towards long-term sustainability.

Example from practice:

Strengthening the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA)

Although there is tremendous will within Afghanistan's governmental disaster response and management institutions, they often struggle from a lack of capacity, resources and support which hinders their effectiveness when disasters strike. In recognizing the needs and working towards more dynamic and sustainable institutions, NAC has developed a partnership with ANDMA, which has overall responsibility for disaster response and management in the country.

Focusing efforts on ANDMA at provincial level in Badakhshan, NAC has entered into a multi-year partnership. The challenges are clear. As Mohammad Es-haq Yaqoobi, the ANDMA Prevention and Resilience Manager in Badakhshan explained, 'We have 10 staff members, but they lack experience in DRR. We also lack equipment for assessing disasters including GPS monitors, rangefinders, or even cameras. And, we don't have a proper database for recording the disasters that do happen'.

To address these challenges, NAC has seconded one technical staff member to ANDMA, providing some of the critical support they need. Since entering into the partnership in 2016, NAC has also supported ANDMA in a number of other ways, as Mr. Yaqoobi recounted, 'NAC has supported us with:

- camera equipment that we are using for assessment and recording of disasters – we include the photos in our reports;
- GPS monitors for all of the main locations in Badakhshan where disasters occur most frequently – we have now recorded the GPS points for all affected locations;
- training in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and GPS, which has paved the way for us to do proper mapping of affected areas;
- developing a database – in the past all ANDMA records were paper-based, but now NAC has helped us develop a database, which has made the recording of all disaster related data easier for us; besides this, we can provide the data to any other stakeholders when they need it;
- establishing a Disaster Communication Focal Point – in the past the ANDMA office did not have any specific person to communicate between provincial and district levels in collecting information and providing support when disasters occurred; also, collaboration between ANDMA and NGOs working in the field of DRR was weak; by training and supporting one person as a Disaster Communication Focal Point, cooperation and coordination between ANDMA and other NGOs, as well as with the district level, has improved'.

Mr Yaqoobi went on to say, 'I thank NAC for improving the capacity of ANDMA staff and our systems as well'.

Through ongoing, but targeted support, NAC works to ensure that our Afghan government partners are ultimately able to 'stand on their own two feet' whatever challenges they may face.

Addressing infrastructure needs

Alongside planning and training, the development of infrastructure is also an important part of disaster preparedness, response and management. In the aftermath of disasters, Afghan communities often need emergency shelter and supplies, when homes have been destroyed and food and medicine is scarce or difficult to access.

NAC works with provincial, district and community partners to address key emergency supply needs through the construction of permanent shelters and have provided supplies for the provincial stockpile in Faizabad and the four decentralized disaster response centers constructed by NAC in 2015. Also, in support of reliable and effective coordination of disaster response and management, NAC constructed earthquake-proof, disaster response centers in 2016, in four Badakhshan districts.

Building environmental resilience

The ultimate survival of Afghan communities depends on preventative measures, which reduce the likelihood of disasters and mitigate the impacts when they strike, especially in the face of climate change, which has increased the frequency and severity of disasters in Afghanistan. This requires addressing environmental issues head-on, particularly deforestation – which can lead to erosion, landslides and a greater risk of flooding.

A coordinated approach between different NAC technical teams, helps ensure the communities we support are taking a long-term approach to environmental sustainability.

NAC sustainable environment initiatives focus on range of issues including: watershed protection, revitalization and management; reforestation; the construction of flooding and erosion protective 'gabion' walls; the planting of drought resistant crops; and earthquake resistant construction.



- Equipping the provincial stockpile and 4 disaster response centers in Badakhshan
- 90 School-based Emergency Response Teams established in Badakhshan and Ghazni
- 30 schools provided with first aid and search and rescue equipment
- 1706 children (621 of them girls) trained in disaster awareness, basic first aid and search and rescue
- 758 school Shura members received DRR awareness training
- 90 Village Disaster Management Plans (VDMP) developed in disaster-prone communities in Badakhshan and Ghazni
- 50 permanent shelters constructed for victims of natural disasters in Badakhshan
- 860,000 square meters of land reforested in Badakhshan – 1505 short-term jobs created
- 420 meters of gabion protection walls constructed in Ghazni – 131 short-term jobs created



Our work:

Governance and civil society



Afghanistan's and NAC's shared vision of a more peaceful, healthy and inclusive society can only be realized through improving governance and civil society in the country.

Through sustained programs of advocacy, capacity building and technical and material support, NAC works towards ensuring Afghanistan has a strong and vibrant civil society, and in strengthening relationships between government and civil society actors.

Supporting governance bodies

In 2016, NAC continued its support for governance structures at district and community levels. This has involved working closely in Badakhshan, Faryab and Ghazni provinces with Community Development Councils and District Development Assemblies. Specifically, NAC has provided these sub-national governance bodies with training and follow-up support on community development planning and small scale-infrastructure development - two critical areas for Afghan communities' sustainable development. NAC has reduced involvement with these governance bodies in 2016 in anticipation of the national transition to new bodies and elections of new members in 2017, in connection with the upcoming 'Citizens' Charter'.

Self Help Groups – a growing force for women's empowerment

Building on our successes over the past few years, NAC has continued working 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.

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.

As communities become more aware of the activities and benefits of Self Help Groups, interest and support grows. More women seek to join existing Self Help Groups, or form new ones and communities begin to relax some of the conservative strictures, which traditionally block women from participating in activities outside of their households. 11 new Self Help Groups have been established in 2016, bringing the total of existing groups to 68.

Self Help Groups are also proving resilient to security pressures which are increasing in many parts of Afghanistan. We have seen that several Self Help Groups that were forced to disband because of the worsening security situation in parts of Badakhshan in 2015, have been restarted by their members in 2016. This shows incredible perseverance and dedication in the face of adversity and validates the importance of these organizations for their members and communities.

The impacts of this initiative are truly being felt and involve a combination of positive economic and social changes. On an economic level alone, Self Help Groups have managed to save up to USD 900 per year.

Based on a recent evaluation of the Self Help Groups, we found that most women participants felt that they now have more influence over economic decisions within their families than before joining the Self Help Groups. As men see their female relatives are able to use the numeracy and entrepreneurial skills gained in Self Help Groups, in actually supporting their families, they are gradually giving women more say and control of family finances – this is a small, but significant movement towards positive social change.

With support from NAC, Self Help Groups are getting more sustainable access to markets to sell their products. For example, Self Help Group products are gaining a higher profile outside of the communities in which they are produced and now even being sold in a special shop in Badakhshan's Faizabad airport.

Social cohesion through sharing resources

Promoting sound and equitable management of vital community resources is a NAC priority - this leads to greater social cohesion and more sustainable access to the resources all community members need.

Undoubtedly, water is one of the most precious resources, without which no individual or community can survive. With this in mind, NAC has worked with the Afghan communities we support to establish Social Water Management Committees. These committees, developed in accordance with Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) guidelines, work to ensure that water is shared equitably within and between communities. There are often particular tensions around access to and usage of water between communities with different ethnic groups and the Social Water Management Committees can be instrumental in reducing these tensions and resolving specific disputes.

Women's active participation is an important element of the effectiveness of Social Water Management Committees, and women are key members and also serve in leadership positions such as chairs and co-chairs. Women's participation is essential, not only in improving gender equity and equality, but also because women, especially in rural communities, often need the most access to water as they are typically responsible for household domestic duties including washing and cooking, as well as agricultural work, such as looking after cattle.

Involving Afghan communities in participatory monitoring and evaluation

Too often in Afghanistan, civil society organizations lack the key capacities necessary for them to effectively fulfill their functions. Local communities, in particular, lack skills and experience in assessing their own needs and monitoring and evaluating the implementation of critical programs and services, such as health and education.

To rectify this, NAC works with civil society organizations in the communities we support to provide them with the skills they need to do participatory monitoring and evaluation. Participatory approaches equip and empower civil society organizations to be key actors, and ultimately leaders, in the development of their own communities.

Afghan civil society has international influence

NAC continues our support of the Badakhshan Civil Society Forum. This is a forum for different civil society organizations to come together, share experiences and plan collaboratively in building a strong network of civil society actors in Badakhshan. Although this association has clear influence within Badakhshan, in 2016 it was able to contribute valuable insights from Badakhshan's civil society to other parts of Afghanistan and beyond.

In October 2016, an important conference was held in Brussels focused on development and reform in Afghanistan. Participants from the Afghan government, 75 countries and 26 international organizations and agencies attended and the resolutions that resulted will inform funding for aid and development, and other international engagements with Afghanistan for years to come.

NAC was chosen to facilitate a contribution to this conference in the form of statements presenting the views of Badakhshan's civil society on their needs, aspirations and perspectives on the future of Afghanistan. Working together with the Badakhshan Civil Society Forum, NAC first conducted research into the perspectives of Badakhshan's civil society actors from six of the province's districts. This research was then used to inform a workshop conducted together with representatives from the Badakhshan Civil Society Forum and in coordination with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Aga Khan Foundation, to formulate the statements which were later shared at the Brussels conference.

Supporting local NGOs

In 2016, NAC has continued our support for Afghan NGOs helping to build their capacities in developing their policies, managing their organizations and in accessing funding, planning, implementing and monitoring projects. We do this in coordination with the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR), on an initiative which partners international NGOs with Afghan NGOs. This fosters mutual learning, and supports the Afghan NGOs in working more effectively and transparently.

NAC is 'twinned' with two Afghan NGOs - AREA (Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation in Afghanistan) and SAF (Solidarity for Afghan Families). This five-year commitment is helping AREA and SAF strengthen their organizations to meet the demands of development and humanitarian relief work in Afghanistan, and to survive in an increasingly competitive funding environment.

Example from practice:

Citizens' Monitoring in Jaghori

Noor Association is a grassroots civil society organization, based in Pato village in Jaghori district, Ghazni province. In 2016, NAC worked with Noor Association, facilitating training in using Citizens' Monitoring, a participatory approach to community-based monitoring and evaluation.

As Mr. Farhad Ekhlesi, the head of Noor Association explained, 'This training was very useful for us. We learned how to identify important advocacy issues in our community, begin the process of advocacy and convince decision-makers to take concrete steps to improve basic service delivery in the village'.

NAC provided training in the concepts and methods of Citizens' Monitoring and also supported Noor Association to actually implement this participatory approach on the ground.

After the initial training, Noor Association began the Citizens' Monitoring process in their village by working with the community in choosing a challenge to focus on – the challenge ended up being 'women's lack of literacy'.

After identifying the challenge, they trained community research teams and supported them in gathering and analyzing data related to women's literacy.

Discussing the process, Sima, a Noor Association member, said, 'When we held meetings with the Community Development Councils (CDCs) in our village to seek their endorsement for the Citizens' Monitoring activity, all the CDC members offered their cooperation and this really encouraged us to work for the education of our women.'

After researching into the challenge of literacy for women in the village, Noor Association organized a community meeting to present their findings, discuss these with the community and advocate for change. They also invited the district literacy manager, community-based organizations, religious leaders, traditional elders and some media representatives to the meeting.

Another Noor Association member explained, 'When we invited the traditional elders, at first they were worried, but we started the meeting very warmly and when the results of our evaluation and recommendations were shared, with a lot of feedback from women, they felt this was very positive'. NAC has supported Noor Association in their advocacy on improving women's access to literacy in the

village, the district and beyond, motivating people at different levels to support this worthwhile initiative.

As a result of this participatory, Citizens' Monitoring activity, the village and district literacy department has been motivated to establish a 'literacy and life skills center' for women in Pato village, and 32 similar centers in other parts of the district. This will have positive future impacts on women's literacy and empowerment. As Mr. Ekhlesi said, 'The empowerment of women has only just started and it will continue to bring achievements in the future. We are thankful to NAC for their contributions and support!'.



- 189 communities in Badakhshan, Faryab, Ghazni and Kabul trained and supported in civil society activities
- 1,244 members of Community Development Councils (CDCs) and District Development Assemblies (DDAs) trained on community development planning and small scale-infrastructure development
- 68 Self Help Groups for women established in Badakhshan and Ghazni

Promoting conflict resolution within Afghan civil society

NAC supports the resolution of conflicts within and between communities by providing training in non-violent conflict resolution and dialogue for civil society organizations. Although such trainings are popular, it is not always easy to measure their impacts on participants' lives. In the following story, however, we see that sometimes our trainings have immediate and profound impacts.

Where have all the students gone?

In Argo district, a very mountainous area of Badakhshan Province, a large school in the district center has more than 2600 students on its enrollment register. However, one day when a monitor came to inspect the school he found only 12 of the 2600 enrolled students were actually present in school.

This case was presented during a NAC workshop in 'Dialogue and Conflict Transformation' for traditional leaders, elders and members of the school Shura from the district center in Argo. Part of the training involved a 'conflict mapping' exercise where participants were invited to share experiences of actual conflict they had experienced. Participants suggested mapping the recent conflict in the school about students' absence. Conflict mapping revealed that teachers and parents had totally different views on why so many of the students were missing and where the responsibility lay.

The school Shura explained that in September 2016, a monitor from the Provincial Department of Education came to inspect the school. The monitor met the school's teachers and although all teachers were present, there were only 12 students in the school that day. This was shocking news and the school monitor accused the teachers of not caring about the students' absence. The teachers reacted by blaming the school Shura and parents for the students being absent.

Resolving conflict through dialogue

After the conflict mapping and a group presentation, the school Shura requested that NAC add one more day to the workshop in hopes of resolving the community's conflict over the students' absence. Drawing on the training in conflict resolution the Shura suggested that the students, parents, Shura members, community elders and a representative from the District Education Department all be invited

to the extra day of the workshop. Normally, NAC provides lunch for every day of a workshop, but as a sign of their sincere motivation to resolve the conflict, the participants did not request that NAC provide lunch for the extra day.

The following day, each group presented their perspectives on the conflict. Teachers explained that although they were present in school, parents had not sent their children to school, but rather used them to harvest crops for money. The school Shura and parents said their children were sent to school, but had returned home early. The students explained that there were too few teachers available at the school and they were not given any proper school-work. This was very boring for them, so they left.

Through NAC's support in using conflict resolution and dialogue techniques, participants were comfortable to share their perspectives and listen respectfully to the perspectives of others. They gained a deeper understanding of one another's positions, needs and interests. Finally, they were able to come up with the following shared resolutions:

- Parents committed themselves to send their children to school every day.
- The school Shura promised to conduct more regular Shura meetings and visit the school more often.
- The teachers promised they would pay closer attention to students' attendance and also agreed to ensure that students who dropped below the required 75% attendance rate must repeat the semester again.
- The District Department of Education promised to regularly monitor teachers' attendance.
- The students agreed to return to school and stay for the full school day.
- All participants resolved to conduct more group meetings involving all stakeholders in support of a shared approach to school improvement.

The seeds of a new peaceful generation

Not only did the initial workshop and meeting work towards resolving this particular school conflict, it also served as an important lesson for all on how social conflicts can be resolved meaningfully at the community level. Together they have cultivated the seeds of a new peaceful generation in their community.



NAC in 2016

315 staff in Afghanistan, 3 in Norway. 99% Afghan nationals, 39% women

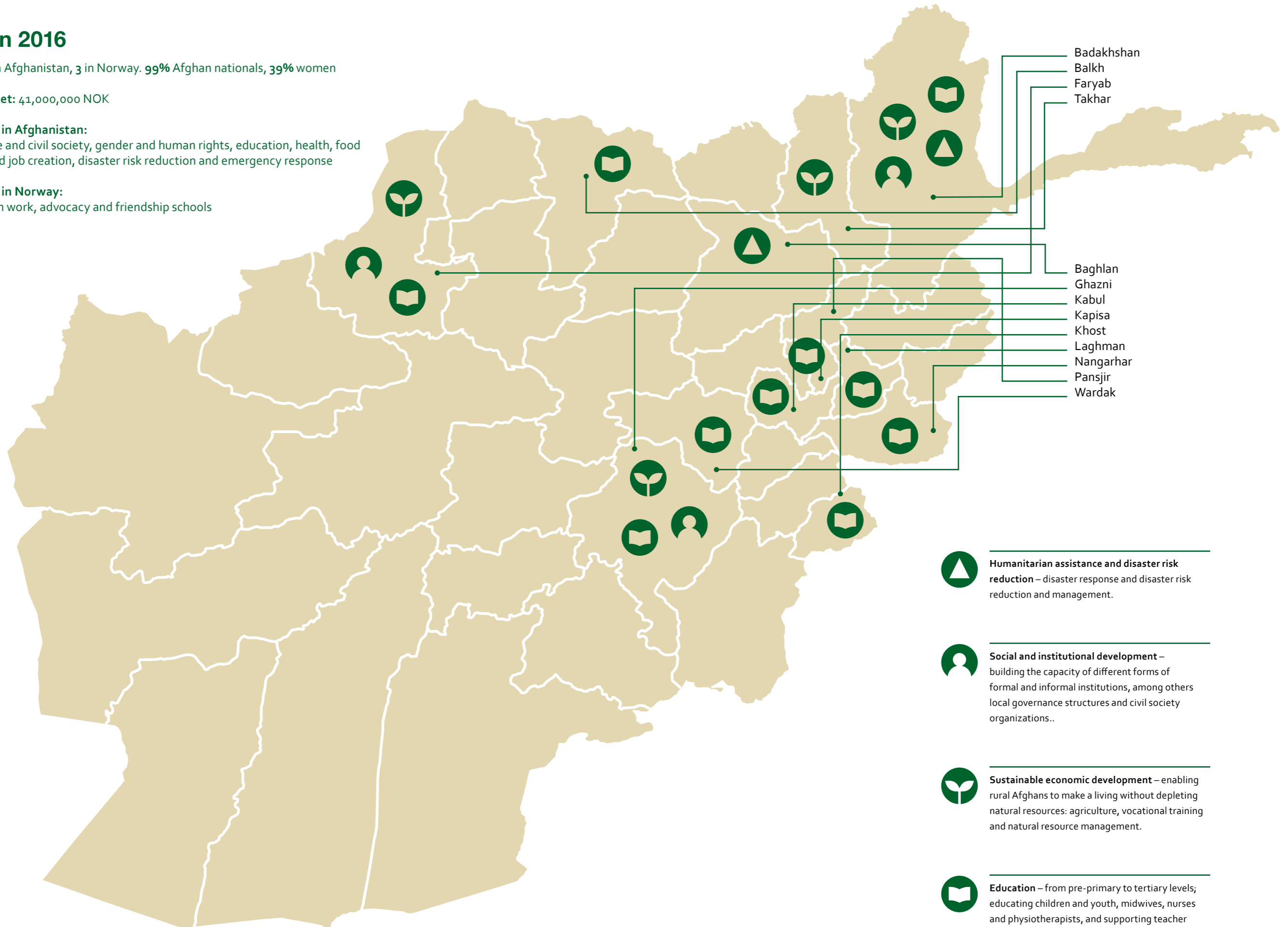
Total budget: 41,000,000 NOK

Main work in Afghanistan:

governance and civil society, gender and human rights, education, health, food security and job creation, disaster risk reduction and emergency response

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.

Advocacy and Information in Norway

Civil and military engagement in Afghanistan

In June 2016, an independent, government-appointed commission launched its evaluation report on Norway's military and civil engagement in Afghanistan, 'NOU 2016:8 Norway in Afghanistan 2001-2014'. The commission found that Norway had either failed, or partly failed to achieve two of three main goals; state-building and development (failed), and combatting international terrorism (partly failed). The report found the only goal successfully achieved, was the third goal; to be a good ally and partner to NATO and the USA.

The report's findings and conclusions are relatively critical of Norway's engagement in Afghanistan. However, Norway's Government and parliamentarians have proven reluctant to engage in public debate about the findings. NAC believes these must be addressed to ensure learning from 15 years of civil and military engagement in Afghanistan – so that we do not make the same mistakes again.

NAC has therefore invested in ensuring public debate; by arranging open meetings, producing op-eds published in Norwegian newspapers, radio interviews and advocating for a parliamentary debate on the report. Accordingly, NAC has advocated for: long-term investment and partnership for development with the Afghan Government and Afghan people; increased investment in long-term development interventions that address underlying causes of fragility; and strengthened democratic control of the deployment of Norwegian armed forces.



Providing a platform for Afghan voices
Making sure Afghan voices, particularly of youth, are heard, is a key priority. In 2016, NAC continued partnership with the Norwegian Storytelling

Festival in training young Afghans in storytelling and providing platforms to share stories. Young Afghan participants were supported to interview politicians on their views on the future of Afghanistan; including Minister of Defence, Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide, and Member of Parliament, Bård Vegar Solhjell.

Afghanistan has a long history of fostering poets, including Jalaluddin Rumi, the famous 13th century poet. Some contemporary Afghan poets have been forced to flee their country because of persecution. One of them is Gulabuddin Sukhanwar, who now lives in Norway. Sukhanwar writes poems about displacement from family and homeland in search of security, such as in the beautiful poem 'Wandering Traveller'. NAC facilitated cooperation between Sukhanwar and the Norwegian musician, Kristin, who added music to his poems. During Afghanistan Week 2016, their cooperation culminated in a concert 'The Wandering Traveller' that attracted a full house.

Wandering Traveller!

*Oh wandering traveller!
Peripatetically lonely, wearing a world of malaise
You are full of sorrow, but joyful too for sweet,
bittersweet memories
Your words are poetic and your heart, full of love
But now, far from home, your mood is dull grey
Your surrounding lacks magic, you suffer each day
Suffocating slowly in this cloud of distrust
Sustained by your dreams, the freedom for which you lust
Despite eyes full of tears, your hope can transport you
Destination unknown, no family to support you
A wandering traveller: When will you cross the frontier
to security?
Years ago I came to know
- that wandering travellers are accompanied
By Noah in the sea,
Retain your faith I wish you fortitude;
Safe Journey, nights illuminated by spontaneous quiet
moonlight
And your heart full of love
Oh wandering traveller
Peripatetically lonely
Seeking shelter in this solitude, your parallel universe.*

- Gulabuddin Sukhanwar

Public Events in 2016

NAC arranged public meetings and seminars on topics, ranging from Norway's role in Afghanistan and lessons learned, to women, peace and security and regional dimensions of the Afghan crisis. In total, NAC contributed to, 28 public events in Norway.

Afghanistan Week 2016



Alghantanspindien Retweeted
Kai Eide @kai_eide · 21-Sep-2016
Great to discuss our continued partnership with Afghanistan with @MujibMashal @aarby & many Afghan friends #afghanweek



For the 3rd time, NAC and its partners, the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and Christian Michelsens Institute (CMI), Bergen, hosted the 'Afghanistan Week'.



With international guests, including New York Times journalist, Mujib Mashal, former Afghan parliamentarian, Farkhunda Naderi, and Afghanistan Analyst Network researcher, Thomas Ruttig, there were full houses for all 16 seminars.

NAC arranged a meeting with the Norwegian Parliament's Foreign and Defence Committee, where international guests were able to discuss the obstacles to peace and development in the country, and Norway's role in contributing to peace and prosperity. In the meeting, Farkhunda Naderi advocated for Norway's continued support to the democratisation process. She said, 'Norway should push for elections in Afghanistan. Elections are key to the continued process of democratization in Afghanistan, even if not flawlessly implemented. The process, in itself, is important'.

In a meeting on women, peace and security, H. E. Shukria Barakzai, Afghanistan's Ambassador to Norway, Farkhunda Naderi, Lisa Golden, Deputy Director and Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Arne Strand, Deputy Director of CMI, discussed the obstacles and opportunities to ensuring women's access to, and meaningful participation in peace and decision-making processes in Afghanistan.

In the meeting, Ms. Farkhunda Naderi emphasised the importance of long-term engagement to achieve results for women's rights and gender equality. She said, 'I cannot say that the government is willing to include women in the peace process, but I can truly say that the president is. I doubt the commitment of the men in suits and ties who put on beautiful international faces, but it's good that they are learning how to act because in time they will start believing it'.

Solidarity between Afghan and Norwegian Children and Youth

The Friendship School Program

Since its establishment in 1998, the Friendship School Program has developed friendship and solidarity between school children in Afghanistan and Norway. For almost two decades, students from Afghan and Norwegian schools have exchanged letters, experiences, drawings, handicrafts, hopes and dreams. Schools in the two countries have had parallel teaching programs, and the Norwegian schools have used the related teaching packages available on NAC's website.

Advances in technology create new opportunities, and from 2016, the Friendship School Program has introduced Skype conversations where students from the partner Friendship Schools in Afghanistan and Norway talk directly with each other. A Skype video meeting was recently held between Afghan and Norwegian students where they were able to see each other, ask questions and share experiences virtually 'face-to-face'.

Fundraising in Norway is also an important part of the Friendship School Program. The teachers, students and parents from the three Norwegian Friendship Schools, Krohnengen, Sulitjelma, and Vinderen, provide a very significant financial contribution. Through events like the Christmas market at Krohnengen, and the 'friendship days', at Vinderen, Norwegian Friendship Schools have raised NOK 190,000 in 2016.

These funds have been used in providing a better and more diverse school day for the Afghan partner schools in Badakhshan, Faryab, Ghazni and Kabul.



Afghan Friendship Schools have identified priority areas for using funds generated through the program. Accordingly, in 2016, project-based learning activities were held and new playground and sports equipment was provided helping Afghan students engage with learning, be healthier and have more fun in school.

Educating Norwegian students about Afghanistan

In 2016, NAC continued providing educational material about Afghanistan in Norway for schools at all levels; in subjects such as history, geography, religion, and the social sciences. The experiences and lessons learned from the Norwegian intervention in Afghanistan also provided an important topic for discussions in schools. Together with the Norwegian Peace Council, NAC held seminars for high school students from many different schools in Oslo during Afghanistan Week 2016. Through lectures and workshops the students addressed the theme of the seminar: 'Norway in The World and in Afghanistan defender of peace or nation of war?'

Youth politician debate

Together with organizers from the Norwegian Peace Movement and The Norwegian Social Forum, NAC held the debate, 'From Afghanistan via Libya to Syria: When will we start to learn?'. During the debate, leaders and representatives from the youth movements of all major political parties in Norway debated the experiences of Norwegian military interventions in Asia and the Middle East and implications these should have for future Norwegian involvement in foreign conflicts.

Board of Directors and Volunteers

Board of Directors

NAC's Board of Directors stakes out the organization's strategic direction and is involved in making major decisions regarding NAC's work both in Afghanistan and Norway.

Sverre Hjelleset, Chair of the Board

Technical Director of Flekkefjord Municipality, and a former teacher, producer and finance coordinator in several NGOs working in Afghanistan. Sverre Hjelleset has served several terms as a member of NAC's Board and took over as Chair of the Board in 2016. Sverre is also a musician.

Anne Hertzberg, Deputy 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.

Farid Ghiami, Board Member

Herdis Sigurdgrimsdottir, Board Member

Beate Fasting, Board Member

Terje Skaufjord, Deputy Board Member

Deeva Biabani, Deputy Board Member

Our volunteers

Since our founding as a grassroots solidarity organization in 1980, volunteer members have been a core resource for NAC. In 2016, our volunteers continued to play vital roles in many aspects of our work: from organizational management and mobilization, to reviewing and giving advice on project implementation; from organizing local and nationwide fundraising campaigns, to contributing to our communication work in Norway as speakers, writers, panellist and organizers. Some are organized in groups and sub committees. Others are involved in special tasks. The Bergen Local Committee is the oldest of these groups, tracing their origin back to the establishment of NAC in 1980.

Afghan voices: Unpolished

Supporting and promoting Afghan voices in Norway is an important part of our information strategy and mission. We have continued our close cooperation with the Unpolished Project in 2016, after co-initiating it the year before. Run by a trio of Norwegian stage artists, the project consists of a group of volunteer Afghan youths living in Norway. With roots in Afghan

storytelling tradition, they have produced and developed their show, 'Unpolished – Afghan Dreams', narrating their dramatic and powerful life stories; their departures from Afghanistan; the difficult journey they had to take; and their experiences with Norway, after their arrival. During 2016, they performed at the biggest literature festival in Norway, in Lillehammer, and at The Nobel Peace Center, among other events. Parallel to this, they are organizing many open storytelling nights and storytelling workshops.



Afghan voices: the History Bank

In 2016, another project was integrated into our work, aimed at promoting Afghan voices in Norway – the History Bank. Run by a group of Norwegian artists, the project collects the stories of people's relationships to Afghanistan. Several of our Afghan-Norwegian members and volunteers involved in the Unpolished Project participated, but also NAC veterans contributed with their stories from their time as volunteer health workers in Afghanistan. Participants also took on journalistic roles, interviewing members of the Norwegian government and parliament about the Norwegian military intervention in Afghanistan.



Solidarity in Action and specialist volunteer committees

While we have over 300 employees in Afghanistan, the main office in Oslo exists with a staff of only three people. Our roster of specialist volunteers contribute to keeping the staff in Oslo at a minimum, making us able to channel a maximum amount of our resources towards Afghanistan. Academics, medical personnel, civil servants, journalists, experts on Afghanistan and NAC veterans support the staff in their communication and advocacy work in Norway and the monitoring and development of our programs in the field in Afghanistan.

Trough the Solidarity in Action Program, a number of specialist volunteers travel to Afghanistan, giving expert advice on project implementation and other types of support, some returning year after year. Their continued commitment to NAC and our work brings valuable resources and knowledge. Given that volunteers either work completely unpaid, or NAC merely refunds their salaries for their time lost from work at home, they liberate economic resources that would otherwise have to be used on specialist expat staff or expensive consultants. This also means that our NAC volunteers come to Afghanistan because they genuinely care about the Afghan people, not for financial gain. A bit further on, we have an interview with Miriam Skjørten one of NAC's specialist education volunteers about her experiences of volunteering.

Continuous volunteer support

NAC enjoys the assistance of friends, old and new members and volunteers who are always contributing to organize our public events and make things happen. During our flagship event, the third instalment of the Afghanistan Week, in September 2016, our members and volunteers played crucial roles, as organizers, panellists and participants. Because NAC is a solidarity organization, our members and volunteers are truly our foundation.

Running in solidarity with Afghan Midwives

Volunteers from partner organizations have in recent years, come to play a central role in supporting NAC. Having supported NAC's program on midwifery education in Afghanistan for years, the Norwegian Association of Midwives (Dnj) organized a national solidarity event in support of their Afghan colleagues and NAC on 5th May 2016 - the 'International Day of the Midwife'. All over Norway, hundreds of midwives and many more supporters participated in the 'Run for Life' event, a sponsored run, or walk, raising a considerable amount of funding and reaching out to local and national press in awareness raising, and in many other ways contribution to making this a great demonstration of grassroots solidarity between Norway and Afghanistan.



Interview with Miriam Skjørten, a NAC volunteer

Introduction

Miriam Skjørten was born in 1935 and was a war-refugee herself during the 2nd World War. Miriam is an Emerita Associate Professor in education from the University of Oslo and has been a senior education specialist with UNESCO. She has also been working and volunteering with NAC since 2014.

Miriam has been supporting NAC's Master's Degree Program in Inclusive Education, and other education endeavors, particularly in the area of child development. Here Miriam discusses what it means for her to be a NAC volunteer.

How did you become a NAC volunteer?

At first I started working for NAC as a consultant, I was not a volunteer, but then after getting to know the organization, I said I enjoy the work so much and it does so much for me, I would be happy to volunteer. I feel that sitting at home and not doing anything is not good for me. Actually, I tried volunteering for a cancer charity in Norway, but this was not active enough for me. I don't have to do work now to survive financially, but I have to do it for my wellbeing.

What has been different about working with NAC in comparison with other organizations?

I've worked for a number of different development organizations, but NAC is the first organization I've worked with that has a really holistic approach. This is very, very motivating for me! It's good to work with NAC also because there are many nice people and I feel very welcome. But, the main thing for me is that I feel I can use myself and use my past experiences to fit within a framework I believe in. This framework, the holistic approach, means that, in education for example, NAC is working with all ages, from young children through to adults.

Has your experience with NAC given you new understandings or moved you into different directions in your work?

I think I now see more clearly some of the challenges Afghan's face. It has also challenged me to work in areas that I would not otherwise have been doing, like developing indicators for assessing early childhood development education.

What does NAC's approach to solidarity mean to you?

This is one of the reasons I haven't wanted to be paid for the work I'm now doing with NAC. At the beginning I was a little embarrassed when I was introduced as a volunteer, but then I thought, no, this is ok, because this has to do with solidarity. I feel I've been very well taken care of by the people I've worked with in NAC as well as other Afghan's I've worked with. It really gives me a lot. When I talk with other NAC volunteers, or other people about NAC, I have even caught myself saying now, 'those who work for us', not 'those who work for NAC'.

What has been the most meaningful part of your experience of volunteering with NAC?

I have learned so much about Afghan culture and society – it has really opened my eyes. I also see that the Master's degree students I've worked with have really gone on to make positive changes. I hope this sticks. For example, one of the school inspectors who was on the Master's program, dared to go to his colleagues, and teachers and head teachers and Ministry of Education staff and said, 'We are getting all these complaints about the quality of education and so what are we going to do about it? Let's do something.'

So, things have started changing. Other Master's students who are teacher educators, have really worked to improve the educational experiences of their students, reducing barriers on an individual level. It's so touching. This I'm really proud about. With the Master's degree students - who all did action research projects - first we pushed them, then we motivated them, then we gave them the freedom

to act, and we supported them and they succeeded to do things.

What would you say to prospective NAC volunteers?

They get as much as they give, if not more. My life really has become richer. And when I volunteer and go and talk about my experience with NAC in Norway, people get a picture of Afghanistan that is not only what they get from the newspapers. We have to be careful to give a balanced perspective of Afghanistan, not overly negative and not overly positive, but we do something about the negative things by also being an example.

If one person can say, 'I'm a volunteer and I'm achieving this, I also see the problems, but what I do is meaningful', this will inspire other people to say, 'Ok, I can give one week of my summer vacation to volunteer'.

But one has to volunteer with what they know, not just to be a good person. One has to say, 'I can offer these skills and do you need me?'.

It is also important that NAC volunteers interact with each other. We can have a network of NAC volunteers. Because what I am doing in education actually has a direct relationship with what is happening in health and with midwives, for example. So, when I meet with health volunteers we can talk together about how to make these connections. We can share our different experiences. In the end I want to say that I have enjoyed myself working as a volunteer with NAC and I want to come back!





Our NAC Team:

36 years of dedication

NAC has 318 dedicated staff members, three in Norway and 315 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. 39% 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 and district office in Maimana, Faryab, and Yawan, Badakhshan, seasonal field offices in Malistan and Keshem, and project offices in Kapisa, Khost, Laghman, Nangarhar and Wardak.

A few words from some of our Afghan colleagues:

Nasima: 'It's almost four years that I'm working as a kindergarten teacher in Kabul. Working with kids was a really new experience for me, because they have another world without the same concerns that adults have. I really enjoy my work and I've learned a lot. We have 5 children in the kindergarten, and many other children when female staff are visiting from NAC regional offices. They learn rhymes, make drawings and we play games together. Also, they learn to take turns and respect each other. The kids who are in the kindergarten are like my children.'

Salem: 'I'm 20 years old and working as a guard in the Kabul office. I joined NAC in 2015. At that time, because of costs and other challenges, I wasn't going to school. But, I remember that from the first day of my work with NAC, everyone encouraged me that I should continue my education. So, I went back to school and now I'm in the 11th grade and plan to go university. I think working with NAC, has completely changed the direction of my life.'

Bilqis: 'I have been working with NAC since 2006 in Ghazni City, and currently I'm working as a project assistant. I work with women in education, but when I'm needed, I also work in others areas, like with Self Help Groups. Working with NAC for a decade, I have learnt a lot, and I appreciate NAC's efforts in staff capacity building. NAC's been like a family for me. We have such talented, honest, respectful and hardworking colleagues, which makes for a good and

safe working environment for everyone. I also really appreciate NAC's dedication to work with the most vulnerable women in rural parts of Afghanistan.'

Ibrahimi: 'I have been with NAC since August 2010, working as a training coordinator in Ghazni province. NAC is more than a university for me and I have learned a lot of new things here. I am very happy and proud of working with NAC. We are thankful to NAC's service to the Afghan people.'

Arghawan: 'I've worked with NAC as a course coordinator for Laghman's Community Health Nursing Education program since 2012. I used to work with a different organization, outside my professional area. When I joined NAC, I was so happy I could work again in my area of health education. Also, with NAC, I have learned many important things about management. Before I joined NAC, I had one family, but now I feel like I have two.'

Shirabuddin: 'I've been working with NAC as guard since 2014 for the Community Midwifery Education program in Kapisa. I am very happy that NAC has paved the way for me to support my family and that NAC supports our Kapisa people through training midwives and nurses. We hope these needed health programs will be continued in the future as well.'

Roshan Gul: 'I'm 50 year old and I work in the Community Midwifery Education program in Khost as a cleaner. My husband died a few years ago and left me alone with ten children. I also lost a son last year in an explosion in the center of Khost. It is really difficult for a mother to see the death of her son. I got depressed and lost interest in life and I was not able to work, but, NAC held my hand in that difficult time. NAC helped me with treatment for my depression and some economic support. I will never forget this support and I am working with love for NAC.'

Yahya: 'It is twenty years that I'm working as a driver for NAC in Badakhshan. I have travelled to almost all of the districts and most of the villages in remote areas of Badakhshan, in cooperation with all of my program colleagues to serve our people and communities. I've witnessed that NAC has brought positive changes in the communities where we work. NAC has an excellent reputation. I enjoy my work and I am proud of to be a part of the NAC family.'

EXPENDITURE BY SECTORS

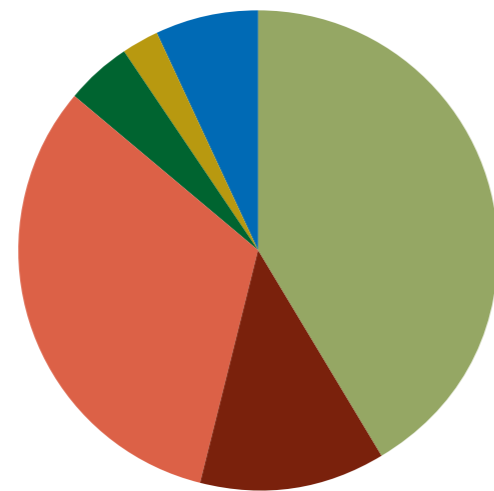
Professional education (health nurses, midwives, physiotherapists and teachers)	Education & the Friendship School Program	Humanitarian assistance & disaster risk reduction	Governance & Civil Society
1,989,947 USD	1,538,149 USD	603,190 USD	2,425,441 USD

Gender & Human Rights

112,404 USD

Food Security & Job Creation

327,745 USD



TOTAL: 4,791,954 USD

Our finances in 2016

In 2016, NAC worked in Norway and in thirteen Afghan provinces: Badakhshan, Baghlan, Balkh, Faryab, Ghazni, Kabul, Kapisa, Khost, Laghman, Nangarhar, Pansjir, Takhar and Wardak. In addition, our innovation project on teacher education, part of a triangular collaboration between Afghanistan, Indonesia and Norway, was completed in December 2016. 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, the European Union, Swedish Sida through the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) 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 Afghani (AFN). Funding for NAC's programs in Afghanistan in USD has increased slightly from 2015 levels. The extreme volatility of the currency market has continued to affect 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 2017 is relatively positive as new donors, including the UN OCHA Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF), the European Commission, and the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC), are supporting NAC programs and initiatives. The collaboration with the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) continues, while the support from the World Food Program (WFP) may continue to increase in spite of reduced funding for their humanitarian operations in Afghanistan. Mid-2017 the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) has may start co

Children in the friendship schools in Norway raised USD 32,500 to improve education in the seven Afghan friendship schools. Through fundraising campaigns, NAC received almost USD 48,000 from the Norwegian Association of Midwives (Dnj). Individual donors contributed with almost USD 45,000 for different initiatives. 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 to support different education and health initiatives.

FUNDING FOR PROJECTS IN AFGHANISTAN BY DONOR

Donor	Funding in 2016 in USD
NORAD - Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation	3,505,000
EC - European Commission	387,113
SCA - Swedish Committee for Afghanistan	314,867
UN OCHA - CHF (Common Humanitarian Fund)	235,742
Royal Norwegian Embassy in Jakarta	144,196
WFP - World Food Program	89,927
ACBAR	11,660
University of Montana	10,570
Dnj - Norwegian Association of Midwives	47,766
Norwegian Friendship Schools	32,500
GFZ - German Department of Geosciences	1,449
Smaller instutional and private donors	44,879
TOTAL	4,779,341

EXPENDITURE BY PROVINCE

Geographical area	Expenditure in 2016 in USD
Badakhshan (and Takhar)	1,311,776
Ghazni	796,475
Faryab	677,069
Kabul	554,648
Kapisa	497,383
Khost	330,018
Laghman	292,013
Nangarhar	187,041
Wardak	142,462
Other Provinces	3,068
TOTAL	4,791,954

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

- 36 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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