



From the past to the present

German-Afghan Cooperation

gtz





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Photos on page 3: from top to bottom: Harald Mundi, GTZ, Oliver J. Haas, Rada Akbar; Photos on the back cover: from left to right: Harald Mundi, Viola Reinhard, Oliver J. Haas*

From the past to the present

Afghanistan's history and culture

Retracing the routes of caravans and poets

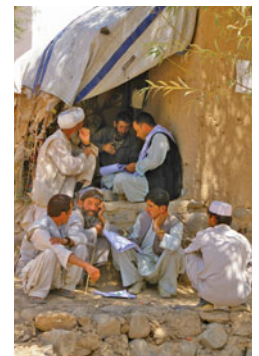
‘We are all one body. Whoever tortures another, wounds himself,’

cautions *Abdul Rahman Mohmand*, one of the most famous of Afghanistan's 17th century Sufi poets. In his work, which deals with mysticism, knowledge and the social issues of his time, it is humanitarianism that takes centre stage and not the affiliation to a given group. To this day, his engaging poems remain popular. Revered by the Afghans as Rahman Baba, 'Father Rahman', many people share his longing for peace in a country that – then as now – is racked by conflict.

The territory that makes up Afghanistan today has been exposed to many cultural influences in the course of its history, not least due to its geographical location on the legendary Silk Road whose main route linked the Mediterranean with East Asia. This came to embody the Orient itself, and its very mention conjures up images of sumptuous materials, precious stones, glass and porcelain, and the aroma of spices. Its beginnings go back to the Bronze Age (around 2000 BC) when the oasis culture with its highly developed metal working skills flourished in northern Afghanistan. From 500 BC this territory belonged to the Persian Empire before passing into the hands of Greek and Indian rulers. Between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD, the Indian influence brought Buddhism to the country, giving rise to a series of Buddhist sites along the trade routes, including the monumental Buddha statues in Bamiyan Valley of central Afghanistan.

Golden age, power struggles, reconstruction

By the close of the 10th century, Islam had established itself in the region, and the country flourished politically, economically and culturally – until it was attacked by the Mongols in the 13th century. From the 16th century, the Persians and Indian Moguls were the dominant powers in the Hindu Kush, until the Pashtuns – who with 42 per cent, today form the largest ethnic group in the country – set up their own kingdom in the mid-18th century. In the 19th century, the colonial powers Great Britain and Russia shaped the country's fortunes. It was not until after the First World War that they acknowledged the country's independence, enabling Afghanistan to become a constitutional monarchy in 1925. After a few decades of political stability, a dictatorship came to power in 1973 that was overthrown five years later by the military. The new rulers wanted to turn the country into a socialist state by means of land reform. However, the big landowners together with the Muslim clerics and foreign supporters exhorted the people to engage in armed resistance, which led to the 1979 invasion by Soviet troops. The years that followed were marred by civil war. The Soviet withdrawal in 1989 paved the way for the radical Taliban movement's rise to power. In 1996 they conquered the capital city of Kabul and three years later they were in control of nearly all the country. Societal structures in Afghanistan began to break down and families from the upper and middle classes, including many intellectuals, fled abroad to escape Taliban repressions. Following the 9/11 attack on New York in 2001, the US-American military overthrew the Taliban regime. Since then, the international community has been engaged in the process of peace building and reconstruction in Afghanistan.



A longstanding tradition: German-Afghan cooperation

Active economic and cultural exchange

Germany and Afghanistan are two completely different countries and yet they have shared close cultural and economic ties since the beginning of the 20th century. Germany, which is half the size of Afghanistan, is today a home from home for some 90,000 Afghans.

The two countries' friendly relations stretch back to the 1916 when Germany acknowledged Afghanistan's sovereignty three years before its official independence, a move that generated considerable goodwill. In a bid to modernise the country, the Afghan king, Amanullah, sought German expertise in 1919. By the time the two countries concluded a Friendship Treaty in 1926, some 200 German experts were working to build roads, canals and electricity plants in the Hindu Kush. These lively trade relations led to the foundation of the German-Oriental Trading Company (later called the German-Afghan Company). Exchanges were also strong in cultural terms, with many graduates from the Amani School, a German-language educational facility set up in 1924, coming to German universities to study – including many members of the Afghan Government. Conversely, German instructors taught at the Kabul Technical School – known today as the Mechanical Institute – which was set up in 1938. After the Second World War, the Mayor of Kabul, who had studied in Germany in the 1920s, established links with West German experts and companies. In 1955 the Federal Republic of Germany started providing technical assistance and extending long-term loans at favourable conditions. Starting in the 1950s, Germany spent twenty years promoting vocational education, building vocational training schools in Kabul, Khost and Kandahar. More than 800 German experts were employed in Afghanistan at the end of the 1960s. The largest project focused on developing forest and agricultural management in the southeastern Paktia Province on the border with Pakistan. Furthermore, the 1960s saw the formation of partnerships between the University of Kabul and the universities in Cologne, Bonn and Bochum in the fields of science and education, and many young Afghans received grants to study at a German university.



Street scenes in Kunduz
Photo: Harald Mundt



... in Herat
Photo: Sebastian Widmann



... and in Tarin Kowt
Photo: GTZ

New beginnings

German development cooperation with Afghanistan was forced to cease on two occasions: once following the Soviet invasion of 1979, and the second time after the Taliban's accession to power in 1996. The International Afghanistan Conference, held at the end of 2001 at the Petersberg Conference Centre close to Bonn, set the stage for a peaceful new beginning. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH and KfW Entwicklungsbank were two of the first organisations to operate in Afghanistan, starting at the end of 2001. Both of them were acting on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). In June 2002, Kabul was the venue for a large-scale council meeting, the 'Loya Jirga', at which representatives of all Afghanistan's ethnic and religious groups elected Hamid Karzai as their head of state, leading to the formation of a transitional government. In the same year GTZ opened its office in Kabul. One year later, the Loya Jirga negotiated a new constitution. Both these meetings were funded by BMZ, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assigned GTZ to organise them. In June 2010 a Peace Jirga was held in Kabul to discuss the Afghan Government's reconciliation and re-integration policy. The German Federal Foreign Office (AA) commissioned GTZ to provide logistical support for this event. All three assemblies took place in a marquee tent – a symbol of its new beginnings.

Germany's development cooperation engagement and GTZ's contribution in Afghanistan

Complex challenge – intensive commitment

For more than 30 years now, the situation in Afghanistan has been one of armed conflict and ethnic tension. People's livelihoods have all but been destroyed. As one of the poorest countries in the world, Afghanistan is a priority country of German and international development cooperation. The international community has been supporting civil reconstruction since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. Germany has been accorded special responsibilities in the northern provinces of Kunduz, Takhar, Badakhshan, Baghlan and Balkh, an area in which the German armed forces are also engaged militarily as part of their ISAF mission (International Security Assistance Force).



Chieftans are trained in legal texts | Photo: GTZ

GTZ's contribution to civil reconstruction

The German and Afghan Governments have agreed on a series of priority areas which are essentially being implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH and the KfW Entwicklungsbank.

On behalf of BMZ, GTZ is responsible for

- sustainable economic development
- energy supplies
- water supplies
- basic education and vocational training
- good governance (rule of law, respect for human rights, especially gender equality)
- development-oriented emergency and transitional aid (DETA).

GTZ also executes commissions for other German federal ministries. For example, working on behalf of the German Federal Foreign Office (AA), it is helping to build and equip police stations and training centres. Furthermore, GTZ is engaged in the training of hospital management staff, and for the German Federal Ministry of Defence (BMVg), it is managing the construction of military installations for the German armed forces in Kunduz and Taloqan.



The Balkh Hospital is the main centre for health care in the region | Photo: GTZ



Electricity is generated by water power/ Badakhshan Province | Photo: GTZ

GTZ's activities for international donors include, in the southern province of Uruzgan, a commission from the Dutch Government to implement a provincial development programme designed to promote the rural economy, train administrative staff and build key connecting roads. For the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, GTZ is providing support for an HIV programme. The World Bank also calls on GTZ's expertise, amongst other things to promote school education for girls.



... and increases the productivity of small businesses | Photo: Andre Möller

Close cooperation

The organisations implementing German development cooperation in Afghanistan all work together closely, each one contributing its own particular strengths. GTZ combines fast-acting contributions with longer-term measures, both in rural areas and at government level. The GTZ-affiliated Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM) places Integrated Experts from Germany in key positions, such as with Afghan government ministries. KfW finances major infrastructure projects, the German Development Service (DED) supports further training for teachers and the international capacity-building organisation Inwent promotes Afghan experts.

Strengthening development efforts

Nine years after the Petersberg Conference, the international community of states came together in London in January 2010 to re-align the priorities for reconstruction in Afghanistan. The German Government has taken on the task of expanding civil reconstruction in rural areas in the northern Afghan provinces. The aim is not only to support poverty reduction but to foster better political and institutional framework conditions. As part of this new development drive, the German Government is particularly concerned that these efforts will

- be more effective on a wider scale
- be extended to other provinces and districts
- reach the people more quickly and more directly
- help establish state structures that are more efficient and citizen-centred and have greater legitimacy.

Giving rural development a boost – building on past successes



It is intended that the people in Afghanistan should take over responsibility for the development processes in their country by the end of 2013, as their situation should have improved still further by then. On behalf of the German Government, GTZ is promoting the following objectives:



Water supply

Photos: Sebastian Widmann

- 75 per cent of the population in the northern provinces will be employed and have an increased income (currently 30 percent).
- 700 additional kilometres of road have been built that can be used throughout the year and which connect rural areas with provincial and district centres.

- Two million people, i.e. half the urban population in the northern provinces, have improved energy and drinking water supplies (currently as many as 900,000 people).
- 500,000 and/or 60 per cent of school students in the northern provinces have better trained teachers (currently 25 per cent).
- Cross-border trade and cooperation between Afghanistan, Pakistan and the neighbouring states help stabilise the region.



Vocational training | Photo: GTZ

GTZ operates in Afghanistan by

Building confidence: Development-oriented emergency and transitional aid (DETA) generates fast and effective improvements in living conditions. Since these measures have an immediate effect, they generate a great deal of confidence.

Networking instruments: Via district or province development funds, DETA also makes it possible for communities to submit applications for projects that they will implement themselves with GTZ support. This might involve the construction of a bridge, road, or school. Stabilising measures of this kind evolve into long-term projects – assistance that ultimately becomes self-sustaining.



Council of elders gathering (Shura) | Photo: Harald Mundt

Acting flexibly – at several levels: In order to be able to respond at short notice to demands for support outside the agreed focal areas, GTZ manages two BMZ-financed funds. One is the Open Policy Advisory Fund (OPAV) which is designed to assist the government in Kabul to enhance its governance. The main issues here are thus fighting corruption and enhancing transparency in financial matters. The other is the Regional Capacity Development Fund (RCDF) which is applied in northern Afghanistan where it is intended to enable the provincial and district authorities to deliver basic services such as security, infrastructure, rule of law, healthcare and education for the people. In particular, improved procedures in the administrations are designed to improve service quality and make things more transparent, thereby gradually raising people’s confidence in state institutions which will eventually lead to their acceptance as legitimate and competent contacts.

Demonstrating cultural and conflict sensitivity: GTZ repeatedly reviews its work and the results it generates to ensure that it is reducing rather than fuelling tension and conflicts. GTZ liaises between conflicting parties and tries to involve all stakeholders. It also endeavours to initiate and foster dialogue between the genders. GTZ understands development as an ongoing process in which the stakeholders search for and negotiate viable and fair solutions. In its capacity as moderator, GTZ influences this process, but its objective is ultimately to empower the Afghan partners to shoulder responsibility themselves.

Minimising risks: Together with the other German implementing organisations, GTZ has a comprehensive risk management system that reaches out across all projects like an umbrella to shield staff by ensuring they have the requisite scope for action and sufficient mobility. Culturally sensitive behaviour also plays a role with regard to security, since staff competence and credibility help reduce risks and elicit assurances of safety from the Afghan side that make it possible for development work to go ahead.



Cultivating under difficult conditions

Photo: Oliver J. Haas



Meeting to plan for a biogas plant

Photo: Sebastian Widmann



Literacy training for the police

Photo: GTZ



School in Kohi Safi

Photo: Harald Mundt



Construction of flood protection walls

Photo: GTZ



Training for female lawyers

Photo: GTZ



Agriculture in Khenjan

Photo: Harald Mundt



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