



JICA Research Institute



Afghanistan and Japan

Working Together
on State-Building and Development

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Foreword

It has been widely broadcast by the Japanese media that the Japanese government has contributed greatly toward Afghanistan's reconstruction and peace-building since the fall of the Taliban regime. It is not widely known, however, that there are many Japanese who have been engaged in supporting the Afghan people in returning to peaceful daily lives and reconstructing their own country. Even less is known about what they do, how they struggled, and what they have achieved in Afghanistan. The JICA Research Institute felt the need to shed a spotlight on these activities and thus established a project team in late 2010 and commenced preparations. Looking back on the whole range of support provided to Afghanistan by the Japanese people, and not only that delivered through the government and JICA, we first asked those who worked on the ground to write a background paper or respond to oral surveys, while also culling information from documents and websites. This report is a collection of all the information that was attained in this manner: the experiences of these people in various areas, including emergency aid that started with humanitarian aid; support given to building public institutions from scratch; and aid aimed at the very foundations of the everyday lives of the Afghan people.

The Japanese who appear in this report have worked in their respective areas alongside Afghan people who have worked hard on rebuilding their own country. We would like to demonstrate in this report the contributions these Japanese have made through these joint efforts toward Afghanistan's nation-building.

Various people who have worked in Afghanistan appear in this report: those from the Japanese government and the private sector, NGO (non-governmental organization) members and staff members of international organizations and the Japan International

Cooperation Agency (JICA). For JICA's projects, not only JICA staff but also many others were involved, including university faculty members and employees of private-sector consulting firms who served as experts or consultants of the project. This report also includes stories of employees from private-sector construction firms that were contracted to work on infrastructure construction with financial aid from the Japanese government.

As mentioned above, we asked numerous people who worked on aid in Afghanistan in various ways to write a background paper that covers their work and experience in detail. The framework of this report is based on an edited version of these papers. We would like to express our deep gratitude to those who have contributed to this volume by writing the background papers; they are named at the end of this report. We also obtained information from various people in ways besides the background paper. We deeply thank them for their contribution.

Needless to say, peace-building and reconstruction in Afghanistan is a formidable task, and so we do not think that this report is able to depict a comprehensive picture of the efforts. We did try to cover as broad a range of people as possible in this report. But even so, we were able to mention only a portion of the whole. I would like to add here that there are a lot more people who have actively participated in the endeavor.

This is the report's preliminary version that was assembled to coincide with the Tokyo International Conference on Afghanistan on July 8, 2012. The JICA Research Institute will continue with the editing of this report and plans to publish the report for a wider readership. We greatly hope that through this report we would be able to reach out to as many people as possible to tell the tales of hardship and thoughts of the people who have worked on supporting Afghanistan.

Akio Hosono
Director
JICA Research Institute

Maps of Afghanistan



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Chronological Chart of Afghan-Japanese Relations

Year	Month	Afghanistan	Japanese assistance
1747		Durrani Kingdom is established	
1919	Apr	Declaration of Independence	
1928	Apr	Basic Friendship Treaty is signed	
1930	Nov	Afghan-Japanese Treaty for Friendship is signed	
1933	Oct	Afghan Legation is established in Tokyo	
1934	Nov	Japanese Legation is established in Kabul	
1935			Mitsuo Ozaki, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, is sent to Afghanistan as an agricultural expert
1936	Feb		Six Afghan exchange students come to Japan
1955	Dec	Restoration of diplomatic relations with Japan	
1968			Yen loan projects for water supply system
1969	Apr	King Zahir Shar and Queen visit Japan	
1971	Jun	Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince and Princess (presently Their Majesties Emperor and Empress) visit Afghanistan	
1976			Grant aid to the television station in Kabul
1979			Construction of National Tuberculosis Institute (NTI) begins and is suspended
	Dec	Soviet military invasion	
1983	Sep		NGO "Peshawar-kai" is established
1989	Feb	Soviet military withdrawal	
	Apr		Japan International Friendship and Welfare Foundation (JIFF) starts accepting Afghan refugee patients
1996	Sep	Taliban takes control over Kabul	
2001	Jul		Japan Platform (JPF) sends missions to Afghanistan
	Sep	September 11 attacks	
	Nov		Peace Winds Japan (PWJ) and other NGOs enter Afghanistan JPF approves funding to ten NGOs
	Dec	Bonn Agreement Interim Administration is established Chairman Karzai is appointed	MOFA and JICA mission enters Afghanistan

Year	Month	Afghanistan	Japanese assistance
2002	Jan	International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan (Tokyo)	Prime Minister's Special Representative Ogata visits Afghanistan
	Feb		Charge d'Affaires Komano is appointed
	Mar		JICA Urgent Rehabilitation Support Project starts Medical equipment is provided to 160 locations through emergency grant aid JPF approves funding to eight NGOs
	May		Foreign Minister Kawaguchi introduces the proposal for "Register for Peace" (support for DDR process)
	Jun	Emergency Loya Jirga (Transitional Administration and its President Karzai is elected)	JICA supports broadcasting of Emergency Loya Jirga AAR JAPAN starts mine risk education program HANDS conducts a nationwide assessment of health resources
	Jul		JICA opens Kabul Office
	Sep		JICA Urgent Rehabilitation Support starts in Kandahar JICA dispatches a long-term advisor in public health (followed by advisors for other sectors such as education, gender equality, and agriculture) JIFF Medical Center is established in Kabul
	Oct		JPF approves funding of two NGOs
	Dec		National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan starts assistance in non-formal education
2003	Feb	Tokyo Conference on "Consolidation of Peace (DDR)" in Afghanistan	
	4		Shanti Volunteer Association (SVA) starts children's library project in Nangarhar Province
	May		JICA opens Kandahar Office JICA dispatches a mission of constitutional scholars National Solidarity Program (NSP) commences
	Jun		JICA dispatches an advisor on water resource management (Ushiki) JICA dispatched a long-term expert to Ministry of Women's Affairs
	Sep		JICA dispatched short-term expert on special needs education
	Dec	Constitutional Loya Jirga	First phase of Kabul-Kandahar Highway is completed

Year	Month	Afghanistan	Japanese assistance
2004	Jan	New Afghan Constitution is approved	JICA sends an expert on vocational training for DDR
	Mar	International Conference on Afghanistan (Berlin)	
	May		JICA sends mission to Mazar-i-Sharif JICA starts JICA Support Programme for Reintegration and Community Development in Kandahar
	Sep		JICA starts Tuberculosis Control Project JICA starts Reproductive Health Project
	Oct	Presidential election	JICA dispatches a mission to support the electoral management body for the presidential election
	Dec	Karzai takes the office of President	Second phase of Kabul-Kandahar Highway is completed Construction of Kandahar-Herat Highway commences
2005	Feb		JICA starts Project on Enhancing Women's Economic Empowerment
	May		JICA starts Project on the Basic Vocational Training
	Jun		JICA starts Strengthening Teacher Training Project (STEP) JEN starts a well digging project in Parwan Province
	Jul		Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC) opens a medical clinic in Gorek village in Shiwa District in Nangarhar Province
	Aug		Japan Center for Conflict Prevention (JCCP) starts landmine and UXO removal project in Bagram District in Parwan Province
	Sep	Parliamentary and Provincial Council elections	JICA dispatches a mission to support the electoral management body for the Parliamentary and Provincial Council election
	Nov		JICA starts Inter-Communal Rural Development Project (IRDP)
	Dec	New parliament is opened	
2006	Jan	International Conference on Afghanistan (London) (I-ANDS is presented; Afghan Compact is adopted)	
	Mar		JICA starts Project on Support for Expansion and Improvement of Literacy Education (LEAF)

Year	Month	Afghanistan	Japanese assistance
2006	Apr		Government of Japan and JICA decide to retrieve all Japanese personnel from Kandahar, due to security concerns
	Jun	Government of Afghanistan declares the completion of its DDR process	
	Jul	Second Tokyo Conference on “Consolidation of Peace” in Afghanistan (DDR/DIAG)	
2007	Sep		JICA starts Improvement of Rice-based Agriculture in Nangarhar Province (RIP).
	Dec		JICA agrees on designing a master plan for Kabul metropolitan area development
2008	Jun	International Conference on Afghanistan (Paris) (ANDS is presented)	World Bank approves the allocation of JSDF to “Clustering of CDCs under NSP2”
	Nov		Kabul International Airport terminal is completed JICA starts Strengthening of Teacher Education on Special Education
2009	Jul		Kandahar-Herat Highway is completed
	Aug	Second presidential election (President Karzai re-elected) Provincial Council elections	
	Dec		JICA starts Urban Health System Strengthening Project
2010	Jan	International Conference on Afghanistan (London)	
	Feb		PMS (Peshawar-kai) completes construction of the Marwarid Canal
	Mar		JICA closes its Kandahar Office JICA finalizes Master Plan for the Kabul Metropolitan Area Development
	May		JICA starts Project on Promotion of Kabul Metropolitan Area Development
	Jun	Peace Jirga (Kabul)	
	Jul	Kabul International Conference on Afghanistan (Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program is validated)	

Year	Month	Afghanistan	Japanese assistance
2010	Jul	Parliamentary elections	
	Sep	High Peace Council is established	
	Oct		JICA agrees on Project for the Promotion and Enhancement of the Afghan Capacity for Effective Development (PEACE)
2011	Mar		Great East Japan Earthquake
	Apr		PMS (Peshawar-kai) completes the construction of inlet at main Kama canal
	Jul	Transition from ISAF to Government of Afghanistan starts	The Global Fund Board appoints JICA as the principal recipient for Afghan Ministry of Public Health
	Sep	Former President Rabbani (Chairman of High Peace Council) is assassinated	
	Oct		First student group for PEACE project arrives in Japan
	Nov	Istanbul Conference for Afghanistan on Regional Security and Cooperation	
	Dec	International Conference on Afghanistan (Bonn)	
2012	May	Meeting on Afghanistan on the occasion of the NATO Summit (Chicago)	
	Jul	Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan	

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Introduction

Objectives of the Report

The story of Afghanistan changed dramatically with September 11, 2001. After the terrorist attacks, the Taliban regime collapsed in the face of the US-led coalition, and a new state-building process began. The international community has stepped up its involvement in state-building efforts, recognizing the importance of providing support so that Afghanistan never again becomes a haven for terrorists. At the Bonn Conference in December 2001, Afghanistan and the international community came together to agree on the Bonn Process for forming a new government. Assistance from the international community gained momentum at the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan in Tokyo in January 2002, with the announcement of \$4.5 billion in assistance and other measures. This was followed by the adoption of a new constitution and the formation of a transitional administration. Finally, Hamid Karzai elected president in October 2004.

Assistance from the international community gathered momentum with emergency assistance following the collapse of the Taliban regime, the goal being to gradually move from humanitarian assistance to reconstruction assistance, and then to longer-term development assistance. Initially, aid was concentrated on addressing urgent humanitarian needs, but as refugees and displaced persons began to return home the emphasis shifted increasingly to reconstruction assistance. Even so, most aid tended to be delivered directly to the people from donors, rather than being directed through the Afghan government, which was not yet fully functional. The Afghan government redoubled its efforts to increase its ownership, presenting its policies for the next five years of national development as the Interim Afghanistan National

Development Strategy (I-ANDS) at the International Conference on Afghanistan in London in January 2006, and committing to the Afghanistan Compact, which spelled out the roles of the Afghan government and the international community in executing these policies. The full version of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) was announced at the International Conference in Support of Afghanistan in Paris in June 2008.

ANDS is based on the three pillars of “Security,” “Governance, Rule of Law, and Human Rights,” and “Economic and Social Development,” and raises six “cross-cutting issues,” namely “counter-narcotics,” “regional cooperation,” “gender equality,” “anti-corruption,” “environmental management” and “capacity building.” The Afghan government is working on the state-building process based on this plan with the assistance of the international community, and aid disbursed through the Afghan government has been increasing in recent years.

The biggest challenge facing Afghanistan is the unstable security situation. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), has been deployed with the objective of maintaining public security. There has also been assistance for strengthening the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP), with the objective of improving the capacity of the Afghan government to maintain public security. There is even an estimate¹ that more than half of the aid since 2001 has been directed to the ANA and the ANP. NATO has created Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) to support reconstruction in regions with unstable public security, and they deliver aid directly to local communities in rural areas.

These efforts to maintain public security are essential, but there is also a deep-rooted opposition to the presence of foreign troops within the Afghan population, and approaches reliant on military

¹ ICG. 2011. “Aid and Conflict in Afghanistan.” Asia Report No.210.

force have obvious limitations. Long-term stability will require that the Afghan government win the trust of the people.

For people that have experienced violent conflict for years, the overriding issue is securing everyday life. For the people to put their trust in the new Afghan government, they will have to be able to sense the “peace dividend.” For this to happen, progress must be made in the government’s capacity to support and improve the welfare of its people. A new government with the trust of the people and the international community supporting it must work closely as partners in supporting the Afghan people.

*We must work
closely as
partners for the
Afghan people.*

Relations between Afghanistan and Japan have a long history, and the Afghan people have an extremely strong sense of trust and affinity towards Japan, as an Asian country that has achieved rapid economic development. As an Asian country, and as a country that has recovered from the devastation of war to achieve economic development, there is real significance in Japan sharing its experience with Afghanistan. Now, as Afghanistan faces huge challenges, if cooperation from Japan is able to support nation-building by the Afghan people, then the long-standing cordial relations between Afghanistan and Japan will surely become even closer.

In addition, the world today is connected in all kinds of aspects, so that a problem occurring in one country can pose a threat to the entire international community. Prior to 2001, Afghanistan was a country “forgotten” by the international community, but during this time, Afghanistan – thrown into chaos by war and poverty – ended up becoming a base for terrorism. To prevent any recurrence of this, the international community must unite in supporting the nation-building process of Afghanistan. Japan has the opportunity to contribute not just to Afghanistan but to the entire international community by providing assistance that benefits from the close relationship between Afghanistan and Japan.

Since the end of the World War II, Japan has used civilian methods in its efforts to achieve stability and prosperity, both domestically and internationally. The Japanese government's Official Development Assistance (ODA) Charter takes "human security" as a basic policy, and treats consolidation of peace as a priority issue. Even in extremely difficult environments such as Afghanistan, contributing to peace-building and peace-consolidation through development assistance is surely the role of a country that seeks peace.

In fact, Japan and Japanese people are already working in Afghanistan in all kinds of areas to rebuild people's lives and improve the capacity of the government. This report will introduce the activities of these Japanese people, focusing on each person's activities on the ground.

Nature and History of Afghanistan

Deserts, Mountains and Green Valleys

The natural environment of Afghanistan is very diverse. To the south, vast red-brown deserts spread as far as the eye can see; while to the north there are lush green plateaus with clear streams. While looking up to the towering peaks of the Hindu Kush mountain range are covered in perpetual snow, you can smell the rich scent red and yellow roses blooming here and there. The roses of Afghanistan bloom all year round. Seeing these roses on a snowy day with cold gusty winds, blooming modestly as though trying to escape the blizzard, is like seeing the Afghan people themselves, tossed and turned by their country's history.

The flight from Dubai to Kabul takes two hours. As you approach Kabul, the plane starts making rapid maneuvers as though avoiding the precipitous mountain ranges surrounding the capital. Mountainsides without even a single blade of grass and earth-colored houses are followed by a dark brown plain and an



Distant view of Kabul
Photo: Mika Tanimoto

overcast sky. All of these things are blurred together as they flicker in and out of view like a kaleidoscope, and for a moment you have no idea where you are. You regain your senses with the shudder of the plane landing, and you are in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan and home to more than three million people. This is the town of hope for most of the people returning to Afghanistan from abroad, as they seek a safe refuge in the hope of a long-awaited peace.

Afghanistan has four seasons. Once you endure the long, dark winter, the fresh green shots of spring arrive with the Afghan New Year every year around March 21st. Everyone changes into their spring clothes, and children stamp the mark of peace on the sky by flying kites. In the old district of Kabul, small colorful birds that have been lovingly cared for all burst into song at once, while the people gather beneath the basket with cups of *chai* (tea) in hand, after refreshing themselves at the *hamam* (public baths). You know summer has arrived in Kabul when watermelons begin to appear here and there. By the height of summer, there are watermelons everywhere in Kabul, and everyone is eating split watermelons that can no longer be sold. The locals look for sweet watermelons in the



People celebrating a new year with traditional music
Photo: Sayad Jan Sabawoon



Traditional buzkashi horse polo
Photo: Sayad Jan Sabawoon

exactly the same way as in Japan, by tapping them and checking the sound. Even small children go looking for watermelons with their mothers, just like the adults. Just thirty minutes drive to the north of Kabul is the town of Istalif, which could easily be mistaken for a kind of paradise on earth. From between the murmuring streams and the green trees stretching to the heavens can be seen the smoke from pottery kilns. Even in the desert region of Kandahar, the areas surrounding the oases scattered here and there are the gathering places for people, livestock and animals, as well as numerous trees. When people gather, chai is served, and once chai has been served that is the beginning of endless conversations. Summer finishes quickly. As soon as you notice the sun is a little lower in the sky, the first snow is not too far away. Old men and women are predicting the severity of this year's winter based on when the first snow falls, and they often say that recent winters have been a lot milder than in the past. The children love winter as well. The wood stoves in each home take a long time to get going, but once the house is warmed up it is heaven. As well as kettles, all kinds of other things are placed on the stove, such as irons and left over bread from lunch. If you are peckish, you can snack on this bread. And then there are more conversations between family members. These are the times when people say they really feel grateful for the peace. If you look out the window, you will probably see roses poking through the snow.

A Country of Mosaics

Afghanistan is not a country that has been formed by a single unified ethnic group. Rather, Afghanistan is a country that has resulted from the coming together of various groups of different races, ethnicities, languages and religions that just happen to live geographically close to one another. As a country, Afghanistan has a low level of unification, and its international borders tended to be unstable, but it has consistently maintained an effective

independence since the middle of the eighteenth century. Because of these ethnic and geographical traits, the national foundations of Afghanistan are fragile, and there are deep divides between the state and society.

Ethnic groups are further divided into tribes, clans, and kinship groups, and an individual Afghan's loyalty is said to extend only as far as the tribal level. In a society with groups made up of tribal units, the social system is founded on loyalty to each group, and regional identity tends to be emphasized more strongly than national identity. In Afghan regional politics, political decisions are made by a *jirga* (tribal assembly) or *shura* (council of the elders), and society often acts in community blocks.

Islam is the majority religion, and so it may appear that Islam unites the country under a single faith, but Islam in Afghanistan is associated with local customs, which vary from tribe to tribe, so that Islam is actually split into countless denominations. In Afghanistan, Islam is a vernacular religion that has been transmitted orally, meaning that there are differences in interpretation from region to region even if the basics are the same. From the end of the nineteenth century through to the beginning of the twentieth century, Islam was used by the central government in order to govern the country, and then spread in the 1980s as it was widely used ideologically to call for jihad, which helped different tribes unite with the objective of fighting the infidels. Even so, the consensus is that the people who wield power in Afghan regional politics are ultimately landowners and the leaders of villages and tribes, rather than the *mullahs* who lead religious Islamic worship.

These kinds of divisions resulting from tribal and religious difference have been solidified by the geography of Afghanistan. The mountainous landscape of Afghanistan is very rough, and movement or even communication itself is often very difficult. This means that it is extremely difficult to build state apparatus over a wide geographical area, beyond the bounds of tribal society where

it is easy to understand one another. Historically, most Afghan states have controlled no more than the capital, unable to extend their influence to the rural areas with rugged mountains.²

Domination by the Pashtuns, and Internal Conflicts within the Pashtuns

The history of Afghanistan has long been colored by conflicts between tribes and by tempestuously changing alliances, but at the same time there is also a history of conflicting tribes united to resist invasion from the outside. The history of the Afghan people's independent spirit and defiance toward conquerors goes back to the fourth century BCE, when Alexander the Great arrived in this area.

The ethnic group with the largest population in Afghanistan is the Pashtuns, and while the Pashtuns have generally controlled Afghanistan, the internal conflicts within the Pashtuns have also made Afghanistan an unstable country.

The establishment of a Pashtun kingdom centered on Kandahar by the Durrani Pashtun tribe in 1747 is widely understood as the starting point for nation-building in Afghanistan. Since then, the Pashtuns have always occupied a dominant position, and the modern history of Afghanistan can be described as the history of domination by the Pashtuns and their conflicts with other ethnic groups resisting this dominance. However, the Pashtuns are fragmented to numerous tribes, such as the Durranis, the Ghilzais, and many others. These tribes are further divided into lineages or sub-tribes (known as *kelbs*) and further sub-divided into extended family groups or clans (called *kebol* or *kol*). The history of Pashtun domination is also the history of internal conflicts for supremacy within the Pashtuns.

Leadership of the Taliban, which had controlled Afghanistan

² Larry P. Goodson. 2001. *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics and the Rise of the Taliban*. University of Washington Press.

since the 1990s were also Pashtuns from Kandahar. The Taliban also received support from the Pashtun diaspora living in Karachi and Dubai, and supporters in Balochistan and the North-West Frontier Province in Pakistan. The main force of the Northern Alliance that resisted the Taliban came from non-Pashtun ethnic groups, but there were also Pashtun forces that joined the Northern Alliance. Conflicts between the Pashtuns and other ethnic groups, as well as internal conflicts within the Pashtuns, still remains at the base of Afghan society even today.³

The Influence of the International Environment

While a Pashtun diaspora does exist, mainly in Pakistan, other ethnic groups (such as the Tajiks, the Uzbeks, and the Turkmen) can also be found across neighboring countries (the exception being the Hazaras). These strong cross-border ties can sometimes lead to foreign interventions. The war in Afghanistan was influenced by what happened in neighboring countries, such as Pakistan and Iran, both of which received many Afghan refugees, and Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, where antigovernment forces are said to continue traveling back and forth from Afghanistan.

Taking a broader perspective, Afghanistan is geographically located between the three regions of the Middle East, South Asia, and Central Asia, and it is effectively the junction of the four cultural spheres of Islam, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Afghanistan is also located on the path to the rich oil and mineral resources of Central Asia, which results in a high level of geopolitical and economic interest from neighboring countries. Afghanistan is in an environment that is prone to foreign intervention. Looking at past history, present-day Afghanistan was treated as a buffer state between Russia and UK, and also became the scene of a tug of war between the forces of

³ Barnett R. Rubin. 2002. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System (Second Edition)*. Yale University Press.

Goodson (2001)

the East and the West, who showed interest in Afghanistan during the Cold War.

In this international environment, successive generations of Afghan rulers have maintained control over their territory by obtaining assistance from foreign powers, in addition to using domestic resources. It has been easier for them to strengthen their control by seeking foreign help than to solidify their relations with the disparate internal factions of Afghanistan's diverse and divided society. According to Barnett Rubin (2002, ix-x), the state of Afghanistan was shaped by interactions with the modern state system.⁴

The Collapse of Fragile State Institutions

Despite these unfavorable conditions, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the government in Kabul extended its influence over a wider area than the government today, as progress was made with the formation of a bureaucracy and military, as well as a modern economy and transport system. During the Cold War, foreign aid was used to invest in education for the elites in order to strengthen the capacity of the state institutions, as the government sought to make the transition to a modern nation state. However, there was an uprising after the transition to communism that followed the coup d'état in April 1978. The Afghan War that started with an invasion by the Soviet Army in 1979 then destroyed the state apparatus that had been built up. The ability of the central government to govern no longer extended to the rural areas, bringing about the revival of traditional authority in rural areas, and the emergence of new forces such as warlords.

Although the Soviet-backed communists sought to strengthen their control over Afghan society using the state apparatus, the fragility of this apparatus meant that it did not yet have the capacity needed to reform the society. There had been ongoing

⁴ Rubin (2002) and Goodson (2001)

investment in public education for the twenty years prior to the communist coup d'état, but the public education system collapsed as the Islamic resistance movement became increasingly popular. More and more people began to receive an Islamic education at the madrasas during the communist era. Resistance to state control received some support from outside Afghanistan, and contributed to the weakening of secular state organizations and the fragmentation of society into numerous factions. The Pashtuns who fled to Pakistan, in particular, had no opportunity to receive an education other than at the madrasas, and the network of teachers and students at the madrasas led to the formation of the Taliban. In contrast to the derelict state education system, the madrasas were ubiquitous throughout society, and the network went from strength to strength via the mosques.

After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, US involvement in Afghanistan also declined. As a result of the continuing collapse of state control throughout the 1980s, after the Soviet withdrawal, Afghanistan was left without a legitimate state or leaders, and each region was flooded with jostling armed groups. With the collapse of the Pashtun-controlled communist government, Afghanistan, which had received a huge influx of weapons during the Cold War, fell into a growing civil war as different ethnic groups and tribes sought to expand their autonomy or attempt to expand the authority of the central government⁵

The Emergence of the Taliban and 9/11

The armed groups known as the mujahideen that fought against the Soviets were divided into numerous factions along ethnic and regional lines, and because these groups were hostile to one another, it was not possible to form a stable government after the Soviet Army withdrew. This allowed the Taliban to emerge. Around 1994 and 1995 when it began to emerge, the Taliban might have

⁵ Rubin (2002)

formed a coalition with five other ethnic and regional groups. In fact, the Taliban assumed control of Kabul in 1996 and began controlling the state apparatus, using the network of mullahs to bolster their presence in the community. The mujahideen forces, on the other hand, continued to be divided even after forming the Northern Alliance in 1997, unable to agree on the selection of the prime minister.

Once the Taliban seized real power, they introduced Islamic sharia law and began governing according to Islamic Law. However, only three countries—Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—recognized the Taliban government, which faced widespread criticism in the international community for its discrimination against women. Until the communist era at the end of the 1970s, foreign aid in Afghanistan had been directed at strengthening the urban elite and promoting the social advancement of women. As the systems of the modern nation state had disengaged from rural society, however, the Taliban reversed this urbanization trend and established its political foundations by increasing assistance directed at rural areas and the refugee camps in Pakistan.

US interest in Afghanistan increased dramatically after 9/11. The US and its allies could not realistically accept the involvement of the Taliban in the new government, given the suspicion that the Taliban was sheltering Osama Bin Laden and given its closeness to al-Qaeda. After the Taliban government collapsed as a result of the US military action, what actually happened was that a traditional *loya jirga* was held, opened by the former King, Zahir Shah, to select the representatives of the new transitional administration.⁶

After being long forgotten by the international community, Afghanistan rapidly became the center of attention in the international community following 9/11. This would result in many

⁶ Rubin (2002) and Goodson (2001)

Japanese people travelling to Afghanistan to assist in its recovery following many years of strife.

Afghan-Japanese Relations up to the Soviet Invasion

The history of Afghanistan-Japan relations dates back the early 20th century. After Afghanistan declared its independence in 1919, it concluded a Basic Friendship Treaty with Japan in 1928 and the Afghan-Japanese Treaty for Friendship in 1930. An Afghan Legation was established in Tokyo in 1933, with a Japanese Legation being established in Kabul in 1934. Prior to the opening of the Legation, the judo practitioner Shinzo Takagaki visited Afghanistan in 1931 in response to an invitation from Afghanistan.

After the Legation was established, Japanese technical experts in various fields (including civil engineering, agriculture, forestry, education, and construction) were invited to Afghanistan. The first to arrive was Mitsuo Ozaki, an engineer from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, accompanied by his wife Suzuko. Ozaki was sent to Afghanistan as an instructor in agricultural technologies in 1935, eventually returning to Japan in 1938. During his time in Afghanistan, Ozaki visited Kandahar and Jalalabad, collecting a huge volume of contemporary materials on Afghanistan, such as books, newspapers, and photographs taken there, and introducing them to Japan. Long stored in the Ozaki family home in Yamaguchi Prefecture, this archive of materials has recently been unearthed by researchers who have recognized their value.⁷ Around the time of Ozaki's stay in Afghanistan, a private Japanese company, Mitsui & Co. established a branch office there, and the Japanese army appointed a military attaché. At any given time, between twenty and thirty Japanese could be found in Afghanistan, sometimes reaching as many as thirty-five. The agricultural experts seem to have spent their days teaching at schools and writing research reports, while the

⁷ This archive has been compiled as *Nihonjin ga Mita '30 Nen Dai no Afugan (Afghanistan in the 1930s through the eyes of a Japanese Man)*, text and photographs by Ozaki Mitsuo, Sekifusha, 2003.

experts in the areas of civil engineering, irrigation, and construction worked together with technicians from Germany and Poland, and some were also stationed in Kandahar. There was even a female expert named Harue Sakamoto.

In the meantime, the first group of exchange students from Afghanistan arrived in Japan in 1936. The six students, ranging in age between 20 and 27 at the time, studied subjects such as economics, forestry, mining, education, and textiles. When they first arrived in Japan, they struggled to learn Japanese language and to adjust to the way of life, while their host universities debated whether or not to accept their high school diplomas. The six students returned home for the summer holidays in 1937, during which time discussions proceeded between the two governments, and the students returned to Japan three months later to study for bachelor degrees. In March 1938, the exchange students entered the Economics, Agriculture, and Literature departments of the Tokyo Imperial University, the Engineering Department of Kyoto Imperial University, and the Textile School of the Tokyo Institute of Technology. Four students graduated in 1941 and went on to post-graduate studies.

As World War II approached, it became increasingly difficult to dispatch experts from Japan to Afghanistan. In April 1941, shortly before hostilities commenced, an eight-member delegation from Afghanistan arrived in Japan to exchange views on economics after traveling from India by boat. Thereafter, the sea route from Japan to Afghanistan was cut off, leaving the Trans-Siberian railway as the only remaining option. The six exchange students also left for home between February and December 1943, but apparently they were unable to use the sea route and had to return home via the rail line. At the end of the war, one of the diplomats at the Japanese Legation in Kabul described what happened to them: “The Afghan Government has dispatched one platoon of soldiers to the Consulate to protect us as far as the outskirts of Kabul – an

*An
unprecedented
courtesy deeply
moved us.*

unprecedented courtesy for the withdrawal of the diplomats of a defeated nation, and one that deeply moved us. Then several dozen of these soldiers escorted us as far as the Torkham⁸ border post on the border between Afghanistan and India.”⁹

Looking back on the long history of relations between Japan and Afghanistan, it is clear that bonds of friendship between the people have always been at the heart of cooperation.

Apparently, many Afghan people believe that “Afghanistan and Japan became independent in the same year,” which leads to a sense of affinity towards Japan. There are various theories as to why this idea has become so prevalent, but it is said that it is probably because the year Afghanistan became independent from the United Kingdom (1919) was the same as the year that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was terminated (actually, this took place in 1923). This “fact” is said to be taught in Afghan public schools, and is said to express the idea that although both countries became independent during the same year, their subsequent developments have been very different, and so Afghanistan should learn from Japan, which developed from the same starting point.

After the World War II, Afghanistan and Japan restored diplomatic relations in 1955, and relations between the two countries remained strong. In 1969, the Afghan King Zahir Shah visited Japan, and in 1971 Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince and Princess (currently Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress) made a reciprocal visit to Afghanistan, visiting Kabul, Bamiyan, Kunduz and other places.¹⁰

Many Japanese technical experts have also been dispatched to Afghanistan, focusing mainly on areas such as medicine, agriculture, groundwater, and waterworks. There are also records

⁸ currently in Pakistani territory.

⁹ Kosaku Maeda and Masao Sekine. eds. 2006. *Nihon, Afugan Kankei Zenshi (The Complete History of the Relations between Japan and Afghanistan)*. Akashi Shoten.

¹⁰ Maeda and Sekine eds. (2006)

of Japanese people giving technical advice in areas such as road construction, mine development, silkworm breeding, ceramics, sugar manufacturing, and matchmaking. Until 1990, the Japanese government, as part of its Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) programs, had dispatched 121 experts to Afghanistan, while inviting 437 Afghan trainees to Japan.

There were also many Japanese involved in groundwater and waterworks projects in Afghanistan, where securing water was extremely important for people's livelihoods. In the 1960s, upgrades to the water-supply system in Kabul were started as a private sector outsourcing project, and many waterworks technicians were dispatched from Japan's Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency (OTCA, which became JICA in 1974). Projects to upgrade waterworks funded by Yen Loans were implemented in 1968. The development of the waterworks



Family of Siddiq, an agricultural machinery engineer who attended JICA training course in Japan in 1970s
Photo: Yoshino Oishi

Water from public taps were called Ab-e-Japon ('Japanese water')

projects was remarkable, with water supplied to each home in Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Jalalabad, and other cities, and a fee collection system was in operation. Apparently water supply system by the Japanese assistance was directly helping the Afghan people in their everyday life, and there was a time when the residents of Kabul referred to drinking water from public taps as *Ab-e-Japon* ('Japanese water').

However, this relationship was interrupted by the Soviet invasion in 1979, and bilateral aid from Japan to Afghanistan would come to a halt for a long time.

Hisao Ushiki, one of the engineers who had worked in Afghanistan before the Soviet invasion, later became Senior Advisor of JICA, and returned to Afghanistan in 2003, after being away for several decades. Ushiki would meet other Japanese experts who had also worked in Afghanistan during the 1970s, such as Kazuo Nakabayashi (Senior Advisor of JICA) and Takao Kume (Sanyu Consultants).

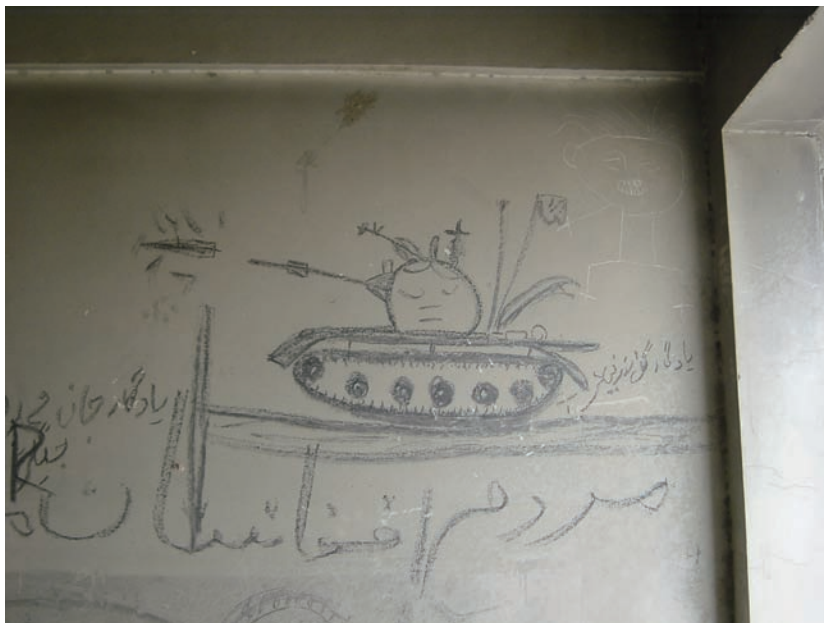
In 1976, a project to establish a television station in Kabul was implemented through the Japanese grant aid, and the equipment for Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA) was donated. When the Emergency *Loya Jirga* was held to decide the form of the new government after the collapse of the Taliban, it was RTA that took responsibility for the broadcast. Apparently, as of 2002, it was still continuing to use equipment donated from Japan.

From 1977 to 1978, JICA conducted a preparatory survey for a Rice Development Center Project in Jalalabad. The project was due to start from 1979, and Mitsuhiro Ota, a JICA staff member at the time, was preparing to move to Jalalabad. However, the project was cancelled because of the Soviet invasion, and so Ota's transfer to Jalalabad became just a dream. In 2007, when an irrigation project for rice-based agriculture development was started in Jalalabad, Ota was finally transferred to Jalalabad after a delay of 28 years.

In 1979, the construction of a National Tuberculosis Institute

(NTI) in Kabul was being implemented by Japanese grant aid, but this cooperation too had to be interrupted because of the Soviet invasion. After the war, Toshiyuki Nose of Dai Nippon Construction discovered the ruined NTI building during a visit to Kabul. Work had stopped midway through construction, and the building had been damaged by war, but the structure of the building still retained its original form. Nose was astonished by the high level of technical skill of the Japanese construction company in the late 1970s. He found graffiti on the wall of an abandoned building depicting a tank and a bomber, together with a dove, the symbol of peace. Nose was shocked at being presented with the harsh reality for Afghanistan, where even children's graffiti were shaped by the war. Before too long, the NTI facilities would be rebuilt, and would become a center for supporting the Afghans' efforts to address tuberculosis control.

After the Soviet invasion, it became difficult for Japanese to enter Afghanistan to work on development assistance projects, but



Graffiti depicting a tank



Children whom Nose met in an abandoned building
Photo: Toshiyuki Nose

assistance still continued nevertheless. Dr Tetsu Nakamura's NGO, Peace (Japan) Medical Services (Peshawar-kai) was formed in 1983, and began providing medical services in villages without doctors in Afghanistan from 1986. For five years starting from 1989, the Japan International Friendship and Welfare Foundation (JIFF) accepted 56 patients who had been injured due to the fighting in Afghanistan and treated them at the Josai Hospital (in Yuki City in Ibaraki Prefecture), in response to a request from the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

JIFF had been working on providing medical relief to refugees from Cambodia and Ethiopia since 1982, and they received their first Afghan refugee patient in 1989, the nine-year-old Salam Jan. At this time, Kazem Ahmadyar, who was an Afghan medical exchange student at the University of Tsukuba, assisted JIFF as both an examination assistant and an interpreter, before later becoming a JIFF staff and supporting JIFF activities in Pakistan and Afghanistan together with his three brothers. In 1991, in order to reduce the amount of time that Afghan refugees spent being

treated in Japan, JIFF established a free medical clinic (the JIFF Physiotherapy Center) in the Peshawar province of neighboring Pakistan, where many Afghan refugees were staying. This center was then expanded as the JIFF Medical Center, which has continued to provide assistance to about three hundred refugee patients per day.

Japanese Engagement since 2001

Afghanistan in 2001 was in crisis, as three consecutive years of drought on top of the long civil war had created about a million displaced persons within the country. In the previous year, a consortium of NGOs, the Japanese government, and business community established the Japan Platform (JPF) to strengthen international humanitarian assistance. The JPF began considering how to assist internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Afghanistan from July 2001, and conducted a field survey of Afghan IDPs. The September 11 attacks took place just a few days later.

After 9/11, Afghanistan suddenly became the focus of attention from the international community, but the international staff of the United Nations and international NGOs were withdrawn from Afghanistan, with local staff left to work on their own. JPF also discontinued its plans for assistance work within Afghanistan and instead provided help in addressing the flow of refugees to surrounding countries, such as Pakistan. As the environment within Afghanistan changed, Japanese NGO staff entered the country and large-scale emergency humanitarian assistance moved into top gear from November.

When the Taliban government collapsed as a result of the US military engagement, efforts were made to establish interim Afghan administrative apparatus in order to move forward with building a new nation. The Bonn Peace Conference was held on November 27, 2001 following the successful intervention of Lakhdar

Brahimi, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

The Bonn Process proceeded with a strong commitment by the international community to support Afghanistan, and the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan was held in Tokyo on January 21 and 22, 2002. This conference was attended by 61 countries and 21 international institutions, and the participating countries pledged 4.5 billion dollars in assistance over a five year period. The conference was co-chaired by Japan, the United States, Saudi Arabia and the European Union, and the co-chair for the host country was Sadako Ogata, who was the Prime Minister's Special Representative for Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan. For Ogata, who had experience negotiating with the Taliban to provide assistance to Afghan refugees as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, of all the unfinished tasks that remained, this was one of the most significant.

There was a great interest in “seamless transition”.

Within the Bonn Process whereby the reconstruction process advanced in parallel with the political process, there was a great interest in the “assistance with a seamless transition from humanitarian to reconstruction and development.” Because development aid organizations had not been operating in Afghanistan for a long period, it took a long time for those agencies to get ready to implement development projects, and they also faced the difficult challenge of coordinating with humanitarian aid organizations. It was against this backdrop that the Japanese government designed a comprehensive regional development assistance plan known as the “Ogata Initiative,” which was executed by international organizations with the financial support of the Japanese government. The initiative aimed to help IDPs and returnees smoothly re-establish a stable living environment, to support comprehensive regional development for Afghanistan, and then to realize a seamless transition from humanitarian

aid to recovery and reconstruction, and ultimately long-term development, Many NGOs also continued assistance programs within Afghanistan in order to support recovery at local levels. The Japanese government took into account balances between different regions and ethnic groups, given the distribution of different ethnic groups across different regions. From 2002, JICA started programs in Kabul, Kandahar in the south, and Bamyan in central Afghanistan, with these programs expanding to Mazar-i-Sharif in the north in May 2004.

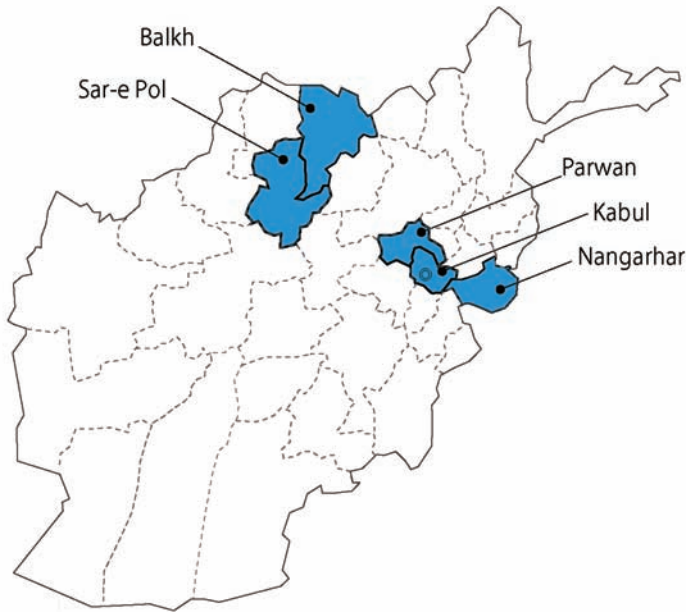
More than 10 years have passed since the events of September 11. Initially, programs were implemented in rapid succession with the goal of “seamless assistance,” even though there was no information and even securing accommodation or telephone connections was a challenge. Assistance in building a national framework and establishing government institutions continued to be provided diligently, despite the difficult post-war situation in which even the most basic essentials were lacking. The foundations for social infrastructure and economic development were also laid down, with the aim of improving the lives of the people. Despite ongoing difficulties such as the deteriorating security situation, the search continues for ways to provide assistance to build a new nation, where government policies are linked to people’s livelihoods, so that Afghanistan can once again become a country of peace and stability. The road that Afghanistan must travel towards peace and recovery is still a long one, and even now many Japanese people are risking their lives as they work on programs on the ground.

There is a history of trust between Japan and Afghanistan that has been built over many years. Japanese assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan has made this trust even more solid.

In this report, we will look back at the footprints that some

Japanese have left behind in Afghanistan, as they work to restore peace to people's lives in a difficult environment.

Emergency Assistance



1) Emergency Assistance

People Suffering from Warfare and Drought

Forgotten by the international community, Afghanistan lost a great deal in its many years of war and its people also faced severe poverty due to drought. The country needed assistance from the international community. To provide assistance, many humanitarian workers arrived from Japan and other countries.

When Rika Yamamoto and Hiromitsu Suzuki of the NGO Peace Winds Japan (PWJ) visited the province of Sar-e Pol in the north of the country in July 2001, nearly 60,000 people had evacuated from remote regions to the suburban plain in search of fresh water, forming a camp. Seemingly stretching to the horizon, their tents were so poorly made—just cloth laid over wooden bars—that they did not seem capable of withstanding either the local summers,

with temperatures regularly topping 40 degrees Celsius, or the winters, which could be as cold as 20 degrees below zero. Tens of thousands of lives looked to be at risk.

To offer emergency aid in the wake of the damage from the drought, PWJ, JEN, and other NGOs that were taking part in the Japan Platform (JPF) conducted a field survey from August 25 to September 7, 2001. Just as the PWJ staff moved to neighboring Pakistan, the attacks of 9/11 took place.

The 9/11 event brought global attention to Afghanistan. However, air raids by US forces were expected, forcing international organizations and NGOs to withdraw to neighboring countries. This intensified the chaos in Afghanistan. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) predicted that, in a worst-case scenario, another 1.5 million people would flee the country as refugees. In fact, at least 250,000 Afghan refugees fled the country.

Emergency Humanitarian Aid

The JPF suspended its preparatory survey of relief activities inside Afghanistan and shifted its focus to supporting the refugees in neighboring countries, including Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Iran. Although these neighboring states had closed their borders, they still received an influx of refugees. Conditions in existing refugee camps deteriorated. The JPF carried out relief activities for refugees in Pakistan.

Based on the findings of the study from July to September, the PWJ had decided to provide drought assistance in Sar-e Pol Province in Afghanistan. Hiroshi Miyashita was assigned to this task and began preparing to make the trip. Although 9/11 made his travel plans unpredictable, he traveled to Islamabad, Pakistan on September 21, looking for an opportunity to cross into Afghanistan. Miyashita met Suzuki, who had just come out of Afghanistan, and began procuring winter tents to distribute

to displaced persons, traveling around inside Pakistan with only a tiny suitcase, exchanging information with UNHCR and other JPF member NGOs. Miyashita was able to secure 5,000 custom-made tents in Pakistan.

In November, the situation in Afghanistan began to change swiftly as the Taliban withdrew from Kabul. Miyashita, sensing an opportunity, learned that the UN was flying into Kabul, and the *Medicins sans Frontier* had been the first international NGO to use these flights. Immediately after hearing this, Miyashita grabbed a seat on a UN flight, and finally landed in Kabul on November 28, more than two months after leaving Japan.

Later, Japanese personnel started to reach Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, and other cities. From December to February, emergency aid activities were underway in earnest, including the distribution of relief supplies, medical activities, support for domestic refugee camps, and mine risk education. JPF's operations were Japan's first large-scale emergency aid activity serving a cumulative total of at least 100,000 people.

After arriving in Kabul, Miyashita set up an office for PWJ, benefiting from the network they had built in July to September. He then left for Sar-e Pol. At the time, the Salang pass, connecting Kabul to the north, was not yet open, and Miyashita had to travel a circuitous route to Bamyan, then to Mazar-i Sarif, before arriving in Sar-e Pol. When Miyashita was moving to the north, he passed trucks carrying loads of materials to Kabul as well as many tanks and armored trucks coming from the north, which he took to be the army of the Northern Alliance. Resting at a roadside cafe, his driver spoke to truck drivers and checked the security situation in the north. It took three days and two nights to reach Mazar-i-Sharif from Kabul, partly because Miyashita avoided traveling after dark. At motels along the way, Miyashita slept on the floor, in shared rooms filled with local Afghans. Arriving in Mazar-i-Sharif, he found the city brighter at night than in Kabul, and calmer than he

had anticipated.

At the beginning of December, the 5,000 tents Miyashita had procured were delivered to a warehouse in Islamabad. PWJ was able to secure another 1,000 tents donated from other organizations. They split up the 6,000 tents and transported them to Sar-e Pol using four different routes, including overland and air, hoping to disperse the risk. The first trucks carrying tents reached Miyashita in Sar-e Pol on December 25. The tents had been flown from Islamabad to Turkmenistan, and then trucked to Sar-e Pol. Miyashita, having met displaced persons barely surviving in ramshackle tents and desperately awaiting aid, felt strong relief that the tents had finally arrived. Later, trucks from Kabul also arrived, and a total of 5,865 tents (a few had been lost in an accident during transit) were distributed to displaced persons and put up by the end of the year. In the meantime, PWJ provided displaced persons with food from the World Food Programme (WFP), cooking stoves from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and non-food items from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

In all, 12 NGOs¹ took part in the JPF and worked to provide aid for Afghan refugees in Afghanistan and neighboring countries.

The influx of refugees had meanwhile resulted in a sharp increase in the number of patients—from 800 to 1,200 per day—being treated at the Medical Center in Peshawar run by the Japan International Friendship and Welfare Foundation (JIFF). In response, JIFF formed an emergency medical aid team to offer medical treatment to Afghan refugees. Later, in September 2002, the Medical Center in Peshawar was shut down. In its place, a JIFF Medical Center, dubbed the Clinic for Mothers and Children, was

¹ Association for Aid Relief Japan (AAR JAPAN), Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Japan, BHN Association, Japan Center for Conflict Prevention (JCCP), JEN, Japanese Red Cross Society, Medical Relief Unit (MeRU) Japan, Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development (NICCO), Peace Winds Japan (PWJ), Save the Children Japan (SCJ), Shanti Volunteer Association (SVA), and World Vision Japan (WVJ).

set up in Kabul to continue medical aid.

In October, another NGO, the Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC), carried out a field survey on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border zone. Because of the border closure by the Pakistani government and security issues, it sought to provide aid for those displaced persons who remained in Afghanistan, unable to cross the border. In collaboration with the OMAR, a local NGO engaged in landmine removal and medical activities, it deployed a mobile medical team to Nangarhar Province on November 1 to deliver medical supplies to the area. In late November, wheat and cooking oil were provided to refugees and local residents.

Meanwhile, Peace (Japan) Medical Services (PMS, i.e. Peshawar-kai), which was running clinics in Kabul, did not pull out. Its 20 Afghan staff members, who volunteered for its operations despite being fully aware of the risks involved, delivered aid supplies to people in the capital. While PMS had been working mainly in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border zone since 1984, it also operated clinics in the eastern, southern, and western parts of Kabul. As refugees and evacuees filled the city, a serious food crisis emerged. However, international aid agencies had left the city prior to the air raid, and Dr. Tetsu Nakamura, then stationed in the Pakistani town of Peshawar close to the Afghan border, found people in Kabul to be facing dire circumstances. He raised funds from Japan to provide relief, leading to the provision of 1,800 tons of wheat and 200,000 liters of cooking oil during the two-month period before the fall of the Taliban regime for the 150,000 citizens at risk of starvation. The effort produced enough food to enable the people to survive the winter.

In winter 2002, mountainous areas in Afghanistan received massive snowfalls, which were expected to ease the drought. Before the spring of 2002, internally displaced persons (IDPs) began

leaving camps to return to home. So NGOs shifted the focus of their aid to reconstructing their home villages.

Beginning of Reconstruction Aid to Afghanistan

The Japanese government—the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to be precise—sent a mission to Afghanistan in December 2001, prior to the Tokyo International Conference on the Reconstruction of Afghanistan. Used since before the incursion of the Soviet forces, the Japanese embassy office was so badly damaged that its doors and window frames were gone. While the United States and Germany had built their bases for activities under the protection of their respective militaries, Japan had to start by securing lodging and an office without a security force. Despite this, Kinichi Komano was assigned to the country as *chargé d'affaires* on February 19, 2002. He started fulfilling his duties in a two-story detached house, which he used as a temporary office and residence.

Ten days after assuming his post, Komano visited a clinic run by Peshawar-kai in the suburb of Kabul. Takuro Fujii, who was working as a secretary at the embassy at the time, led him to the clinic. Fujii had previously worked in Peshawar for three years as a Peshawar-kai member. He told Komano and others that medical activities had continued at the Peshawar-kai clinics with female medical doctors, even though female education was banned under the Taliban regime.

Fujii had visited Kabul once as a Peshawar-kai member in 2000-2001 during the Taliban era. The peace he experienced during that period was unsettling. At the time, the atmosphere in the Afghan capital was tense. Everyone was careful about what they would say in public and men had to keep their beards long. All women were forced to wear a burqa, and men to wear a turban or a white brimless cap. With braided hair and black turbans, personnel for the Amar-bin-Marooof (the Ministry for the Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue, or the religious police) were on patrol



Destroyed soviet era tanks in Kabul
Photo: Raymond Wilkinson

in every corner of the city. Whenever they came close to Fujii, the local personnel accompanying him would get very nervous, he recalls. The braided hairstyle was part of the practice of the Prophet. The bazaar was lively, but most of the streets had been destroyed in the aftermath of the civil war. The area along the city's main street, Jade Maiwand, and the Karta-i-She areas in the southwestern part of the city, looked devastated. However, the security situation was said to be so good that you could leave your car unlocked on the street and it wouldn't be stolen. Although there was heavy combat in regions defended by the United Front (better known as the Northern Alliance), such as the Panjshir Valley and the upper Dara-e Noor Valley, the country was mostly peaceful. Surprisingly, the Taliban succeeded in eradicating poppy cultivation and disarming the inhabitants.

Even so, most Afghan people objected strongly to Taliban rule, and welcomed the support of the international community and the birth of a new government after the fall of the Taliban. A large percentage of the public believed that their country would change for the better if the international community offered its

*Afghanistan
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full support. Some expressed concern about whether they could accept the entry of the foreign forces that would take charge of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), but Fujii heard from an Afghan colleague that it was Afghanistan's last chance. He said, "Now that the international community is extending a helping hand to this country that has been totally destroyed after 23 years of warfare, Afghanistan will have no future unless it grabs the key to peace and prosperity. To achieve this objective, the Afghan people are ready to accept foreign forces."

JICA's Entry into Afghanistan

In March 2002, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) sent an urgent rehabilitation support mission to the country. In April, it stationed Takao Kaibara at the provisional office of the Japanese embassy to prepare for the establishment of a JICA office in Kabul. In July, it set up its own office and appointed Takanori Jibiki as its first Resident Representative. Thus, JICA rapidly built its



A Kabul palace destroyed during years of civil war
Photo: Raymond Wilkinson

organization.

To quickly produce a tangible impact on the post-conflict environment, JICA chose an approach called an urgent rehabilitation support program. With this approach, pilot projects were to swiftly proceed with emergency rehabilitation, while in the meantime drawing up a short- and medium-term rehabilitation plan to gradually increase assistance. This approach had been utilized in emergency reconstruction support in the wake of the Gujarat-Earthquake disaster in western India. It turned out to have a rapid effect. Having participated in the urgent rehabilitation support program to assist in reconstruction after the earthquake in India, JICA Headquarters tapped Tomohiro Ono to deal with the first project for Afghan rehabilitation.

Leaving Tokyo on March 1, the first JICA study team consisted of 15 members, including Jibiki and Ono. Chargé d'affaires Komano joined them as a team leader. They established themselves in a guesthouse in Kabul called the Peace Guest House. The mountains surrounding the Afghan capital looked beautiful covered with snow, but the team noted debris from a destroyed warplane at the airport. At the Peace Guest House, they managed to find a space to meet, but there were not enough desks or chairs. They found knockdown desks and chairs brought from Japan extremely useful. At the Peace Guest House, cold water was available but not hot water. Although the city of Kabul was full of dust, hot water showers were available only for three or four people a night, because the cook used up the electric power to boil water. The team members would wake up early to secretly take a shower, or return to the guesthouse during the day to take a shower if they happened to be free. At night, it was bitterly cold. They used sleeping bags they brought from Japan and also covered themselves with blankets to avoid the chill while they slept.

There was a feeling in the air that the war was close at hand. One morning, at the entrance to the Peace Guest House, Ono saw five

US Apache attack helicopters flying in formation. On the evening of the same day, a group of ISAF jeeps and trucks filled with soldiers covered in mud returned to Kabul. They had all taken part in a battle in eastern Afghanistan.

Many members fell ill due to fatigue and dysentery. At last came the day they were to return to Japan. They waited at the Kabul airport for a United Nations aircraft from Islamabad. During that time, U.N. aircraft flights were very unpredictable, and they heard that delays were frequent. So it was with great relief that the team saw their aircraft arrive at the Kabul airport. Ono says he felt as if he had been rescued, as the flight would take him back home alive. However, alone among the team members, Ono was due to return to Kabul just two weeks later. An open tender for a consultant for a full-fledged study team that would start working in April had already been publicly announced.

As an architect at Pacific Consultants International in those days, Shozo Kawasaki entered the bidding after seeing the public announcement of the urgent rehabilitation support program in which Ono was involved. A little after 7 p.m. on Friday, March 29, 2001, Kawasaki received a phone call from JICA while he was getting ready to go home. He heard, “We have decided to dispatch you to the urgent rehabilitation support program on Kabul, in Afghanistan. The scheduled date of departure is April 6. Please come to our office to talk about the contract and participate in preliminary discussions of the study details.” That was the beginning of Kawasaki’s involvement with Afghanistan, which was to last beyond ten years.

The contract talks began at around 8 p.m. and continued until late into the night. Possessing little information on Kabul, the two sides were largely negotiating in the dark. During the planning stage, there were no data on the cost of constructing facilities, so they mainly evaluated the study policy for the overall process and

the initial project cost. They decided to respond flexibly to price changes during the project. With just one week to prepare for his dispatch, the team hastily completed the dispatch procedures and the selection and purchase of the materials and equipment to take to Kabul. Some suggested taking sleeping bags and said it was necessary to take knockdown desks and chairs to work in the camp. Others advised Kawasaki to prepare stationery and satellite phones, and to follow emergency procedures for official passports. He was told that a meeting on the inception report would take place that night. On and on went the details, during what was a tremendously busy week. The consultant team would number as many as 27 members.

Kawasaki's First Visit to Kabul

On April 6, a group including Kawasaki left Tokyo for Kabul, where it joined four JICA staff members. Again, all the members moved into the Peace Guest House. They were split into groups of two or three, with each group sharing a room overnight. Without worrying about the sheets, which anyway hadn't been changed for a month, they spread their materials and computers over their beds. Grateful to be able to enjoy a hot shower at five o'clock in the morning, they embarked on their camp-style activities.

In those days, as Kawasaki recalls, more than one in three of the men walking the streets of Kabul openly carried weapons. This environment would not exist two to three years later, but at that time, many had weapons, even the children. The streets were pitch black at night with little electricity, creating an eerie cityscape without pedestrians or cars. Armed police officers and soldiers stood silently in the darkness. The group felt very nervous as they passed them. In the town, they were occasionally told to stop by armed police. Sometimes, they were unable to stop immediately and went a bit too far, but their drivers always reversed so they could undergo an inspection. Noting the care with which the drivers

followed the instructions of the police, Kawasaki realized that locals took very seriously the possibility of being shot.

In the city there were very few stores and only about three local restaurants. The Peace Guest House offered only a simple breakfast. The group had difficulty procuring food. If they happened to see a chicken, they negotiated to purchase it. It was then prepared and eaten by all the team members. Makoto Harada, the president of OPM, would prepare the chicken. He had long experience in development assistance projects and field work. Seeing him prepare their food, Kawasaki realize how lucky it was to have a member capable of doing this “wild” cooking.

Large numbers of Afghan job seekers would gather in front of the provisional embassy office in Kabul. The situation was the same in front of the Peace Guest House. Kawasaki and the rest of the team looked for people who could speak English and who could provide cars, and hired them. The people had such strong mutual distrust that they would not talk to each other. Without definite information about the locations of the destinations they were visiting, they had to take a trial-and-error approach to visiting offices of Afghan government authorities and UN agencies. Because the same driver was chosen to go to a particular place he had driven to before, a rumor began that he had “become a favorite of the Japanese boss.”

Kawasaki struggled to find opportunities to shower and had difficulty washing his clothes. He walked around streets filled with dust, mixed with animal and human waste. By the time he returned home, his family thought he stunk and he had to rush to the bathroom. When he finished, the bathtub was so full of dirt he needed to wash himself repeatedly. When he opened his suitcase, which arrived on the following day, he was astonished by its foul smell and realized that he had smelled the same. He felt ashamed at having annoyed the passengers around him on his flight and on the train he took on his way home. Today, this inconvenience has been

dispelled, with Kabul locals now able to maintain high standards of personal cleanliness and with more and more of them wearing perfume.

Building a Local Base

Securing a means of communication was a serious challenge for Japanese personnel in Kabul. They used Thuraya satellite mobile phones and larger satellite communication devices, Inmarsat, but these did not offer stable communications. There were few means of communication using fixed phone lines. To communicate with Japan, Kawasaki took Thuraya and Inmarsat satellite phone equipment to Kabul, but he found it difficult to establish a connection. Every time a connection was made, Kawasaki was thrilled.

Around the middle of May 2002, a UK-related carrier called the Afghanistan Wireless Communication Company (AWCC) launched a mobile phone service. At first, it was difficult to obtain handsets. Kawasaki, with Takao Kaibara, who was working on setting up the JICA Office, visited the Ministry of Communications to argue that mobile phones were important for them to have, since they had been sent from the Japanese government to provide assistance. Subsequently, they managed to obtain five or six handsets. At that time, many Afghans were unaware that mobile handsets did not work until they were recharged. Some complained to the phone station, claiming that they couldn't make phone calls and that their handsets were faulty. Over the next year, however, the number of mobile phone users increased. International phone calls became available. Today, five mobile phone carriers are operating in Afghanistan. As for connecting to the Internet, the Inmarsat service was used for communication via satellite. This connection cost as much as two to three million yen a month. It lasted until a local Internet service provider started offering service around 2004.

JICA's first Deputy Resident Representative Tomonori Kikuchi,

Kikuchi still remembers narrowly escaping death thanks to a clogged toilet.

who was working on setting up the JICA office launch, was about to go out one day to buy mobile phones for a large number of incoming visitors. However, the office toilet has become clogged. To arrange the repair, he put off his mobile phone purchase. Just then, an explosion occurred where he was intending to make his purchase (near the Ministry of Interior). The blast killed 46 passersby. Kikuchi still remembers narrowly escaping death thanks to a clogged toilet.

In those days, international organizations and NGOs were beginning to arrive in the Afghan capital. The local real estate market experienced such high demand for its limited buildings that rent prices soared daily. Delay in making an offer, and a property would be taken by someone else or its rent would increase. In July 2002, JICA leased two detached houses standing next to each other for use as an office for staff members stationed in the city. Appointed as the first resident representative for the office, Jibiki moved to Kabul in August with his wife to take the post. Meals for office staff and visitors were prepared at the guesthouse. People traveling to Kabul carried as much food as possible and offered it to the office.

Kikuchi was very busy, purchasing vehicles, installing communication equipment, acquiring wireless communication equipment and a large power generator, dealing with construction to manage security, arranging repair work for leaky roofs and the sewer system for the lodging facilities, and recruiting national staff. After the office was established, the staff had to make do with a small and noisy generator until two large generators with noise cancellation systems could be purchased. Repeated complaints about the noise were received from a minister's residence in the neighborhood.

The JICA staff also faced continuous trouble transferring funds to the office. At first, business travelers put plenty of US dollar bills in their bags and haramaki belly warmers to deliver

them from Tokyo to Kabul. After the JICA office was established, it swiftly opened a bank account at the Afghan Central Bank, and tried transferring money from a third country, but this was far from satisfactory, as it took several weeks for the money to reach Kabul. At that time, a local system called hawala was found to be effective. With this system, the user would write the amount on a check and hand it to a broker in Kabul. The broker would then immediately change it into cash in exchange for a commission. The money to cover the check would then be withdrawn from JICA's bank account in Pakistan. The availability of this system considerably improved money transfers.

Life in Kabul

Shoji Hasegawa was one of those who worked particularly hard to make infrastructure assistance a reality during the initial period of reconstruction assistance. Working for Japan International Cooperation System (JICS), Hasegawa had watched the events of September 11 on television while on assignment in Kenya, without any idea that he would end up in Afghanistan. When he returned to Japan from Kenya six months later in March 2002, he was told that his next assignment would be Afghanistan. He agreed without hesitation, apparently disconcerting his boss, who asked, "Don't you need to talk about it with your family...?" Hasegawa was a technical expert, and would first visit Kabul in April 2002, before being transferred to the JICA office in Kabul in July in order to make infrastructure assistance projects a reality.

Hasegawa also stayed at the Peace Guest House. At first, the residence had no facilities at all, but as each guest left, the income from that guest was used to carry out an upgrade. After one person left there was a new heater, when the next person left there was a television in the dining room, and so on, with the result that the level of accommodation improved almost daily. Guesthouses with en suite toilets and showers began to appear from about the

summer of 2003.

Supermarkets and retail stores, at first nowhere to be found, gradually became more commonplace. Even so, few shops sold alcohol, and a can of beer would cost as much as ten dollars in the black market. This situation changed drastically with the opening by the ISAF of a PX store for foreigners, where one could buy souvenirs, and where beer and whiskey could be had at duty free prices without having to present identification papers. Surprisingly, the PX was so well stocked it even sold pork, something that could not be bought even in neighboring Pakistan.

Transportation to Kabul was limited at first, with basically the only options being UN flights or the “Air Serv” airplanes operated by an international NGO. Hasegawa had to shorten his stay in Kabul to return Japan temporarily because of the risk that the public security situation would destabilize as a result of the convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga, but the Air Serv and UN planes were all fully booked. In the end, he had no choice but to board, together with his fellow team members, an Ariana Afghan Airlines plane, fully aware of the danger, and return to Japan via Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. Hasegawa had used all kinds of airlines in his career, but this was the first (and last!) time he travelled in an airplane without seatbelts. Another Japanese who used Ariana Airlines had to return to Kabul shortly after takeoff because of engine problems, and this too was the first time that person had experienced a “belly landing.”

Still, public security at the time was not too bad. Occasionally a rocket would land within the city limits of Kabul or Kandahar, or there would be curfews at night, but it was unusual to see an armored vehicle driving through the streets of Kabul or Kandahar. Hasegawa and the others bought Chinese-made bicycles in Kabul, which they basically used just to travel back and forth between their residence and their office, or to visit the shopping district on their days off. Once the people of Kabul learned that Japan was

providing all kinds of support, there were even instance when, after using a taxi, the driver would say, “I can’t take money from a Japanese.”

While living in Kabul, Hasegawa caught a glimpse of the pride and hospitality of the Afghan people. Hasegawa tells a story about one day when, after finishing a meal at a restaurant in Kabul, he stepped outside to be approached by a woman wearing a burqa and her child, who started asking him for money. Just as Hasegawa was wondering what to do, an Afghan man who was walking nearby said something to the woman and gave her some money, and she left. When Hasegawa asked the Afghan person that he was with what the man had said, he was told “The foreigners have come to help Afghanistan, but you are begging from them. You should be ashamed as an Afghan.”

There were even instance when, after using a taxi, the driver would say, “I can’t take money from a Japanese.”

“The foreigners have come to help Afghanistan.”

Emergency Loya Jirga

The nationwide broadcast of the Emergency Loya Jirga in June 2002, the first to be held after the collapse of the Taliban regime, was the first highlight of the urgent rehabilitation support program by Kawasaki and his team. “Loya jirga” is a Pashto word meaning “Grand Council,” which refers to a traditional decision-making assembly in Afghanistan. The function of this meeting was for representatives from each tribe to approve decisions about issues such as the framework for the new government. A loya jirga based on traditional methods was seen as an essential part of the process of deciding the form of the new government after the collapse of the Taliban regime, ensuring that Afghans selected their own representatives rather than having them imposed by the international community. Afghanistan is a large country, with many diverse tribes and ethnic groups, so it was seen as vital for people to have a real sense that a new era had arrived by conveying what was happening to the entire nation at the same time. The nationwide broadcast was expected to enable people to witness the

process of creating a new government for themselves by having representatives from this diverse country get together. The plan was that filming at the venue would be conducted with German assistance, while JICA would receive the signal and broadcast what was happening at the Emergency Loya Jirga to the major cities in each part of the country.

Japan has close ties with Afghanistan in the area of television broadcasting. In the mid 1970s, the Japanese government provided television broadcasting equipment and technical training to the national broadcasting company Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA). In 2002, immediately before the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan in Tokyo, Sadako Ogata, who visited Afghanistan as the Japanese Prime Minister's Special Representative, visited the RTA where she found the Japanese equipment provided a quarter century earlier was still in use, and that the local technicians could still recall the names of two or three of the NHK experts who had visited from Japan in 1970s to instruct them in how to use the equipment. Then Afghan Interim Administration Chairman Hamid Karzai had sought to address the entire Afghan people via television, but at the time it was unthinkable as the RTA broadcasts could only be picked up in the area around Kabul. It became a common goal of the Japanese and Afghan people to somehow enable the television broadcast of the Loya Jirga to reach the entire country.

The local technicians could still recall the names of the NHK experts from Japan in 1970s.

When Chairman Karzai came to Japan for the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, he also visited NHK, and the direction of the cooperation solidified. Not only did NHK provide the equipment for the broadcast, The JICA mission in March was also joined by NHK technicians, thereby initiating preparations to bolster the broadcasting functions of RTA and for the broadcast of the Emergency Loya Jirga in particular.

On the day of the Emergency Loya Jirga, a signal was sent to



People watching Emergency Loya Jirga on television

a communications satellite from RTA in Kabul via a transponder built on a hill on Mount Asmai. The signal was then picked up at six stations (Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, Kandahar, Jalalabad, Badakhshan, and Kunduz), from where it was relayed to each city. The sound cut out at one point, and the technicians rushed to check whether it was a problem with the broadcast equipment. It turned out that one of the microphones at the venue had not been switched on, and the sound soon came back. The images were successfully broadcast to six cities, and were viewed by many people in the form of street television. The BBC reported on the citizens of Mazar-i-Sharif and Kandahar watching the event on television. The Emergency Loya Jirga was of great interest internationally too, but if the achievement of the television broadcast allowed the people of Afghanistan to feel a little bit closer to the events taking place, then this was surely a significant step in itself.

The Urgent Rehabilitation Support Program in Kabul

Kawasaki and the others who were dispatched to Afghanistan to

implement urgent rehabilitation support program aimed to present the people of Kabul with a clearly visible “peace dividend,” by coming up with short-term reconstruction plans and implementing urgent recovery projects. Kawasaki and his team continued to struggle in Kabul, where there was almost no track record of construction work, and it was completely unclear as to how materials and equipment could be obtained.

Talking to himself “Well, let’s try anyway,” Kawasaki made up his mind to work on restoring a girls school called Afshar. The school building was a reinforced concrete structure built around 1980 when the Soviet influence was very strong. It had been damaged during the civil war but the framework remained in place, and that is where classes were organized. The restorations slowly got underway as Kawasaki, in consultation with the principal, moved things forward through a process of trial and error. He found local people who could do carpentry and plastering work and handed over money to look for materials, starting with ten windows and doors, followed by another twenty once the first ten were ready, and then filling in the holes that had been blown open by bombs.

In July, chairs and desks arrived from Turkey, and the construction for the improvised repair work was somehow completed. This was the first comprehensive repair project in Kabul, and the female teachers attending the opening ceremony had tears in their eyes. Kawasaki was filled with emotion over the fact that the construction work, which had started in an improvised manner with no prospect of even being possible, had now come so far thanks to the efforts of the Afghan people.

Now that progress had been made with the restoration of the Afshar school and the construction work being done by Afghans, and with some prospect of being able to procure materials, Kawasaki moved on to the next step to begin construction of another five schools. One school was built on existing school grounds, two other schools were built on new grounds, while for

The female teachers attending the opening ceremony had tears in their eyes.



Afshar Girls School (before rehabilitation)
Photo courtesy of Nobuaki Koguchi



Opening ceremony for new Afshar Girls School

the other two schools the abandoned ruins of existing school buildings had to be demolished before work could begin. For these two schools, classes were temporarily held during the work at the

nearby Kabul University women's dormitory, which had been damaged to the point where only the framework remained. This dormitory was later restored by another donor, and is now fully functional.

Around this time, the programs of government institutions existed in name only, and the government was barely functioning, so even when it came to designing new schools, the Afghan Ministry of Education had almost no involvement with such tasks as selecting the target schools, coming up with draft designs for school buildings, or estimating the size of schools. This meant that Kawasaki and the others had to proceed with the pre-construction schedule based entirely on their own plans, and at the same time they also had to explain everything to the Minister and get his go-ahead because there was no-one directly responsible within the Ministry of Education.

Kawasaki and his team looked for target schools for rehabilitation projects. They found that at the entrances to most schools signs had been erected by various NGOs declaring that they would restore that school. Accordingly, the JICA team adopted the same approach, talking with the principal and deciding then and there whether or not to make that school part of the rehabilitation support project. If the decision was made to go ahead, two or three days later JICA would put up a similar sign declaring that the school would be restored using aid from JICA.

Between July 2002 and June 2004, orders were placed with four different companies for repair work at the five schools. The projects were completed more or less within the scheduled timeframes, but now that more than seven years have passed, while some of these schools have been kept in relatively good condition, others are already dilapidated. Kawasaki says that, while this could not really be helped considering the construction circumstances at the time, it is heart-wrenching for him to see the damaged school buildings.

As the restoration and construction of schools continued, Kawasaki discovered some assistance that Japan had provided in the past in health sector, and a decision was made to rebuild a National Tuberculosis Institute (NTI) in the Duralaman district. This NTI had been planned using grant aid from the Japanese government in 1979, but was abandoned a month before it was due to be complete when the Soviet invasion got underway. With its restoration, however, the NTI would later become the hub for many Japanese experts (See Chapter 2 for more details). A succession of assistance projects were achieved in order to deliver to Afghan society the “peace dividend” in the aftermath of war, including projects such as upgrading 13.5 kilometers of road within the Kabul city limits, and building a 1.2 kilometer extension section, as well restoring schools and hospitals.

Mazar-i-Sharif

The outcomes of the urgent rehabilitation support program were improving steadily in Kabul, and the JICA decided to expand the urgent rehabilitation support program, followed by many other projects, to Kandahar in September 2002. As different ethnic groups are dispersed over different regions in Afghanistan, JICA and the Japanese government considered it important to pursue the balance between different regions and ethnic groups in providing their assistance. After developing programs in Kabul, Kandahar in the south, and Bamiyan in the center, programs were extended to Mazar-i-Sharif in the north from May 2004. The detailed story in Kandahar will be left until Chapter 5, but here we look at what happened with the urgent rehabilitation support program, the first project in the area, in Mazar-i-Sharif.

Mazar-i-Sharif, located near the border with Uzbekistan, is home to a number of different ethnic groups, such as Uzbeks,

Tajiks, and Hazaras, so that the city constructs a small international community. There is a beautiful blue mosque in the center of the city, and the town extends from this core.



Blue Mosque in the center of Mazar-i-Sharif
Photos courtesy of Shoji Hasegawa

The study team that entered Mazar-i-Sharif in June 2004 was again led by Shozo Kawasaki. At the airport, a four-wheel drive vehicle and a driver with a fearful look were waiting for them. Kawasaki wondered if he really should get in the vehicle, but there was nobody else around, so he decided to proceed. As it turned out, the driver spoke no English whatsoever but was a serious man who worked diligently for the team until the work ended in March 2006. Although at first his clothes were filthy and covered in grime, it was plain to see that over time he became better and better groomed.

Kawasaki and his team established a base in Mazar-i-Sharif in a building where the ground floor and the basement were used as office space while the upstairs floor was used as accommodation. As the security situation gradually deteriorated, they faced a situation of semi-confinement, unable to go anywhere other than the government offices and the project sites. They couldn't even go shopping. Those team members that could not fit in the office-cum-accommodation stayed at the government-run Mazar Hotel and the privately run Farhat Hotel. The Mazar Hotel looked old but acceptable from the outside, but this was a false impression. Inside there were piles of dust and the beds were ancient and in need of replacement. The garden was overgrown and the pool was filled with muddy water, on the verge of ruin. The only people staying there were the Japanese team and the Russian pilots of Kam Air (the first private airline company in Afghanistan). Only the simplest of meals were served, and there was no proper housekeeping. The place was run by one old man. He spoke no English, so they used body language to communicate what they needed, and he smiled as he provided their morning eggs and toast, swapped their towels, or did their washing.

On January 2, 2005, the power supplied from Uzbekistan to Mazar-i-Sharif stopped completely. Apparently Uzbekistan had lost patience with bills not being paid, and had cut off the power in retaliation. Despite the fact that there was no power,

the atmosphere in the city did not really change during the day, remaining calm. However, from about five o'clock when the sun went down, the town descended into darkness. The roads throughout the town were muddy due to rain and snow, and everywhere there were places that were difficult to walk. Everybody disappeared from the street at night. The Mazar Hotel only had one old Russian generator, and it was not working properly. Even when the generator was operating, it could barely power the lights and so the guests lived by candlelight. This created a terribly difficult situation where there was no heating whatsoever and they could not have hot showers or even read a book, so the only thing left to do was go to their rooms and sleep.

The conditions were so harsh that the Japanese team eventually stopped using the Mazar Hotel, but when they visited in March 2006 before leaving Mazar-i-Sharif, they found the old man still busily working by himself, and he seemed happy to see them. Apparently the hotel is no longer there.

At Mazar-i-Sharif, the team started repairing roads as emergency recovery projects, as well as building schools. The roads had poor roadbeds, and so were rebuilt from the foundations by digging about two meters down. However, as no one has ever seen this kind of basic paving work in Mazar-i-Sharif before, the local radio reported that they were building a river through the town, creating a great deal of fuss as the team was called in to see the governor.

In the rehabilitation project for school reconstruction, there was controversy surrounding the school grounds for one of the schools that the team was building. Around 1980, under the Soviet influence, the area had been designated as a park and a children's playground, and so some of the neighboring residents complained that it was not appropriate to build a school there. Kawasaki and his team were certainly aware of that fact, but the land where the school should have been built had been illegally occupied by a high-

ranking officer in a military clique, who had used it to build a house for himself. Nobody had been able to raise any objections, and so the provincial governor had directed that the park be used instead, a decision that had the backing of the majority of the residents. The matter ended up being taken as far as the President, who issued a decree that the grounds be used to build a school, so that the team finally reached the point where work could start. At another school, part of the grounds had been taken over by a row of two-story tenement houses that had been illegally constructed by the military clique, and a dozen or so of these houses were operating as shops. This building was at the edge of the schoolyard, and did not interfere with the construction of the school buildings, so construction went ahead anyway. Then one day the military clique, which until now had not responded to the work at all, suddenly announced that they would demolish the building that they had built illegally. The building was made of sun-dried bricks, and just half a day later it was reduced to sand and dust.

In those days, school education did not include organizations such as PTAs (Parent-Teacher Associations), and both parents and local residents seemed uninterested in either the nature or the operation of school education. The same was apparently true of other places in Afghanistan such as Kabul. Kawasaki saw this as a problem and built multi-purpose rooms in the schools constructed as part of their recovery projects. He also developed plans to establish and run a school administration committee (an organization similar to a PTA) to decide how this room should be used, and to manage the use of the room. Kawasaki and his team provided support from the outset, and the committees became quite enthusiastic once a modest block grant was made available for purchasing the materials and equipment required for the uses they had chosen. These committees continued to be active even after the urgent rehabilitation support program had completed, as Harumi Tsukahara, who was responsible for the project at the time, found

when she visited two years later as part of another project.

Even when the team in Mazar-i-Sharif reduced the number of Japanese staff out of security concern during provincial council elections, the projects continued with the Afghan staff and local construction operators taking center stage, so that seven schools and 2.5 kilometers of road upgrades were completed as planned. The basic study on the roads within the city also helped the Japanese government to decide on their grant aid projects in Mazar-i-Sharif; grant aid of 1.2 billion Japanese yen for the procurement of equipment and materials for road improvement in fiscal year 2005, and 1.751 billion Japanese yen for the rehabilitation of roads in the city in fiscal year 2009.

Governor Atta Muhammad Nur of Balkh Province where Mazar-i-Sharif is located has this to say about Japanese assistance: “In Balkh Province, JICA is the major development assistance agency. I am sincerely grateful, with respect for the diligence of the excellent Japanese people. I humbly request continued assistance, for building peace, for establishing democracy, and for development toward a bright future in Afghanistan. We need your continued support so that we are not isolated from the rest of the world.”

“We need your continued support so that we are not isolated from the rest of the world.”

Looking Back on the Emergency Assistance

To provide emergency assistance during the initial phase of the reconstruction effort, JICA conducted a series of urgent rehabilitation support programs to immediately produce effective outcomes while also developing medium- and long-term plans for subsequent assistance.

One feature of JICA’s assistance was the understanding that emergency assistance should lead to medium- and long-term development, and not just produce short-term outcomes. Whenever they designed recovery projects, the study team would encourage collaboration with other JICA project teams as well

as other donors and NGOs to ensure that schools and hospitals were used effectively. They would also provide training to local stakeholders, and conduct programs to benefit local residents. Another aspect of this assistance was that it encouraged the capacity development of local human resources, with workers involved in reconstruction work, learning Japanese-style labor management, and benefiting from technology transfers going on to play active roles in infrastructure development projects in the future.

Nobuaki Koguchi, who was responsible for urgent rehabilitation support programs at the JICA headquarters, talks about the high level of awareness shared by both JICA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the importance of both logistical arrangements for work and the substance of the work. In an extreme environment such as Afghanistan in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, if logistical arrangements for the flights, hotels, and means of communication cannot be made smoothly, then field surveys are not possible. At the same time, to facilitate logistical arrangements, it becomes important to understand the substance of the work, such as building networks for field surveys and analysis to efficiently determine the priorities of aid. Everyone was aware that neither the logistical arrangements nor the substance could be neglected. For example, the members of the study team in the field were able to carry out the study and recovery projects only with the support they received from the procurement division and the support division at JICA headquarters, as well as the Pakistan Office which shouldered most of the responsibility for arranging flights on UN aircraft. For safety measures, the team collected the latest information in the field and responded accordingly. Emergency assistance was delivered in a harsh environment thanks to the support from all of these people in the background.

Koguchi also mentions the readiness even before the assistance to Afghanistan started. He talks about the background knowledge

Workers who benefited from technology transfers would play active roles in the future infrastructure projects.

Gaps between humanitarian assistance and development assistance should not be allowed.

that had existed within JICA, with a widely shared awareness of the issues concerning approaches to ensuring human security and “seamless assistance” in the transition from emergency aid to recovery and reconstruction assistance. Before JICA’s involvement in Afghanistan, there had been criticism on post-conflict and post-disaster emergency humanitarian aid, centering on the “gap” between the conclusion of emergency assistance and the start of full-scale development assistance. For the victims of conflict or disaster, this gap can result in even more serious suffering, and so it was this common understanding that gaps should not be allowed to occur that led to the urgent rehabilitation support program being designed with an awareness that they must result in seamless assistance.

2) DDR and the Restoration of Security The Challenges of Disarmament and Reintegration

While the assistance provided through the urgent rehabilitation program was designed to improve people’s lives, in the initial phase of the recovery the most challenging issue in Afghanistan continued to be the stabilization of public security, both to execute development aid and to ensure that the recovery achieved through the aid was not undone. In the Bonn Process, the G8 listed the five key security issues, with different countries assigned to each. The United States was responsible for creating a national army, Germany was responsible for reorganizing the police force, the United Kingdom was in charge of counter-narcotics, and Italy was in charge of judicial reforms. Japan meanwhile worked together with the United Nations on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). The challenge of DDR – creating an environment where weapons were taken from the soldiers of the military cliques, and soldiers were able to leave their units and return to society – was regarded as one of the most difficult and important of the five key problems.

Japan announced that it would lead the DDR effort in May 2002 during Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi's visit to Afghanistan. As well as clarifying the concept of support for the "consolidation of peace," Kawaguchi also talked about Japan's post-war experience of the Demobilization Agency, which supported the return to Japan of five million Japanese soldiers and military contractors after World War II. Particularly for the "R" part of the DDR tasks (reintegration), it was believed that Japan would be able to take advantage of the experience of the Demobilization Agency in post-war Japan, as well as the experience from past Japanese development assistance in the field of vocational training and rural development. At the same time, the idea was to take advantage of the expertise of the United Nations when it came to the "DD" part (disarmament and demobilization). In fact, "DD" and "R" are intimately connected, and there were instances where political bargaining would be required during the implementation, due to the very close link between DDR and other reforms in the area of public security.

Implementing DDR

Although there was no suicide bombing or similar incidents immediately following the collapse of the Taliban regime, every few months a rocket would land within the city limits, or the police would issue a curfew from ten or eleven o'clock at night. According to the observation of Takuro Fujii, who was working for the Japanese Embassy in Kabul, there was still no progress with the reorganization of the Taliban, and the unstable security situation was mainly attributable to the military cliques that had put its name to the Bonn Agreement and were supposed to back the Karzai administration. Until 2004, the Uzbek faction led by General Rashid Dostum and the Tajik faction led by General Atta Mohammad Noor (later governor of Balkh province²) frequently

² Appears in the previous section on Mazar-i-Sarif

exchanged hostilities in the north of Afghanistan, even deploying heavy artillery. In the East of Afghanistan, the military clique of the faction led by Hazrat Ali (later to become a member of the lower house of parliament), comprising mainly ethnic Pashayi, occupied army and police posts in a show of strength, while in the west the military clique led by Ismail Khan was semi-autonomous, controlling the army and the government administration. Ismail Khan was defeated following an exchange of fire with the United States and the Afghan Army, but later became the Minister for Water and Energy. Even in the capital Kabul, the military clique of the faction led by Mohammad Fahim, consisting mainly of ethnic Panjshirs (Tajiks born in the Panjshir Valley), occupied positions within the city limits. (Fahim was the Vice President of Afghanistan and Minister of Defense from November 2001 to April 2004, and later became First Vice President from November 2009.)

Although these military cliques had created a military alliance to resist the Taliban, they had by no means agreed to disarm after the collapse of the Taliban regime. In most post-conflict countries where DDR is carried out, there is an agreement between the military forces to disarm, and a neutral organization (such as the UN PKO) is then dispatched to oversee the implementation of the agreement. For the DDR in Afghanistan, no such environment existed, and the process had to be advanced on a voluntary basis, based on the presidential decree that the national army would be the only legitimate army. In order for this kind of disarmament to proceed, it is necessary to establish trust in the new national army, namely that it would be a neutral army providing for the defense of the entire country. In this sense, DDR was very closely linked to the reform of the national army.

For this reason, when it came time to start DDR, the first thing that needed to be done was to replace the leadership of the Ministry of Defense, which was then believed to be controlled by the Fahim faction and dominated by Tajiks, in order to change the

organization into one with a better ethnic balance. It was the United States that led the process of reforming the national army, but Japan played a central role and gave the successful push for internal reforms at the Ministry of Defense, while urging on the local media as far as possible, with the work of Chargé d’Affaires Kinichi Komano. Japan was assisting the DDR process and pressure from Japan meant that the Ministry of Defense had no choice but to engage in serious reforms, while at the same it was progress with the reforms at the Ministry that made it possible to carry out DDR.

Another important element of the DDR process was in its relationship with the democratization process. In Afghanistan at the time, the military cliques were powerful political forces, and as political conflict intensified in the run-up to the first presidential election scheduled for October 2004, there was a risk that the election battle might become the trigger for armed conflict at a time when the military cliques were still armed to the teeth. In order for there to be a contest for political power using a democratic and peaceful election process, it was necessary to first create a situation in which an armed power struggle could not take place. This meant that the DDR process had to achieve a great many things prior to the 2004 elections.

Although it was still debatable whether the military cliques had actually been dissolved, Takuro Fujii believes that they had at least been pushed off center stage by the Japan-led DDR process. The DDR process, together with the 2004 presidential election and the 2005 parliamentary election, succeeded in creating the momentum that turned most of the leaders of military cliques into politicians or entrepreneurs. There is criticism that this process maintained the existence of the military cliques, but the DDR process aimed to reintegrate the cliques, not exterminate them. It was not possible to leave private armies of several thousand men equipped with weapons, including heavy artillery, and simply have the government pay their salaries. President Karzai, with assistance from the US

army, overcame resistance (which peaked in 2004) from powerful warlords, and continued efforts to unite warring factions in Afghanistan into a single state.

Vocational Training for the Reintegration of Former Soldiers

As the dismantling of militia organizations continued, the rehabilitation of former soldiers that had left the military cliques became a significant issue. If the former soldiers could not find new job opportunities and a degree of stability then there was a risk that they would be tempted to take up arms once again and go back to being militiamen. Giving these men jobs and reintegrating them into society was seen an important step towards peace.

JICA started to provide vocational training support in 2004 with these objectives in mind. In 2005, JICA started the Project on the Basic Vocational Training in Afghanistan at the Vocational Training Center. Until May 2006, the project supported local NGOs to give vocational training to 554 demobilized soldiers in areas such as carpentry, masonry, and welding. It was not entirely possible to learn of the aspirations of the demobilized soldiers beforehand, but the project aimed to achieve a gradual improvement by responding flexibly, adding lessons in tailoring and driving (including vehicle maintenance) by local NGOs, in addition to the initial offerings of machine processing, welding, and metalwork. The program incorporated skills such as literacy, basic numeracy, business skills and peace education as well vocational skills. The first step was to train 68 instructors, who then conducted classes for the students, including former soldiers. The employment rate for graduates of the training project reached an average of 87%.

When the Afghan government declared the completion of the DDR process in June 2006, the Project on the Basic Vocational Training in Afghanistan shifted its focus to its second stage. Whereas the first stage had targeted demobilized soldiers, the second stage expanded its scope to encompass the socially



Vocational training course in welding

vulnerable, such as returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), unemployed youth, and women, as well as demobilized soldiers. At the same time, the project reinforced its effort to support the capacity building of government institutions. On December 13, 2007, JICA President Sadako Ogata visited the Vocational Training Center for the first time in three years and met with forty women (including eighteen returnees from Pakistan) in the dressmaking workshop, while also observing the welding and metalwork workshops. Ogata said, “Three years ago there was little more than a building here, but now I am impressed to see that the training course is actually up and running. I believe that it is highly significant that about 70% of graduates have found employment, and that, even more importantly, most of the trainees are members of the socially vulnerable population.” Akhtiar, a 18-year-old returnee from Iran who had been introduced to the center by the UNHCR, had a chance to talk with Ogata. A native of Kabul, he was taking a three-month course in welding and metalwork at the time to improve his skills. When he fled to Iran he had worked

“It is highly significant that most of the trainees are members of the socially vulnerable population.”

by helping out at a construction site, but he had never received formal training. He was also taking a literacy class for one hour every morning, and going to high school after training. At the time he was about to graduate, and he said that he wanted to work at his older brother's workshop after he would finish his training, so that he could save money for university tuition, and he dreamed of eventually becoming the Minister of Economics or an economic advisor.

From April 2008 the project was linked to a national program known as the National Skills Development Program (NSDP), which supported nine training centers in areas such as welding, metalwork, electrical wiring, computers, dressmaking, and plumbing. When reporters for NHK's Today's Close-up television program visited Afghanistan, they interviewed Javid, who spent 12 years in Pakistan as a refugee and lost his father in a terrorist attack. When reporters met Javid, he had finished the JICA training course on electrical wiring and obtained a new job. He said he had heard about the training program after failing to find a college he could enter, and he said to reporters, "I was able to get a job thanks to Japanese assistance. I am very grateful to Japan. I now earn 300 dollars per month and support my mother and two younger sisters. As I learned new techniques, everyone started to respect me. Now I wish I can learn more skills." One of the reasons for the high employment rate is the meticulous assistance, whereby JICA experts blazed the trail for each individual job opening.

"I was able to get a job thanks to Japanese assistance. Now I wish I can learn more skills."

It is not as though there were not any problems. The project adopted a strategy of training instructors so that classes could be delivered to more students than would otherwise have been the case, which meant that it took a long time for the vocational training to start, and some of the instructors had other jobs by the time the training did get underway. Of the 67 instructors trained, only six actually trained students. This meant that although the plan had been to expand the project to nine locations, in the end it

could only be conducted in Kabul. Originally it was estimated that 3000 people would receive training, but in the end the number only reached about 600. Not only were there not enough instructors, there were many other challenges, such as opposition to women working, which continue to this day.

Assistance in Rehabilitating Ex-militants by the Japan Center for Conflict Prevention (JCCP)

Some NGOs were carrying out programs to assist with the rehabilitation of ex-militants. Yutaka Hayashi worked in Afghanistan for the Japan Center for Conflict Prevention (JCCP) from 2003 until 2006, and served as a director from 2005. During this time, JCCP developed three projects: 1) removal of landmines and unexploded ordinances (UXOs), 2) reintegration of ex-militants, and 3) assistance for war widows.

Landmine Removal Project

In 2005, JCCP initiated a project for the removal of landmines and unexploded ordinances (UXOs), with grant aid of about 100 million yen from the Japanese government. The removal of landmines and UXOs was carried out in the Bagram District of Parwan Province, near Bagram Airfield on the outskirts of Kabul. Unlike other projects, where the demining work was often done as a military or commercial project by military or ex-military personnel, this initiative was the first humanitarian landmine removal and UXO disposal project in Afghanistan to be carried out by Japanese civilians.

JCCP undertook the work with two Japanese technical advisors and two demining teams consisting of former Mujahideen soldiers. The former Mujahideen were given precedence as deminers as an attempt to give these ex-militants, who were often regarded as “destroyers” or “looters,” a second chance to become “peace-builders,” risking their lives to create safe areas of land. In

Afghanistan in particular, deminers were respected as “mine paki,” an occupation accorded the same level of respect as a mujahid, so that this job enabled the ex-militants to gain psychological self-esteem, as well as economic independence.

Hayashi and his team frequently exchanged views with the local shura (council of elders), and were able to gain the trust and cooperation of the local community by employing local people as guards for the landmine removal sites. Guards from local communities also prevented landmines and other ordinance from being reburied during the night.

The Bagram District of Parwan Province is the location of a former Soviet airfield, and during the civil war it was the site of an intense struggle between the competing factions such as Jamiat-i Islami, Hezb-i Islami and the Taliban. Once the site of vineyards and farms, this area had been sullied by numerous landmines and bombs left over from the fighting. Not only do these landmines and bombs prevent refugees and evacuees from returning to their homes, they also maim and kill when they explode while poorer people, including children, collect scraps or care for sheep. Removing landmines and disposing of bombs once again makes available irrigation channels in land that was once used to conceal the positions of the Taliban or Mujahideen, and enables farmers to reclaim agricultural lands that had been off limits because of the presence of cluster bombs or unexploded munitions. This enables people to return and encourages the revitalization of rural villages.

Hayashi and his team continued this project until 2006, after which it was taken over by the Japan Mine Action Service (JMAS), another Japanese NGO that assists with landmine disposal. To date, 8,716 landmines and unexploded bombs have been removed, and 720,166 square metres of minefields have been successfully restored as usable land.

Rehabilitation of Ex-militants

Hayashi and the other members of the JCCP team also developed a project in the Kalakan District and Mir Bacha Kot District of Kabul Province targeting young men who had fought as Mujahideen. This project, although separate from the DDR process led by the Japanese Government and the United Nations, encouraged these young men to leave the military cliques and other forces in the area, while also helping them to assimilate and put down roots in the community. Participants included men who had gone through the official DDR process, men who had been rejected by the official DDR process, and men who belonged to regional military cliques. These men received lectures in peace education and literacy training, and learned techniques such as wood and metal processing. Ex-militants who participated in the program also worked without pay to repair the homes of widows and establish flower gardens, as they became reconciled to the local community through community work.

In the Kalakan District and Mir Bacha Kot District, the forests that provided shelter to the Mujahideen were cleared during the Soviet invasion, and rural villages were destroyed. When the Taliban came to power, the vineyards that had been the main source of cash income were also cleared, and livestock were lost as the damage from the fighting was particularly severe in this area. During the 1990s, fierce battles were fought between the Taliban and the Tajik-dominated forces led by Rabbani and Massoud, and the Taliban, fearing that the Tajik residents would cooperate with Massoud's forces, forcibly relocated the residents of the area. As a result, boys took part in the fighting to defend or recapture their villages from their teenage years, and many of these boys missed out on the opportunity to receive an education, and after 2001 many of them were either still members of local militias or on the highways with their weapons demanding baksheesh (alms), and thus unable to participate in stable society as civilians.

Despite the dire situation, assistance from the government, United Nations, and NGOs was not reaching those who needed it. Seeing this, Hayashi and his team launched a program in this locality that included literacy and peace education, while encouraging the reintegration of ex-militants into society. Hayashi and his team placed a great deal of importance on close partnerships with the local shura and the local government as they carried out the project. For example, program participants were selected by interviewing ex-militants who had been recommended by the shura and the government. Funds came from the Japanese government, private donations, USAID, and other sources.

Assistance for War Widows

Kalakan District had been the scene of fierce fighting, and Hayashi and his team knew that there were many widows who had lost their husbands in the conflict. The team therefore initiated a project to help the war widows of Kalakan District earn a little cash income by acquiring the elementary dressmaking skills needed to make clothes at the community. The village of Mushwani, which had a particularly high number of widows, was selected as the target for the project, and the shura and government were asked to select candidates. JCCP then interviewed these candidates to select the trainees. When selecting trainees, JCCP conducted interviews and actively accepted candidates in economically more difficult circumstances.

Almost none of the widows that came to the training had completed elementary education, and so almost none could read or write, and very few could take measurements. For this reason, basic education was provided concurrently with the training in dressmaking techniques. Once again when selecting teachers for the basic education, the shura and the local government were asked to recommend candidates, with the result that two teachers were appointed: a female high school student living nearby who had

received a prize for excellence together with one of the trainees who had attained a high school level of education. The high school student had spent nine years as a refugee in Pakistan before returning in 2003 with hopes of becoming a teacher. She says that both she and her family are delighted that she can learn from the lives of war widows and older women, and that she can help the women of her home country. Many of the war widows taking the course were also very happy to have another chance to receive basic education, such as reading and writing, and to be able to sign their names for the first time rather than using their thumb print.

Although their dressmaking skills did not reach the level where they could produce marketable clothing, improvement was clear, as they made children's clothing and other items by themselves during the training period. Hayashi has also heard reports that, by learning how to read and write in parallel with acquiring dressmaking skills, the women have developed a positive attitude towards life and learning, while their families have come to view the widows with new eyes.

The Face of the Japanese People, as Conveyed by JCCP

As can be seen in the example of the activities of JCCP, one of the features of the work of NGOs is that they adopt a sensitive bottom-up approach, whereby assistance is delivered directly to people in communities that are sometimes beyond the reach of assistance from governments and the United Nations, despite their very real needs. By working in close cooperation with communities, NGOs carry out projects with the attitude that the way to ensure their own safety is to win the trust of the local residents. Hayashi believes that it is this kind of attitude that gave the people of the local community peace of mind.

Assistance in Mine Risk Education

To reduce the damage from landmines and UXOs left over from

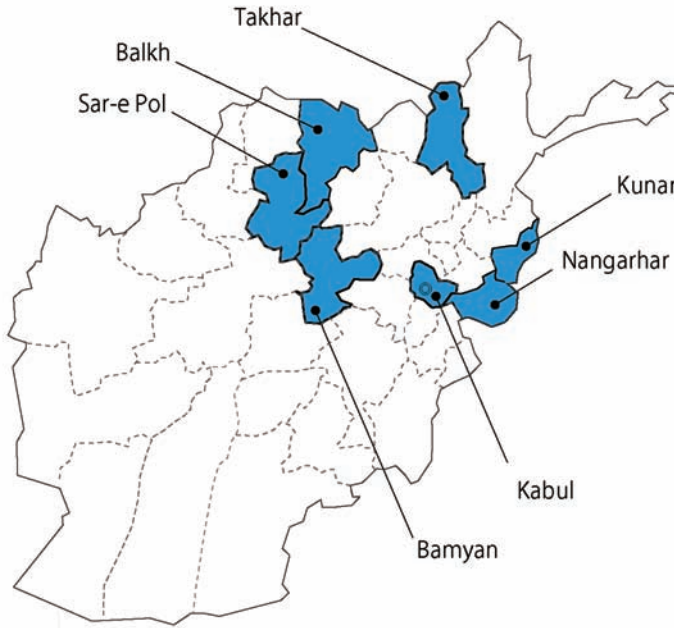
war, the Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR JAPAN) has been providing mine risk education to local communities.

AAR JAPAN established a Kabul office in January 2002, and began providing assistance for mine risk education from June 2006, in conjunction with the international NGO, the Halo Trust. AAR JAPAN was keenly aware of the need to improve the quality and the methodology for the materials for mine risk education that were in use in Afghanistan at the time. They liaised with the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to start work on a project to create new materials for mine risk education, with assistance from UNMAS. The materials created by AAR JAPAN were approved by UNMAS and became a unified standard for Afghanistan, and have also been used in the programs of numerous other organizations.

From September 2005, AAR JAPAN started a mobile film classroom program, whereby AAR JAPAN staff visited schools and communities in areas affected by landmines to disseminate knowledge regarding the risks of landmines and UXOs. Three mobile film classroom teams, each comprising a lecturer, an assistant, and a driver, held 45-minute public lectures on how to avoid landmines in various locations, using teaching materials (such as films and posters) that they had created and that had also been approved by UNMAS. The mobile film classroom teams carried out their work with the greatest possible concern for safety, wearing local traditional clothing and holding discussions with the community beforehand. As of the end of February 2012, as many as 383,244 people had participated in these mobile film classrooms.

From 2007, a campaign via television and radio programs began. In addition to Pashto and Dari programs, shorter programs were created in Uzbek and Balochi languages. These programs were broadcast via major radio and television stations. As of December 2012, the programs had been broadcast 691 times.

Building Public Institutions -- Starting from Zero



In Afghanistan, a country that has long endured conflict, almost all fundamental functions of state institutions had been destroyed. A common experience among those who visited the country at the initial stages of reconstruction was that the government was nonfunctional and scarcely any information was available. A basic structure of the state, though it is something taken for granted in normal states, needed to be decided and to be established from scratch. Assistance was provided in various forms for new processes in Afghanistan, such as the establishment of a constitution that would form the basis of the state, the creation of democratic systems, and the realization of elections. While building effective public institutions from zero for the stable provision of public services, human resource development was also essential to ensure the institutions had the necessary support.

1) Support for Democratization

A new framework for nation-building was agreed at the United Nations-organized Bonn Conference held from November 27

A basic state structure needed to be built from scratch.

to December 5, 2001 in the Bonn suburb of Königswinter in Germany. Based on this agreement, the “Bonn process” was advanced as the Emergency *Loya Jirga* (grand council) elected a transitional administration in June 2002 and the Constitutional *Loya Jirga* adopted a new constitution by January 2004. The first presidential election took place in October 2004.

The democratization process was advanced with the support of many foreign countries. The Japanese play a significant role in supporting democratization less frequently compared to Western donors, which proactively advance aid for democratization in post-conflict countries and sometimes even arrange drafts of constitutions or electoral systems. Yet the people of Afghanistan sought advice from Japanese for a number of reasons. They appeared interested in the history of Japan, which in such processes as the Meiji Restoration and reconstruction after World War II had experienced the struggle in reconciling its unique culture, customs, and democratization.

Support for Establishing a Constitution

Four constitutional scholars left Japan for Kabul on May 3, 2003, Constitution Memorial Day in Japan, to lend support for establishing a constitution in Afghanistan. Toshiyuki Munesue, professor at Seijo University, was the mission’s leader after being casually asked “How’d you like to go to Afghanistan?” by Kentaro Serita, President of the International Human Rights Law Association (Professor at Kobe University) after the academic society’s meeting. JICA, in its search for advisers for establishing a constitution, had asked the academic society to appoint constitutional scholars. Soon after that, Munesue gathered members for the mission to Kabul. While more of the male scholars rejected the offer from the very start, female experts were more willing to join the mission. Ultimately two of the four members were women. Akiko Ejima from Meiji University recalls.

“As a constitutional scholar, I lecture on England’s Magna Carta, the American Revolution, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, and the formation of the Constitution of Japan, but had never witnessed the actual formation of a constitution. This was my first experience giving support for the process. Beginner’s luck might have been what led to our spirit coming across with the Afghans better than we had expected.”

Afghan Constitution Commission consisted of notable jurists ranging from those who had engaged in forming a constitution under constitutional monarchy in 1964 to heavyweight Muslim conservatives. Munesue and other members were overwhelmed by their appearance, which was for them like something out of the movies. They were the figures charged with the difficult task of devising a draft constitution that could satisfy the international community, domestic military groups, and tribal chiefs while the country faced numerous challenges, such as military cliques maintaining local strongholds, inter-tribal conflicts, discrimination against women, the low literacy rate, and abject poverty.

The Japanese team of constitutional scholars aimed to convey the philosophies and procedures of the Constitution of Japan, promote mutual understanding through questions and answers, and mutually exchange opinions about issues in Afghanistan in order to share a certain degree of knowledge and understanding between the parties. Four big names from the Constitution Commission participated in the first meeting in Kabul. Munesue gave an opening remark to clearly show the attitude of mutual learning by saying, “It is you, the Afghans, who will establish a constitution. We are here as students, not teachers.” On the first day, Munesue and the team gave an explanation to four members of the Constitution Commission, and almost all of the approximately 30 members joined the meeting on the second day.

Many of the Afghan participants wanted to know why Japan experienced such a success after the World War II. There was

“We are here as students, not teachers.”



Meeting with members of the Constitution Commission

strong interest in the causal relationship between Japan's economic growth and its constitution. Munesue explained that the economic growth resulted from enacting a simple constitutional code in addition to satisfaction of international standards. He also said that the constitution was a set of flexible, highly applicable, and abstract rules. Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, prohibiting the act of war, was an inevitable topic, and the explanation was given that Japan's post-war prosperity had been realized because the country had focused on the economy, rather than war.

The Japanese team told that continual dialog arose from the clash between the Western values embodied by the Constitution and the Asian/Japanese values existing in everyday lives in Japan. Some of the Japanese experts found some similarities between the Afghan and Japanese mentality in the course of their interaction with the Afghan Constitution Commission, such as the seniority system, male domination, nepotism, loyalty and compassion, and modesty. Someone from the Afghan Constitution Commission apologized for the unfortunate absence of the Vice President, the Chairman

of the Commission, because his leg was being treated. Munesue replied by saying he also regretted not being able to invite his old mentor to Kabul due to his leg and his advanced age, though he could have given significant advice if he were able to be there with them. At that time, Munesue felt some commonality among their virtues. Possibly thanks to this background of cultural similarity, Afghans seemed to favorably accept that Japan had harmonized traditional values such as its collectivism mentality with Western values. Topics such as this seemed to be a source of welcome relief from the Afghans' pains from modernization.

Munesue mentioned that provisions of a positive law could have limited interpretations in light of ideas grounded in socially accepted norms, justice, and equity. He also gave some examples showing that the custom of sharing business by bid-rigging has survived the post-war reforms even though the principle of the market mechanism was officially introduced, and that courts can nullify or limit contractual stipulations based on public order and morals. Muslim conservatives, who wanted to give preference for Islamic justice over a positive law (or a constitution), seemed relieved to hear that.

While the relation between religion and nation was one of the critical issues in Afghanistan, the Japanese team suggested that Afghanistan should take time to identify suitable systems since modern law could be described in various provisions. The team also mentioned that the government supports no specific religion in Japan since the post-war Constitution guarantees religious freedom, but that not all modern constitutions shared such a provision. There are many different ways for a national government to be involved in religion. Christianity is a state religion and public financial assistance is given to churches in European countries including the UK, France, and Germany, while religious freedom is acknowledged. Conversely in Turkey, a country with a high Muslim population, it has been stipulated that politics and religion are

completely separate. The best way for Afghanistan seemed to be to make a decision after looking at examples of various countries for reference. (Ultimately it was stipulated that Islam is not the official religion but that laws would not be accepted if they violate the Sharia moral code and religious law of Islam.)

Those opposed to the inclusion of gender equality appeared somewhat relieved to hear that it had taken many years to achieve actual gender equality in Japan even though the Constitution stipulated it, and that some women still voluntarily chose to be housewives. The members of the Afghan Constitution Commission were highly mindful of the gender-equality issue, but conflicts recurred between the global standard for equality and the true state or customs of Afghanistan. The Japanese team visited the Kabul University faculties of law and political science and of Islamic law to familiarize themselves with the thinking on both sides of the issue. The Minister of Women's Affairs was enthusiastic about a constitutional stipulation for gender equality and the Japanese experts, emphasizing the principle of international concord, advised the Minister to utilize human rights conventions such as the International Covenants of Human Rights in addition to the constitution.

There was interest in the involvement of female constitutional scholars from Japan, and Fatima Galiani (now president of the Afghan Red Crescent Society), a female member of the Constitution Commission, invited the two female experts, Akiko Ejima (professor at Meiji University) and Masako Kamiya (professor at Gakushuin University), for afternoon tea at her house. Galiani had lost her family and lived in exile in London. Now having returned home she was devoted to reconstruction of Afghanistan, together with her husband Anwar ul-Haq Ahady who was then governor of the Central Bank of Afghanistan (and later served as Minister of Finance in 2004-2009). She had pragmatic ideas about supporting women, and spoke about a project in

which a mosque would be built to allow women to pray, and while Islam was properly taught, information would be exchanged and men and women would soften the feelings of resistance and sit together in the same place. Shukria Barekzai Dawi, another female committee member (now a member in the Lower House) invited the two female experts for dinner and said that she was publishing a magazine called *Weekly Women's Mirror*. She had chosen to stay in Afghanistan during its civil wars even as many middle- and upper-class citizens left the country. She revealed that she had run a secret school while education of women was banned in the Taliban era.

In August 2003, Kamiya submitted a report on how Japan had assimilated a modern constitution. Kamiya took the opportunity to ask the Constitution Commission about whether political conflicts may occur separately from constitutional framework if power is formally distributed to too many organizations. The Commission responded that there would be full coordination among organizations. The Constitution of Afghanistan was officially adopted on January 26, 2004 after discussion by 502 representatives at the Constitutional *Loya Jirga* that began on December 14, 2003 after tackling various issues such as the division of power between the president and the congress. Kamiya and some other members had concern about concentration and distribution of power. How this issue will be handled depends on how the Afghans utilize the constitution in the future.

In many post-conflict societies, donors from the West become deeply involved in the process of establishing a constitution, and modern constitutions are resultantly enacted. Western countries had similarly strong influence in Afghanistan. The EU began to get involved in drafting, yet the JICA team was not informed of the details. Despite this, the Afghans showed interest in advice from Japan on issues such as gender equality and handling of religions. There was strong interest in the knowledge of Japanese who in

their history had introduced a modern constitution possessing Western values while advancing modernization. Some Japanese scholars who went to Afghanistan spoke about the Constitution of Japan with legislators in Iraq, and such efforts continue to the present for sharing the experience of Japan, a modern nation that arose from Asia.

Support to Election Management

Elections for president and parliamentary members were held to build a democratic state following the establishment of the constitution. JICA sent a mission that provided lectures to an electoral management body and NGOs concerned with election supervision, and also advised on the operation of an electoral management body. Rei Shiratori, President of the Institute of Political Studies in Japan, held a workshop for these Afghan stakeholders at the time of the 2004 presidential election and the 2005 congressional and provincial elections. Lectures were given on electoral systems in a democratic state, political parties and political party systems, campaign funding, the role of government, and post-conflict democratization. The Afghan participants showed keen interest in Japan's experience with democratization.

Before the elections of the Lower House (House of the People) and Provincial Councils in September 2005, an election support team led by Shiratori held a seminar for members of the electoral management body, attracting about 30 participants. Afghanistan does not use a proportional representation system since the political party system is not well established; instead, voters write a single candidate's name on an open ballot. An official explained the reason for this choice, saying that it was better to allow voters to choose a candidate because of the absence of trust in political parties. During a lecture, one participant said that conflicts in Afghanistan were ideological conflicts, lacking ethnic characteristics. Shiratori responded realistically, noting

that it would be important to secure multi-ethnic/multi-religious perspectives. Shiratori mentioned in a lecture on democratization that public security should be maintained by public institutions, and that the police would not function properly if privately run security was strengthened as in the Philippines. A participant asked whether Afghanistan would be able to follow the path towards democratization with so much of the national budget allotted to military spending compared with postwar Japan. Shiratori answered that it is never too late for a nation to achieve development. The electoral management body even had difficulty distributing election equipment to local authorities. In some provinces where there were many candidates, a single ballot consisted of up to seven pages, and it was a challenging task simply to provide ballot boxes and other equipment to all parts of Afghanistan.

Realities of Constitutional Establishment and Elections

When observing the Constitutional Loya Jirga while working for the Japanese embassy, Takuro Fujii witnessed former Mujahedin participants showing strong aversion to the presence of foreign troops. Some of the anti-US/anti-foreign-force representatives obviously also considered the United Nations as basically a complementary power to the US. This observation led Fujii to expect it would not be easy for the international community to be involved in the country.

Fujii then left the Japanese embassy and began to work on electoral assistance at the UN. He assisted with the October 2004 presidential election and September 2005 parliamentary elections. In the presidential election, Hamid Karzai was elected with his chosen vice-presidents representing a good balance of ethnic groups. The results appeared to reflect the will of the people. Fujii felt the parliamentary elections in 2005 could be regarded favorably because former Mujahedin commanders were incorporated into the formal administration as members of parliament, and many

female lawmakers were elected with a quota system for women. The former Mujahedin commanders had ostensibly refused to countenance control by the central government though they officially supported a new administration. They had in fact strengthened their armed forces and held their strongholds in respective regions. Being backed by ethnic and tribal groups, they had acquired a certain amount of support among the local citizens, so it was essential to involve them in the political process in order to ensure the nation's stability. The leaders were thus allowed to enter elections as a reward for satisfying the precondition that they would disarm.

However, there were complaints about arbitrary discrimination in the examinations of candidates' qualifications in the 2005 elections. From 2006, those who opposed the current administration increasingly deviated from the regime. Fujii sensed apprehension in the country as the president consolidated his support base while facing hostile opposition from people who felt excluded from power or benefits and from the weak, who are unable to enjoy the fruits of peace. Afghanistan has overcome a series of political challenges, such as enacting a constitution and holding presidential and parliamentary elections. Still, Fujii's worry is that the regime is not yet inclusive enough to absorb all the disparate groups.

2) Public Health

Unpacking the Challenges

Japanese assistance for the health sector in Afghanistan started as early as in December 2001, immediately after the engagement of US forces. The Japanese government provided medical supplies and equipment from Pakistan, and the Japanese NGOs started emergency medical relief activities. In March 2002, Japan provided basic medical equipment for 160 locations in Afghanistan as their emergency grant aid. However, in order to provide sustained health

services to the people, emergency supplies of medical equipment are not sufficient; there needs to be a network of public service provision led by the Afghans. Having begun with emergency response, the support for health then gradually shifted into support for building organizations and institutions as part of the nation's foundation.

JICA dispatched health experts from May 2002. To tackle such a vast challenge, it was first necessary to comprehend the actual situation and identify the priority issues. As the public institutions for health at that time were very fragile, major donors including Japan conducted a joint assessment, and decided on the concurrent implementation of projects aimed at immediate results and issue/disease-based projects focusing on long-term human development.

As a result of the joint assessment, it was decided that a Basic Packages for Health Services (BPHS) would be developed with a focus on 11 major issues such as maternal and child health, child malnutrition, tuberculosis, respiratory infections, and diarrhea, and that packages would be contracted out to the NGOs. Funds contributed by the World Bank, the European Commission, and the USAID were allocated to different provinces, and the Afghan Ministry of Public Health outsourced the basic service provisions to the NGOs. This resulted in 57% of people being able to access public health facilities within one hour and receive the minimally required services as of 2011.

On the other hand, Japan and other bilateral donors, and the UN agencies focused on technical assistance. The Japanese government and JICA selected four priority areas for cooperation: (1) improving women's health, (2) countermeasures for preventable diseases in children, (3) countermeasures for infectious diseases, mainly tuberculosis, and (4) strengthening the capacity to provide public health services. The Japanese assistance was concentrated on individual and organizational capacity development so that the Afghan government could improve its capacities in health

administration while leaving the provision of services outsourced to NGOs up to other donors. According to Noriko Fujita, medical doctor of the Japanese National Center for Global Health and Medicine, who engaged in capacity building in maternal and child health in Afghanistan, the contracting-out of services expanded the coverage of basic health services from 5% (2002) to 85% (end of 2008) of the population, and the number of midwives roughly tripled over five years. Health posts were set up at 10,075 locations across the country and the number of community health workers (CHWs; voluntary workers) exceeded 22,000. Yet the provision of services by the CHWs did not increase as expected, thus, the potential of home-visit medical care is currently under consideration.

In the meantime, HANDS, a Japanese NGO, conducted a nationwide assessment of health resources in cooperation with the US NGO Management Science for Health (MSH) and the Afghan Ministry of Public Health, with the assistance of USAID. In June 2002, as there was no information on the number and locations of medical facilities in the country or on the number of physicians and types of services provided in given areas, HANDS trained more than 160 Afghan surveyors to visit 1,037 health facilities around the country. The survey revealed that only 907 of them were functioning. There were some areas where no primary care facilities were functioning due to war or earthquake damages, and there was an overwhelming shortage of facilities providing health services for women. It was also made clear that the Afghan Ministry of Public Health managed only 35% of these facilities and most of them relied on assistance from NGOs and international organizations.

These information on medical institutes and professionals was compiled around the country and became the foundations of an Afghan health information system. To maintain and keep the system in place, it would be essential to build the capacity

of Afghan staff. HANDS and MSH together supported the capacity building of the Afghan Ministry of Public Health, with a particular focus on the capacity to update the database of health-related information and to make policy decisions based on this information. In the beginning, some staff of the information system division of the Ministry had the ability only to type, but after two years of training, many of them became capable of handling Microsoft Access databases and freely making maps with ArcView software. HANDS continued to provide support until 2005, with its focus on human and system development.

It is extremely difficult to build public institutions from scratch and strengthen capacities in a country immediately after conflict. There are many pressing needs in an environment like Afghanistan and such needs require vast amounts of aid that provide medical equipment and foreign physicians. Even though people understand the need to build an administrative system for the Afghans, operated by the Afghans over the long term, it was quite difficult to attract the Afghan counterparts' interest in aid for the development of human resources, capacity building, and capacity development (CD), since short-term outcomes could not be expected. Political instability often leads to frequent personnel change among top officials such as ministers and directors, and even those officers in charge. Under the current security conditions in Afghanistan, Japanese experts now cannot visit many remote areas. Without actually being able to go out into the field, it is indeed difficult to promote capacity development merely by remote operation.

Tuberculosis Control

The first priority areas for Japan and JICA on capacity building in health systems by the Afghans themselves were maternal and child health and tuberculosis (TB) control. To prevent the spread of infectious diseases like TB, it is important to diagnose and treat it

in its early stages, and a network to perform this had to be mapped out. In Afghanistan, where it was not possible to conduct sufficient TB control activities, there were almost 100,000 TB affected individuals as of the year 2000, and the annual death toll from the disease was estimated at over 20,000.

Assistance for TB control began with the reconstruction work on the National Tuberculosis Institute (NTI), which was under construction with Japanese aid in the 1970s. Construction of the NTI building began in 1979 with Japanese grant aid but was suspended due to the invasion of Soviet forces. Kawasaki, who visited Kabul in 2002 for the Urgent Rehabilitation Program, became involved in restoring the NTI as a symbol of the restart for aid in the health sector. Only the building frame for the NTI, abandoned a month prior to completion, remained in Kabul's Darulaman district. More than two decades had passed since it was abandoned and the building was virtually in ruin, but the structural frame, built with Japanese grant aid, was still intact and allowed Kawasaki and his team to refurbish and use the building. Built by the Japanese in the 1970s, this frame would serve as a base for their activities more than two decades later.

The Darulaman district was in complete ruin and nearly deserted. Streets through the center of the district were pockmarked with rocket fire and the district was an eerie place where cars and pedestrians were seldom seen. Within the team, there were many discussions as to whether the Japanese experts and Afghan staff would actually be able to report to work and whether patients could in fact visit the hospital even after the NTI building was repaired. But in the end, when the building was completed, life returned to the Darulaman district and the streets became congested, so this concern was ultimately unwarranted. Since April 2012, the construction of a new hospital for communicable diseases, mainly TB, is being undertaken with Japanese grant aid, and is expected to be completed in August 2013.



National Tuberculosis Institute (NTI) before and after rehabilitation

In the renovated NTI facilities, the five-year JICA Tuberculosis Control Project began in 2004 to help the Afghan government establish a system to control TB. During the project, seven long-

term and 13 short-term experts from Japan were dispatched to Afghanistan. Notably, Mitsuo Isono, Senior Advisor of JICA, became continuously involved in the project.

Isono and the team began with dissemination of a method called DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course) for controlling TB. This is a method appropriate for countries that lack facilities for hospitals and high-tech inspections. It uses the easiest method with patients' sputum for diagnosis, and has patients come to hospital every day to make sure they take medicines in front of doctors. To provide DOTS, which was recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO), to all Afghan nationals, the project promoted human resource development and institution building for the National TB Program (NTP) of the Afghan Ministry of Public Health, which was responsible for the TB control at the national and provincial governments. Establishment of policy documents such as guidelines, and of monitoring methods for the results of the actions, and strengthening of survey and research implementation abilities as well as a wide range of other issues were addressed. At the same time, training was provided to public health professionals who actually implement TB control at the public health facilities. In particular, the project provided almost all the aid for dissemination of sputum smear microscopy (which included preparing training manuals, training trainers, and conducting training), a method to identify TB infection by collecting patients' sputum.

With these approaches by Isono and the team, TB bacilli inspection facilities, of which there were only 60 in Afghanistan in 2003, now number about 650. They have mostly accomplished the global targets of identifying more than 70% of instances and treating more than 85%, and the WHO has evaluated this as a successful program in a difficult environment.

The TB control program managed to achieve successful results but many difficulties hampered its implementation. The first was

the extremely tight limitation on regions Japanese experts could visit due to unstable security conditions. For a project aimed at establishing a nationwide TB diagnosis and treatment network, on-the-ground observation and supervision was imperative and the work of the Afghan officials of the NTP as well as the Afghan assistants hired on the project turned out to be key. Isono exhaustively instructed the assistants, which enabled them to visit local sites to carry out the necessary observation and gather information, and even to conduct technical supervision later in place of the Japanese experts. In the frustrating environment of not being able to go to the sites in person, it seems that the Afghan people who willingly visited locations with unstable security made the project a success.

Ample time was devoted to development of human resources and institutions. At the start, the NTP of the Ministry of Public Health had only five full-time staff and Isono had to wait until 2007 to have the program secure 25 staff, considered the minimum. The program director, the backbone for TB control was replaced frequently due to factional disagreements, and the current director is now the fourth in this position. Isono, while irked by each change in personnel, continually reminded himself to build up an organization that would deliver the TB control needed on the ground even if there were some personnel changes in the administrative positions. With a stabilized staff and an increase in highly motivated mid-level and young personnel, the organization transformed itself so that it could independently consider what was necessary and proceed with it. On occasions when other donors proposed bringing in foreign advisers, they now had the confidence to reply that they did not need them since the local staff could do it on their own.

Isono had the conviction to concentrate on dissemination of basic sputum smear microscopy over the first four years, rejecting requests from the Afghan government and other donors to conduct

more advanced tests as soon as possible. Sputum smear microscopy was easy to conduct and did not require expensive equipment for testing, and he believed that diffusing this method was the necessary first step. Cultivation tests with higher accuracy would improve TB diagnostic skills, but the facilities are more expensive and require electricity and water, as well as high levels of skill, and there were many problems that first had to be overcome before the tests could be introduced. The level of testing method was evolving day-by-day, and Isono could understand the urge to conduct more sophisticated tests at a time when the global level was rising, but he wanted them to fully concentrate on improving basic skills for the first four years. He began introducing cultivation tests from the fifth year, when he considered that the adequate technical level had been secured and this continues to the present.

The number of public officials involved in TB control



Trainees learn new techniques in the hospital lab
Photo: Raymond Wilkinson

has increased to more than 100, including NTP staff outside Kabul. There are now several thousand people involved in TB control, which includes public health facilities and TB inspection laboratories scattered across rural areas. All members have their own stories to tell and many of the younger staff work with private testing centers in their spare time in order to support their family. Yet there are also older staff over the age of 50 who are actively striving to do their duties. One trainer at the NTP evidently worked together with Japanese experts of the JICA's TB control project that started in 1974, and told Isono about his experiences more than 30 years ago. This man is a master trainer in sputum smear microscopy and a key person in accuracy management, but he is taking on the challenge of learning TB bacterium culture testing as we works together with his colleagues.

To encourage ownership by the Afghan government, Isono pushed the government to secure its own budget as much as possible. When JICA provides technical assistance, fuel costs for in-house power generators and repair costs for PCs and copiers are usually supposed to be borne by the recipient government. But because of the acute limitations on the government budget, the project paid for these costs, with a deadline attached. Isono cut off bearing of these costs when that deadline was reached. When there were power failures, the in-house generator could not be started and without electricity no one could work. Water for the toilets stopped. Heating necessary in the winter also stopped and people were freezing in the cold rooms. Some Afghans started to shout complaints such as, "If you're not going to pay, go back to Japan now!" but Isono and the team stood firm and said that they were there to provide skills and knowledge and not to give out money, and they continued to concentrate on the technical transfer. Eventually, one day the director said to Isono with feeling that, "While many countries around the world are seeking technical

"We are here to provide skills and knowledge, not money."

transfer from Japan, we have to thank you for coming here to this country where the environment is so tough. It was wrong for us to ask you for funding. We will not ask you to pay anymore.” It was at this moment that the heart of the “technical cooperation” that Isono repeatedly stressed had truly been conveyed. Since that day, the Ministry of Public Health is making every effort to secure a budget, though the Ministry still faces shortfalls.

The success of TB control began to be noticed by the international community and many donors now began proposing funds for TB control. Isono looked at the proposals and as much as possible refused those that emphasized short-term results that ignored ownership by the Afghans and sought to conduct the project independently. It is vitally important to respect the ownership by Afghanistan and build institutional capacity step by step.

On December 12, 2007, JICA President Sadako Ogata visited the NTI. Having visited the NTI in 2004, she recalled that “there was a shortage of human resources and training could not be fully provided for TB testing and prevention,” and upon returning in 2007 she said that she was happy to find it completely functional.

In the second phase that began in 2009, Isono and his team are continuing to tackle the challenges of improving services provided by public health facilities, TB control for refugees and children, and diagnosis and treatment for drug-resistant *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. Another challenge is improving the quality of TB control, and they need to improve the accuracy of testing. If the quality of service in public institutions is not improved, those who can afford may go to private hospitals and others would simply stop receiving health services, leaving a risk of TB control not being implemented on a nationwide level. As those living in the harsh conditions of refugee camps are said to be more prone to developing TB, this unique situation also needs to be addressed.

In conditions where the NTP had difficulty securing its own governmental budget, Isono strove to secure funds from other sources. The Afghan Ministry of Public Health had applied for funding from The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (The Global Fund) but was turned down in 2006 and 2007 and was unable to secure finances to conduct more activities under its ownership, not under the supervision by foreign donors. In applying in 2008, Japanese experts, including Isono, provided technical support that enabled a five-year budget to be approved. During the period of about one month when the application was being written, the NTP staff who normally go home around 3 p.m. stayed in the office until late, immersed in preparing the application. The financing from The Global Fund is now supporting the NTP's activities.

In 2010, when a new application was to be made to The Global Fund for funds from 2011, the Ministry of Public Health urged JICA to nominate for the role of the Principal Recipient (PR), which would be legally accountable for appropriate financial management and project execution. The PR would be responsible for managing the project using the roughly 500 million yen from The Global Fund. At the same time, it would play a supporting role in building the financial and project implementation capacities of the Ministry of Public Health. The ministry's request signified its high regard for the contributions of Isono and others. In July 2011, a meeting of the Global Fund's Board officially appointed JICA as the PR.

Health Administration Trainings in Indonesia and Cambodia

In addition to advice from Japanese experts, technical assistance through exchanges with other developing nations was also effective in building individual and institutional capacity. For the Afghans, establishing a health administration system that could match those of developed countries like Japan seemed a remote target, but in

the meantime there was much that could be learned from the experiences of other developing countries. By introducing the experience of these countries, an Islamic country that shared many customs and a country recovering from conflict, the Afghans were able to draw up a realistic vision for their nation.

In the Reproductive Health Project that began in 2004, in addition to those from Japan, short-term lecturers were invited from Indonesia, a large Islamic country, to share their experiences. Through these workshops, Indonesia's experiences would prove applicable for Afghanistan, itself an Islamic nation, and training began in 2008 to foster Afghan administrators in Indonesia. This training program consisted of two courses, dispatching one Afghan administrator each for community healthcare and for policy planning and implementation, respectively for three months and one year, to the Faculty of Public Health at Universitas Indonesia.

To enable these training courses, Kota Omiya visited Indonesia from the JICA office in Kabul. Omiya frequently heard comments from the Indonesians that they had appreciated the many years of support from Japan and JICA and wanted to repay it by assisting other countries, and that they wanted not only to teach but to learn how to improve their capacity by accepting these trainees. Such positive sentiment reflected the trust toward Japan nurtured through the past relations. The Afghan trainees commented that they wanted to learn both the good aspects and lessons from the development experiences of Indonesia, and how Indonesia had grown as a fellow Islamic country.

*Indonesians
wanted not
only to teach but
to learn.*

Sharing the post-war/conflict reconstruction experience was also important for the Afghans. The post-war reconstruction of Japan seems to be encouraging for Afghans who wish to reconstruct their own homeland. Eiki Chinda, JICA expert in the reproductive health project, heard from the General Director

Dr. Ahmad Shah Shokohmand of the Ministry of Public Health, how he was impressed by Japan's recovery after visiting Japan for JICA training and seeing the damage of the A-Bomb Dome at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. He told Chinda, "I will resurrect the health administration of Kabul from scratch. I want to reconstruct Afghanistan just like Japan."

*"I want to
reconstruct
Afghanistan
just like Japan."*

Cambodia, which more recently had succeeded in reconstruction from the devastation of war, seemed to be even closer to the situation in Afghanistan. The reproductive health project, for which Chinda was working, started training programs for health administrators in Cambodia from 2007. The target of the program was to learn lessons for Afghanistan from the experience of Cambodia, which reconstructed its ravaged nation from scratch in the 1990s, and the experience of JICA, which supported the reconstruction. Chinda had hoped that the Afghan trainees would learn from both the positive and negative experiences of Cambodia and by showing their enthusiasm to learn would also convey something to the Cambodians. After the training in Indonesia, Omiya accompanied the Afghans on the trip.

Six Afghan health administrators accompanied by Omiya departed from Kabul. Most of the Afghan participants had only visited their neighboring countries, and some were even going abroad for the first time. Some were so intensely interested that they took photos at the airport, inside the plane, during immigration, and at any other opportunities, while another spoke of being sent off by a parent in tears with a prayer holding the Quran above their heads and with no idea of where his son was heading. Some were surprised to find halal food (appropriate for Muslims) being served onboard the flight. All of the participants seemed to be enjoying their various experiences. However, at connecting airports, the Afghans were repeatedly subject to intensive questioning, such as the amount of money in their possession or the purpose of their trip. The voyage provided a

constant stream of challenges for Omiya.

The first year's training program focused on hospital management, and the Afghans from the Malalai Maternity Hospital in Kabul, where the JICA reproductive health project was underway, learned from each other with the Cambodians from the National Maternal and Child Health Center. In the second year, the topic was community health administration. In the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, the Afghan participants learned about health policy and administration, and in the province of Kampong Cham, about a two-hour drive away, they observed the community health administration on the ground. The Afghan participants, who observed the systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanism from the central government down to the communities, commented enthusiastically on how wonderful it was that the Cambodians had progressed to such an extent in just over a decade since the end of war. However, they noted that simply replicating the same system in Afghanistan would not be effective and that rather they would have to learn from the Cambodian experience and adapt it to their situation. The Afghans actively raised many questions and the Cambodians eagerly responded, and all scheduled times for training had to be extended.

“We have to adapt the lessons in Cambodia to our own situation.”

One of the largest problems for Omiya and others was arranging meals for the Afghans, who were Muslim. Their meals basically needs to be halal, and they would not touch pork or alcoholic beverages, which are prohibited by Islamic law. Arranging meals in Buddhist Cambodia proved to be more difficult than expected. In Phnom Penh, they introduced restaurants that served halal food and in rural Kampong Cham during their field visits, meals prepared by the Cham tribe, who are Cambodian Muslims, were served. Difficulties continued for Omiya as he acquired large supplies of bread that could be handed out and eaten by the Afghans in the case everything failed. The Afghans said they would fast if neither bread nor halal meals could be found. Thinking

not only of health concerns, but fearing they may lose their concentration in training if living on nothing but water, Omiya put his utmost efforts into securing meals.

On the other hand, when they visited a health facility located in a Muslim residential area of Phnom Penh, it seemed that the Afghans felt a sort of Islamic solidarity. One of the Japanese who accompanied them reflected, “Watching Muslim women working as volunteers, I felt that it may lead to a change in consciousness among the people in Afghanistan, where it is difficult for women even to go outside their homes.” After leaving the facility and visiting an adjacent mosque, the Afghans spoke to the Cambodian Muslims and sat in a circle discussing their own Islamic culture. Before leaving, when words of appreciation to Allah were being chanted by both parties of Islamic faith, a Cambodian Buddhist accompanying the group also listened intently to the words and assumed a praying posture.

This turned out to be an experience offering many lessons, also for the Cambodians who received the trainees. One official in Cambodia’s National Maternal and Child Health Center said with a smile that, “Cambodia is not the ‘teacher,’ and it would like to learn something from the experience of the other side. It would make us very happy if the experience of Cambodia could in some way be put to use.” In the second year of training, though the theme differed, the Cambodians reflected the results of the first year in successfully establishing the contents of the training, its schedule, and budget, and having advance meetings with related parties and others. It seems that conducting training to trainees from abroad, not just those from within the country, had raised the Cambodians’ skills and motivation.

Noriko Fujita, who worked as a JICA expert in both Afghanistan and Cambodia, reflected on her experiences there. “Knowing the current state of how the fear of suicide bombings is sapping the hopes of all Afghan people, both inside and outside the country,

“Cambodia is not the teacher. We would like to learn something.”

Afghans possess a magma-like passion to make their country better.

has again reminded me how large the step was for Cambodia to leave the days of the Pol Pot regime behind, to join ASEAN, and to enter the stage of designing their social development based on peace and stability,” she said, “For the people of Afghanistan, seeing Cambodia taking a hop, step, and a jump would seem very enviable. Yet, despite that, there are many good-willed medical practitioners in Afghanistan, and it is certain that they have continued to possess a magma-like passion to make their country better on their own.”

Bringing together these two countries with different histories and ethnicities provided intercommunication and mutual learning experiences, much more stimulating than the Japanese had expected, to the participants from both sides.. Indonesia is an Islamic country, Cambodia is a country that experienced conflict, and Japan has provided aid to these countries. Conveying the experiences of different countries is expected to yield a range of clues for the Afghan people, who are faced with the huge task of institution building in their country.

Colleagues in the Ministry of Public Health

Norio Kasahara, a JICA expert who provided support to the Ministry of Public Health in policy and budget planning for the national and provincial institutions, has seen Afghan colleagues who were trying to improve the health situation in Afghanistan, which has some of the worst health outcomes in the world, in challenging conditions such as these. A terrorist car bomb attack occurred on a Friday in May 2006 near the Afghan Ministry of Public Health. Since it was a holiday, fortunately none of the ministry staff were hurt, but upon reporting to work the following day Kasahara and the staff saw the force of the bomb blast had blown away not just the windows but also their frames. The Afghans and the foreigners worked alongside each other as one

unit for recovery, feeling they could not succumb to terrorism and that they had to resume work to maintain the stature of the ministry. Recovery work was completed during the morning, and in the afternoon several hundred new window panes were brought into the ministry. At this time and place, the people shared a determination to not turn their backs to their enemies, no matter how viciously they tried to get in the way, and to not let the nation be dragged into war.

Kasahara's most trusted ally was Ahmad Jan Naeem, General Director for Policy and Planning, an educated person with a good sense of humor. In health policies, his specialty, this man even managed to teach the foreign experts a few things. The inside of the Afghan government was allegedly plagued with deeply rooted corruption, but Naeem was greatly respected by people both inside and outside as being unpolluted and brave. Known for pursuing scientific evidence, relying on competitive principles, trusting his colleagues, possessing a sincere attitude toward public duty, selfless words and action, Naeem was a born leader noted for his cool head and warm heart, and Kasahara took pride in the fact that he was able to work with him, even if only for a short period.

Naeem came to Kabul with his family when he was still young, from a small village in the province of Wardak, but was forced into poverty. He realized that the only way to leave poverty behind was to join the military and he enrolled in the Afghan National Forces. By achieving excellent scores in both training and studies he became noticed by the higher ranks and was sent on a government scholarship to the Medical School of the Indian Armed Forces. After working for some time as a general clinician in the Military Hospital in Herat Province, he moved to a health NGO in Afghanistan to, he said, save the lives of more than just one patient. During the Taliban's rule he had been thrown in jail, accused for contacting people associated with foreign organizations, his

parents' house in Kabul was in the middle of fighting and was destroyed, and he lost his young daughter to illness. Yet even after these tragedies his strong feelings for the people of Afghanistan had supported this hard and bitter life for him and his family. After the Taliban regime was ousted in 2001, he participated in the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan in Tokyo as a representative of the local NGO and has worked for the Ministry of Public Health since 2003 and worked on numerous reform projects. Currently he is serving the Ministry as an acting deputy minister.

Improvement of Health and Medical Services in the Kabul Metropolitan Area

Fujita, Isono, Omiya and their colleagues who have been supporting the health sector in Afghanistan began to look at health issues in urban areas, a topic that donors had not addressed. While health and medical care services improved in the rural areas through contracting out the BPHS to NGOs, the urban areas, including Kabul, which had many private hospitals, had been excluded from donor assistance since they were considered to be located in a relatively favorable health and medical care environment. Yet since budget and operation management of the Afghan government was insufficient, the urban public health facilities faced a shortage of doctors and nurses, medicine shortages, and aging medical equipment, and the conditions of health and medical care in the urban areas were greatly deteriorating for those who could not afford private hospitals.

To improve health and medical care services for the urban poor, overlooked by donors, JICA started the three-year Urban Health System Strengthening Project from December 2009.

The project began with the adjustment of the BPHS package conducted in rural areas, in order to suit the urban environment. Dense population, ease of access to health and medical facilities

with developed public transportation systems, numerous choices for receiving care due to the existence of private hospitals, and other such features characterized the urban area. Surveys of urban residents' needs found that the poor were the leading users of public facilities, that people flexibly choose where to receive treatment based on different medical conditions, and that the quality of the medical facility was the most important factor for the choice especially for childbirth. Based on these results, the project will create an appropriate model for urban areas.

Providing Healthcare Services in Remote Areas

Parallel to institution building of public organizations, NGOs were conducting activities geared at providing healthcare services in remote rural areas.

The Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR JAPAN) opened an office in Taloqan in Takhar Province in May 2002, and established physical therapy clinics at two locations within the province by that September for physical rehabilitation of the disabled, including those injured by landmines. Takhar, located on the border with Tajikistan, had long been exposed to destructive conflict dating back to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and was known to be littered with landmines. Yet it was so remote that provision of health and medical care services was delayed and international aid was not sufficient.

AAR JAPAN coordinated with an international NGO, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), working to support the disabled in the northern region, along with the Afghan Ministry of Public Health, to provide physical therapy-based rehabilitation and assistance in obtaining prosthetic limbs and to conduct mobile clinics. Once the emergency response subsided, to ensure the sustainability of the project, it was important to have these efforts positioned in the public service mechanism within the Afghan government's Basic Packages for Health Services (BPHS) strategy.

Toward this objective, in April 2008, AAR JAPAN transferred the operation of its two clinics to the SCA, which operated physical therapy clinics in Takhar, and pursued sustainable development through coordination with public services. By 2008, the clinic had assisted 31,805 patients.

AAR JAPAN has continued its support for the disabled through repairs to the clinics transferred to SCA in 2008 and repairs to physical therapy clinics operated by SCA in Takhar in 2009. It has also improved the facilities of the Physical Therapy Institute (PTI), the only accredited physiotherapist training organization in Afghanistan, in 2010.

The Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC) began its emergency assistance activity near the Pakistan border in the late 2001 in cooperation with the local NGO OMAR. JVC entered the Khas Kunar District in Kunar Province in the eastern region in January 2004 to support a public medical clinic, but was inevitably forced to leave the area in March 2005 as a result of a move toward the government adopting a new standardized healthcare policy and related NGO regulations. In July 2005, JVC started anew with the support of a medical clinic in the Gorek camp in the Shiwa District in Nangarhar Province. With the aim of achieving voluntary and sustainable healthcare improvement and using the medical clinic as the base, JVC created a structure that enabled the participation of those in the area to work together to improve healthcare, namely a system that supports traditional midwifery in the village, and a medical committee made up of village representatives and community health workers (CHW) who are volunteers from the village. This medical clinic was named the best of its kind in a joint assessment by the Afghan Ministry of Public Health and a university research institution.

The medical clinic is primarily operated by JVC's Afghan doctors. JVC has focused on finding and establishing techniques

and systems suitable for the local conditions, dispatching doctors and nurses from Japan for temporary assignments and inviting Afghan doctors to Japan. Visiting the clinic, Japanese doctors were concerned about the lack of medical histories, as medical records are not traditionally kept in Afghanistan. To overcome this, the clinic created a “family health book” in which medical records of every family that visited the clinic would be kept. With some opposition to having strangers obtain family health information, the clinic spoke with the region’s elders about the significance of the family health book and received their approval before introducing the system.

3) Promotion of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women

Women in Afghanistan

When Afghanistan began building a new nation, gender equality and the empowerment of women were cited as one of the leading issues. In Afghanistan, women had been deprived of their rights and distressed socially and economically during the long civil war and the period of Taliban control. The average life expectancy of men in Afghanistan was 45, but only 44 for women (UN population estimate for 2005), making it one of the very few countries where the number for women was lower. One reason for this was the extremely high maternal mortality rate of 1,600 for every 100,000 births, for which one cause, in addition to weak health institutions, was said to be *purdah*, the Afghan custom of segregating the sexes, which makes it difficult for women to be diagnosed by male doctors and nurses, as well the forbidding of women from leaving the home unless they are accompanied by a male relative. In rural areas, early marriage is so widespread that women have health damage from pregnancy and childbirth at ages of around 15 or 16, before they physically mature. As giving birth to a male child is considered to be an important role for women, many of them are forced to

go through consecutive pregnancies and childbirths. Domestic violence also has a negative influence on women's health and social participation.

In the 2004 constitution, gender equality provisions were included in Article 22, and a certain number of parliamentary seats are secured for women as a quota. Yet even the advancement of political participation by women through this allocation would not lead to improving women's daily lives or advancing women's rights. Especially in rural areas, the scope of traditional customs was larger than that of written law and the influence of traditional customs remains strong to this day.

Building Capacity of the Ministry of Women's Affairs

The Ministry of Women's Affairs was established in the new Afghan government with the expectation of restoring women's rights and promoting gender equality. Many Japanese experts were dispatched to the ministry to firmly embed the notion of gender equality in Afghan society, and they have steadily worked on paving



High school students in girls' school

the way to the institution building in the government.

The new Ministry of Women's Affairs, established in 2002, began its functions by succeeding the facilities and staff of its forerunner the Women's Association, which provided services such as vocational training for women before the Taliban era. Many of the staff had a background working in NGOs and education and were not used to working as administrative officials. Therefore, in the ministry's early stages, it conducted vocational training such as sewing, embroidery, and beauty care just like NGOs do, and for some time the ministry was actually competing with NGOs. After the appointment of the second minister in 2003, the ministry began concentrating on planning and recommending policies, promoting coordination, and recommendation of mainstream gender equality in the national development plan. JICA, GTZ, UNIFEM, UNDP, USAID, and other organizations have dispatched experts, and from 2006 the ministry started to provide advice on gender-mainstreaming to other ministries. Up to now, the ministry has started to function as a policy coordination body for the promotion of gender equality.

A significant number of Japanese women have been dispatched to the ministry since 2003 as gender experts, with continued support for creating organizational charts, managing budgets, and designing terms of reference (T/R) of each bureau and division, as well as for technical assistance and human resource development for mainstreaming gender issues in the national development planning process. From 2005, JICA implemented the Project on Enhancing Women's Economic Empowerment to support 23 small-scale pilot projects were implemented in Bamyan and Mazar-i Sharif, directly supporting 4,300 women while amassing knowledge and information within the ministry for the promotion of economic empowerment of women.

Kumiko Kasai, who was the lead expert for the project, on many occasions, witnessed development of the staff of the ministry.

“Do you know how enjoyable you have made our work?”

She felt satisfaction from the job in seeing the village women excited by the training and watching them actively speak up and later take action. Yet the working conditions were harsh and the ministry’s office often experienced power failures, up to 10 times a day. With each of these, the Afghan staff wanted to go home, but Kasai encouraged them by insisting to them that work can be done without electricity. Conversely, when Kasai was troubled and feeling low, an Afghan colleague came to her and offered words of support: “Do you know how enjoyable you have made our work? We all like the way you work. Don’t worry, we will support you.” She felt that it was the role of the Japanese to support the activities of the Afghan people while remaining in the background.

From 2009, with a focus on institutional capacity building for poverty reduction for women, the Project for Poverty Reduction for Chronically Poor Women was started. JICA’s technical cooperation continues to improve the ministry’s capacity for a series of operations for information gathering, extracting tasks, and recommending policy.

The Scars of War that Remain in Afghan Women

While the Ministry of Women’s Affairs was establishing policies for gender equality and worked with other ministries to provide consideration of gender, gender equality continued to spread through each of the areas where aid workers were working. The Japanese women working for Afghanistan’s reconstruction were able to observe each of the Afghan women they met absorb something on their own and rise above their oppressed condition.

Yasuko Shimizu, who from November 2001 worked for about two and a half years in the UNHCR office in Afghanistan, saw the trying history of women in her workplace at the UN agency. At the end of 2001, expecting a substantial return of refugees, UNHCR set up five offices inside Afghanistan. Accompanying this, many local staff were employed, including women. Among them were

women who had never worked and although they took on secretary positions many had never seen a copier or a computer.

“I thought I was doing the job of a secretary to help my secretary,” Shimizu said. She carefully supervised the small mistakes that occur each day. But whenever Shimizu pointed something out, the secretaries would always say they did not know anything about it. Even when she told them a document had been lost they would assert that they had not lost it. Shimizu was puzzled by this but then came to think that they were nervous because they had no experience in working in offices. So she pleaded with them, “The reason I ask you about when something is missing or if a mistake has been made is not to criticize you but only to solve the problem. So I’m asking you, please, don’t deny things, but try to track them back through your memory.” After this, the female staff members gradually began to think back and, when they have problems, talk about the cause and try to find solutions.

A year passed and the time for staff evaluations came. Shimizu told her secretary that she was learning how to process work at a considerable speed and in a year’s time she would be capable of working independently, and then asked her if she had anything to say. She replied “In the beginning I was scared, but I’ve become a human being since I came here.” Shimizu could not understand what she meant so she asked her to elaborate. “During the Taliban regime,” she said, “women weren’t asked their opinions and sometimes things got scary. Working here, I was surprised that I had to speak my views. In the process of doing different work I felt I was being treated like a human being.” This was the moment when Shimizu actually first felt the experience of what the Afghan women had to go through. When questioned, saying “I don’t know” or “That didn’t happen” was the only way to protect oneself, and the habit of hiding even single, small mistakes had become engrained.

The female staff, having been given the opportunity, willingly

“I was scared. I’ve become a human being since I came here.”

took part in every training session available, and their development was remarkable. At the time Shimizu was about to leave Afghanistan, the secretary said that she would like to make a speech, and delivered it in front of everyone in a dignified tone. Shimizu was thrilled to see her, after looking so nervous years ago, speak so boldly in front of the people.

Promotion of Gender Equality on the Ground

Even in rural villages, where the influence of traditional customary law remained strong and gender equality was believed to be practiced the least, women's status is improving through participation in efforts such as income-generating projects. As difficult as it may be, various techniques are applied so that women will not be left behind. Through a range of activities, women's awareness is changing and various examples can be seen of men showing deference to women.

The participation of women became a sizeable issue when AAR JAPAN was conducting a mobile movie classroom for a mine risk education project. Many of the participants in the classes were children and of the 59,638 who attended between April 2011 and February 2012, adult women accounted for only 0.2% (126). Since women had limited opportunities to leave their homes, their chances of falling victim to landmines and unexploded ordnance may have been small, but considering the influence mothers over their children and the importance of education at home, attendance of adult women at lectures had to be promoted. In February 2012, AAR JAPAN decided to employ female staff to set up a new mobile movie classroom team. It was not easy for them to find women who have sufficient education and who wish to work in remote areas, but AAR JAPAN hired two female staff in March. After two months' training, they started to conduct mine risk education lectures for women in Kabul and its suburbs in April.

In a project AAR JAPAN was implementing in Takhar Province to help the disabled, female patients tend to avoid therapies provided by male physiotherapists. In Takhar at that time, it was impossible to find women with higher education who were qualified as physiotherapists, as female students had just started to finish primary education. Though there were female physiotherapists in cities like Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif, it was extremely difficult to secure women able to work in remote areas. AAR JAPAN, after careful discussions with local elders and religious leaders, ultimately decided to employ female assistants to serve under the male physiotherapists in providing help with female patients, and even this effort hugely increased the number of female patients.

Between 2003 and 2005, Yuko Shibata of Peace Winds Japan provided support of training for chicken farming for income generation and literacy education for women in Sar-e Pol Province. She set up a chicken farm within the city of Sar-e Pol and conducted training for workers in the farms and also for villagers around the city. Then, she distributed necessary equipment and chicks to women who participated the training courses.

The village Shibata visited during a preliminary survey seemed to be especially conservative, and when, together with a man to serve as an interpreter, Shibata arrived at the house where the women gathered, all the women who were in the garden talking immediately hid their faces with scarves or burqas and concealed themselves behind the houses and trees. They did not want a man to see their faces so Shibata asked the women to gather near the entrance of the house and had the male staff stay outside near the entrance and translate.

When Shibata entered the room without the male interpreter, she was suddenly surrounded by all the women and bombarded with questions. Language problems prevented her from understanding all of what was being said, but some questions were

on light topics, such as why she was not wearing earrings or whether she was married.

In training women, it was essential to obtain an understanding of the community and the family, so the project was always explained to the village leaders, but even then, there were women whose families opposed their participating and those who had to drop out partway through. When Shibata asked trainees in one village how their families see them participating in the training, one woman said she was keeping her participation secret from her husband. Yet there was also a woman who said her husband was very understanding. This woman, who had returned from Iran, said that before taking refuge in Iran, her husband was very conservative and violent, but through refugee life and coming back he had changed. In Iran, they had to work together at construction sites to earn a living, and she said her husband's way of thinking had changed through their experiencing difficulties together and his violent behavior toward her had stopped. Another woman said joyfully that by women becoming able to read and write and being able to read the Quran, they had begun to gain respect from men, who had previously looked down on them. As small as it may be, amid aid for Afghanistan, which is still up against a range of challenges, Shibata gained a great deal of hope by being able to sense the change in women and their male family members.

Becoming able to read and write, women began to gain respect from men.

Rumiko Nomura, the JICA representative in Kabul in charge of the community development project, paid many visits to the participatory Community Development Council (CDC), which decided on usage of aid money for each village for community development, and she had witnessed some of the efforts and struggles of women in rural areas.

In Urzgani Village, Balkh Province, where Nomura visited, following the CDC decision by gender, men were building a village road while women were conducting sewing training. When

Nomura arrived at the village, nearly 20 village representatives were gathered, but no women were present. After finishing the meeting with the men, the villagers told Nomura that the women were gathered at another place and she was told to go there by herself. In the remote villages where the custom of *purdah*, segregating the sexes, remained strong, only women were allowed to meet with women, so the Japanese men who accompanied her could not take part. When Nomura entered the building where the female CDC members were gathered, about 15 women, ages ranging from young to old, were seated on the ground in a room about 10 tatami mats in size (approximately 16 square meters). When Nomura asked whether she could see the clothing they made in the training, a young woman stood up and first closed the slightly open door, and then took off her *chadri* (the enveloping garment worn by women to conceal the entire body). Underneath she was wearing a silver one-piece dress she had made by herself for Nomura to see. But what surprised Nomura more than the dress was the fact that the woman had first closed the slightly open door. Nomura felt that for Afghan women in the remote villages with strict traditional rules, having a man see their face or bodyline was like being seen naked.

On the other hand, through these activities, women have gradually gained opportunities to speak up and there are now places where it has become possible for them to exchange opinions with men. The opinions of both sexes must be reflected equally at the CDC, which calls for participatory decision-making, but in areas with strict traditional rules, where it is difficult for the men and the women to see each other, they set up separate CDCs for men and for women. Two CDCs separately discuss their needs first, but later exchange their primary requests with each other, before finally agreeing to allocate funds to meet their requests. In Sheberto in Bamyan Province, the women's cluster CDC (CCDC) promoted a carpet-weaving activity for women, and women are now participating in meetings with the men and are involved in

the community's decision-making. Afghanistan's rural areas are diverse and in Bamyan Province women's involvement in society has progressed. In 2005, Habiba Sarabi became the first (so far the only) woman to be appointed as a governor. It is quite common for women to work outdoors in the fields and participate in meetings together with men. (See Chapter 6 for details about the community development.)

In the Project on Enhancing Women's Economic Empowerment that Kasai supported, she was able to see the efforts of women in many villages. In the Kahmard district of Bamyan Province, the women's skills in producing dried fruits improved and the trading price became seven times higher in two years. The women now talk about running a juice factory sometime in the future.

In December 2005, JICA President Sadako Ogata was scheduled to visit another village supported by Kasai, Uzbek-ah in Balkh Province. When the villagers heard of the plans for Ogata's visit, the men and women, including the mullah and the elders, began preparations together. While men maintained the footpath by



Women producing dried fruits

filling puddles with earth, so Ogata's feet would not get muddy in the rain, the women came up with an idea to collect basketfuls of flowers and shower her with them before she entered the room. Unfortunately, on the scheduled date it snowed in Kabul and the scheduled flight was cancelled, so Ogata was not able to visit. Even so, observing the villagers preparing for the visit with the men and women participating together equally, Kasai felt that the men were beginning to respect the women through the implementation of projects to support women's groups.

Some Afghan women had the opportunity to be invited to Japan to observe various aspects of the country. The International Affairs Division of the Ibaraki Prefectural Government together with the Tsukuba-based NGO Kibou no Gakko invited two teachers from Kibou no Gakko in Kabul to Japan in August-November 2007. This project, Self-Support Program for the Women in Afghanistan, took place under JICA's grassroots technical cooperation, and provided the two with the opportunity to study the basics of design and sewing techniques. Kibou no Gakko was founded by Toropekai Surutani, who came from Afghanistan to Japan in 1977 and was later naturalized in Japan, opened the school in Kabul in 2003, and has provided education of sewing techniques and literacy to 700 women aged between 16 and 44. Some of them became teachers at the school, and others made sewing their livelihood. The reports by the two trainees who came to Japan show how the women faced difficulties in the war and found joy in becoming independent when they met with Kibou no Gakko. One report stated: "Knowing I could contribute to society gave me confidence. Women also have rights as humans, but courage is needed to obtain those rights. I acquired this courage in Japan." Ms. Midori Morita, who looked after the two trainees at her Atelier Morita Sewing School (in Nagareyama City, Chiba Prefecture) said, "Meeting these two women may have been the reason why I have been sewing all these

"Knowing I could contribute to society gave me confidence."

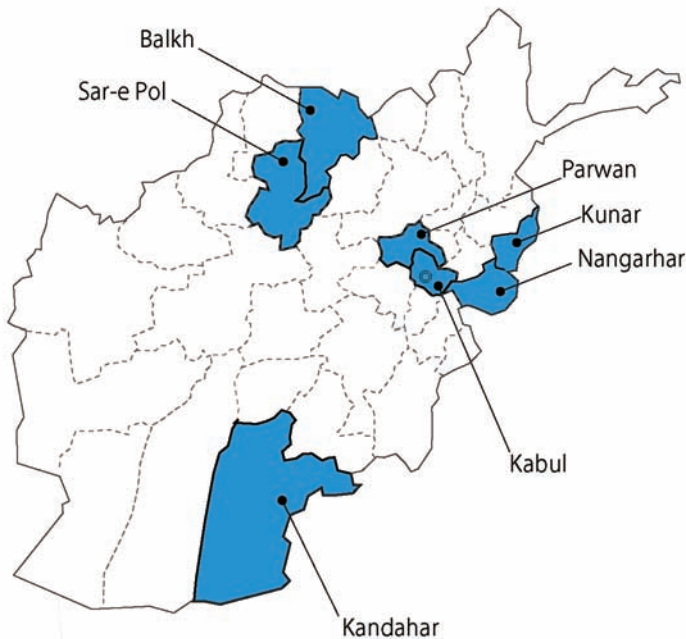
“Meeting these two women may have been the reason why I have been sewing all these years.”

years.”

Activities aimed at improving the living conditions of women, improving livelihoods, and gender equality are continuing in areas such as community development and vocational training. The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and by aid workers on the ground, even in rural areas, are expected to take root in Afghanistan and function like two wheels of a cart.

Chapter 3:

Developing the Foundations for People's Livelihoods in Rural and Urban Areas



Afghanistan is a country devastated by war, creating an urgent need for its government institutions to develop the capacity to improve the lives of its people and for economic and social infrastructure to be established. While steps had been taken to support the building of the institutions of the state, such as establishing a framework for the country or developing institutional capacity, aid that could directly reach the populace and improve their living standards was required.

In the early stages of reconstruction, Shoji Hasegawa, an infrastructure expert at JICA Office in Kabul, was told over and over by many Afghans that “Improving infrastructure, including roads, is the first priority. The delay in improving infrastructure has notably widened the gap between urban and rural areas, increasing discontent among the people, which creates a breeding ground for terrorism.” Improving infrastructure may not necessarily lead directly to public security or improved lives, but there was no doubt among the government and people that this was the area to address first. Improving the infrastructure for agriculture, which employs a large share of the population, by securing drinking and irrigation water, was also essential.

While the military might be useful for maintaining public order in the short term, unless people’s daily lives are stabilized and they can see the significance of their everyday life, and political, economic, and social stability will not last. Improving the foundations for people’s livelihoods was the key.

The delay in improving infrastructure widened the gap between urban and rural areas, increasing discontent among the people.

1) Infrastructure Improvement Reconstruction and Improvement of Trunk Roads

September 11, 2001. Toshiyuki Nose of Dai Nippon Construction was in Jakarta on a business trip. Returning to his hotel room and turning the TV on, he watched an aircraft ramming into a building. At the time, Nose was stationed in Singapore and was responsible for sales for a reconstruction assistance projects in Timor Leste, which had been devastated during the conflict at around the time of its independence from Indonesia. In April 2002, seven months after witnessing the images of 9/11 in Jakarta, Nose was instructed to take a business trip to Afghanistan. At the time, he had no idea that this trip would mark the start of ten years' involvement in construction work to support Afghanistan's recovery.

The first time Nose set foot in Kabul was in early April 2002. Flying in from Islamabad, he disembarked from a UN aircraft at Kabul International Airport, which was literally in tatters, its ceiling caved in and without lights. The baggage conveyer didn't work, and he struggled to locate his luggage. There was no heat and it was so cold he needed winter clothing, even though it was spring. The customs area was a melee. Nose was astonished to find the gateway to the nation's capital in such a state.

From 2002 to the beginning of 2005, Afghanistan was relatively peaceful overall, and Nose traveled around the country surveying needs for reconstruction support. Using Kabul as a base, he visited cities including Kandahar, Herat, Bamyan, Mazar-i-Sharif, Jalalabad, and Spin Boldak, and conducted surveys of the trunk roads that connected the cities as well as surveys of agriculture, irrigation, education, hygiene, infrastructure, airports, and other areas. He saw the effects of the war in the form of checkpoints manned by tough-looking local militia, houses destroyed by rockets and gunfights, burned out and deserted tanks and armored vehicles, worn-out farmland, and signs of uncleared landmines. However,

with the end of the civil war, which began in 1979 with the Soviet invasion, the eyes of the people seemed to be shining with the hope of a bright future. It was a time when many refugees who had escaped to Iran, Pakistan, and other neighboring countries were returning to their Afghan homeland.

Even though the war had ended, the government was not fully functioning, and when Nose visited the ministries in charge, they told him about the huge challenges they faced, yet they had not developed long-term plans. Nose thought that this country would face a long road to economic recovery, but the people all looked like tough negotiators. In one rural area, he even saw poppies being grown in a field owned by a government official. A local farmer put it pragmatically: “Rather than growing wheat at 20 cents per kilogram, growing poppies at \$200 per kilogram is food for living. In the Taliban days, there was no need for money to buy mobile phones or TV, but now we need money.”

In 2004, Nose, now based in Kandahar, was engaged in



Nose with local children in Bamiyan
Photo: Toshiyuki Nose

improving the road from Kandahar to Kabul. Later, he was in charge of improving the road from Kandahar to Herat. Faced with issues he had not experienced at previous work sites, such as the need for minesweeping and public security measures, he went about his contribution to the reconstruction of Kandahar and Afghanistan. The 50-kilometer stretch of road between Kandahar and Kabul was completed, but during the improvement work for the road between Kandahar and Herat, security in Kandahar deteriorated, and Nose was forced to evacuate Kandahar in April 2006 (see Chapter 5 for details on activities around Kandahar).

School Construction: Battling the Cold

For two years after March 2005, Nose was involved in school construction project. According to a UN survey, there was a shortage of approximately 4,000 to 6,000 schools across the country, brought on by the devastation of the civil war, and since the Taliban had considered women's education unnecessary, schools for girls did not exist. Dai Nippon Construction was awarded a contract to build 19 schools in the provinces of Kandahar, Kabul, and Parvan, with the support of the Japanese government and JICA, at the request of the Afghan government.

For Nose and his team, this was their first building construction job in Afghanistan, and they started the work not knowing what to expect. The first difficulty Nose and the team faced was securing skilled workers. During the war, many buildings had been destroyed, but they were never rebuilt, and the shortage of skilled engineers was acute. Unlike the road construction work Nose had already undertaken in Kandahar, building construction required skilled workers such as carpenters, reinforcement bar (rebar) technicians, plasterers, electrical technicians, bricklayers, and other workers with various skills. Nose tried to use the local skilled workers, but none could provide the finish needed to satisfy Nose and his team. Local construction companies all had two or

three purported engineers, but none seemed reliable, and some companies would simply stop showing up for work, because of a shortage of funds. None of the contractors had heard of test-mixing concrete. To complete the work Nose and his team ended up calling in carpenters and electricians from Mongolia, whom they had trained during construction work there, and also called on multi-skilled workers from Japan.

Security concerns were another major issue. National elections were held during the summer of 2005. Unable to assess how the elections would affect security, Nose and other aid professionals suspended their work and temporarily left the country. The deterioration in security was felt the most in Kandahar, and although various measures were taken, they were forced to evacuate during construction and did not see the completion of the school in Kandahar.

Another serious obstruction was Afghanistan's severe weather. The finishing touches to construction coincided with the winter season, and in 2006 and 2007 in particular, temperatures fell to 20 degrees Celsius below zero, with more than 40 centimeters of snow, making the work extremely difficult. To meet their deadline, Nose and his team enclosed the school building in plastic sheeting, installed more than 100 wood-burning stoves to keep the building warm around the clock, and proceeded with woodwork, plastering, and painting. There was little awareness of overtime among local labor—the need to keep going—and many wanted to go home, and there were some who did not show up because of the cold. Nose remembers the final rush to complete construction work on the school in the dead of winter as a particularly difficult time, although it turned out to be a very useful experience for subsequent projects.

Construction of Kabul International Airport Terminal

The next project for Nose and his team was the construction of Kabul International Airport Terminal, where Nose had first set

foot back in 2002, appalled at its miserable condition. The facilities of the old terminal had been built in the 1960s by engineers sent from the Soviet Union. They had been occupied by Soviet forces during their invasion and had aged during the conflicts that followed. Now, they were almost unusable. As visual flight rules were in force, operations depended on the weather, arrivals and departures were frequently delayed, and on many occasions Nose had to wait patiently for hours in a room with no air-conditioning or announcements. He would just hope to arrive or leave that day, but there were days when there were no flights at all, and many would-be passengers caught colds or came down with a fever or sore throat because of the long wait in a room with very cold marble floors in winter. Leaving the country was an intensely frustrating, exhausting full-day job, and the old terminal had a very bad reputation.

For a landlocked country like Afghanistan, securing a smooth flow of people and goods via air is very important. With the number of flights and passengers increasing annually as reconstruction proceeds, the old terminal was completely lacking the floor space and necessary facilities, and was in no condition to respond to the air traffic demand. Adding to the problems, passengers for domestic and international flights intermingled, and security was lax. Thus the decision was made to construct a new international airport terminal through grant aid of 3 billion yen from the government of Japan.

Nose and his team began construction in October 2006, with the project running approximately two years. Immediately after signing the contract for construction, Nose's team went to explain the work to the US forces who were in de facto control of Kabul Airport, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the Afghanistan Air Force, and the Border Police, who controlled security. To begin, Nose and his team requested the removal of two bonded warehouses in the area that was earmarked for the new terminal.

A great deal of air cargo was stored in these bonded warehouses, but after several twists and turns over a period of three months, the Afghan Ministry of Transportation and Civil Aviation ultimately accepted Nose's request to remove them and vacate the project site. Nose's team finally could start excavation work.

The next problem was for Nose and his team to obtain the necessary passes to move around inside the airport, and residential permits to live on the airport premises. At the time, terrorist attacks were taking place inside the city of Kabul, mostly during commuting hours and between 7 and 10 a.m., when the ISAF started their activities, and there were many suicide bombing attacks on Massoud Road, which led to the airport. To avoid the risk of being caught up in an attack, Nose felt it necessary to eliminate the need to drive during commuting hours. To do this and be safe, he believed workers should live on the airport premises 24 hours a day, borrowing land from the Air Force and building a camp for their lodgings and offices.

The airport premises were patrolled by the Border Police, but both the ISAF and US forces had erected bases inside the airport and were stationed there, so movement was highly restricted. Nose and his team had to negotiate again and again with both airport authorities and the Border Police so that construction vehicles and personnel could enter and leave the premises without being stopped by security personnel. Negotiating with the Border Police in charge of security took priority. An approach via the Ministry of Transportation and Civil Aviation failed to produce results, so in the end, Nose went directly to the top of the control tower, asked who controlled the control tower, explained to them directly the construction policy and security measures, and finally obtained consent to get a special pass for the project. However, the Border Police security guards changed every three months, and when the new guards arrived, their construction vehicles were stopped at the gate. Some soldiers even pointed guns at them. Every time this

happened, a Japanese staff accompanied by a local had to pay a visit and explain the situation. The police were suspicious of the local staff, and would only trust them if they were accompanied by a Japanese. Nose realized the harsh truth that the Afghan people continued to hold onto the memory of their long period of conflict, and still could not trust each other.

Expatriate staff were not allowed to leave the camp, so Nose set up a basketball court, a golf driving range, a billiards table, a TV room, and a Mah-jongg room inside the camp for recreation. Although the Islamic faith prohibits alcohol, Nose set up a bar inside the camp, believing that people would look the other way if it was kept within the camp.

This bar, called the “Kandahar,” was decorated with party goods Nose purchased from a hundred-yen shop (one coin shop, the equivalent to a dollar store) during a trip back to Japan, and provided a place for people to communicate with each other. The only rule inside the bar was “no business talk,” and those who violated this rule were ejected by Nose. Looking back now, Nose thinks he may have earned some enmity for that.

For the construction, locals who had been trained by Nose and his team for the school construction project joined as cooperating contractors. By this time, the Afghan engineers were becoming used to Japanese construction methods for carpentry and rebar work. However, skill levels for electrical and facility-related work were still low: for electricity, local workers were at the level of being able to do domestic wiring, and for plumbing, they were just able to connect PVC water pipes. Since there were no Afghan contractors with experience in large construction projects involving electrical facilities of the scale needed for the airport, specialists were called in from Japan for electrical, water, sewage, and air-conditioning systems and carpentry, with skilled Mongolian workers working under their supervision alongside the Afghans. Because Afghanistan was considered too risky, the team could not

find Japanese suppliers to deliver the equipment. Steel structures, cargo conveyors, boarding bridges, and baggage security check equipment had to be procured from third countries. Delivery times became a serious problem, but with a concerted effort, the project was completed within the contract term.

While living in the camp during the construction period, which lasted almost two years, there were several occasions when artillery shells landed nearby, as well as suicide bombings targeting the ISAF. The blasts could be heard very close by, sometimes shaking the windows of the building. Maintaining delivery times, quality, safety, and costs are the basic principles of a construction company, but Nose realized that in Afghanistan security management was especially important.

In June 2008, when the new terminal was approaching completion, nine Afghan officials were sent to Japan to receive training in airport management ahead of the opening. They visited Haneda Airport and Centrair (near Nagoya) in Japan as JICA trainees, studying a range of functions that the gateway to Afghanistan needed to fulfill. The trainees included the president of Kabul Airport, Border Police, a security officer, the customs chief, the quarantine chief, the chief of protocol for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and an official from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The president of Kabul International Airport took the opportunity to express his deep gratitude for the efforts that Nose and his team had made, saying, "The Japanese construction company subcontracted the local work to Afghan subcontractors, and employed 300 Afghan laborers. They also used local white marble for the exterior of the terminal building, and made good use of Afghanistan's resources."

November 6, 2008. Thanks to the efforts of Nose and his team, the Kabul International Airport Terminal celebrated its completion with a ceremony attended by President Hamid Karzai and Hideo Sato, the Japanese ambassador to Afghanistan. JICA

"The Japanese company employed 300 Afghan laborers. They also made good use of Afghanistan's resources."



Kabul International Airport Terminal. Alongside the Afghan national flags, the Japanese flag is always raised.

Photo: Gyros Corporation

President Sadako Ogata also attended as a Special Representative of the Prime Minister of Japan. President Karzai had inspected the interior of the new international terminal during its construction, and was extremely interested in the project.

The new international passenger terminal, a two-story building of approximately 8,000 square meters—about three times as large as the previous terminal—will support Afghanistan’s air travel in the future and will facilitate the movement of people and goods as the country continues along the road to recovery.

Working for a construction company and involved in aid projects on the ground, Nose says that through his contact with the citizens of Afghanistan, overcoming difficulties together, he became more aware of being Japanese, and of Japan, of its national interests, and its international and social contributions. He understood that the significance of Japan’s contributions rose in proportion to the severity of the environment, and saw Afghanistan as just an

extension of that. Nose is devoting all his energy to completing the assignment and bringing everyone home safe, maintaining good spirits despite facing the high security risks.

2) Water Resource Development

Kabul Groundwater Development

Access to safe water was another serious problem in Afghanistan. In Kabul alone, the population had risen from just 300,000 some 30 years ago to more than ten times that level, and because of this the water supply shortage was becoming serious. The amount of water supply per person per day in Kabul was said to be 30 liters, which was about the same as rural villages in Africa facing acute water shortages. The situation was considered to be very serious.

Before the Soviet invasion, the water supply system had reached every household in Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Jalalabad, and other major cities, and a payment collection system based on user contract cards had been introduced. With the Soviet invasion and the war that followed, water supply facilities fell into disrepair, and citizens were forced to rely on shallow wells and outdoor water pipes for water. To avert a water shortage, thousands of shallow wells with hand-operated pumps were dug by international NGOs in Kabul, but the matter of turning a tap and receiving clean running water in every household had become a thing of the past.

Could developing deep groundwater inside the city solve Kabul's water shortage? Shoji Hasegawa, infrastructure expert at JICA Kabul office, thought about this and phoned Hisao Ushiki, whom he had known in the past. Ushiki had visited Afghanistan in the 1970s and had contacts with many Japanese waterworks engineers. A Senior Advisor at JICA at the time, Ushiki had received local information from Kazuo Nakabayashi, another Senior Advisor from JICA who had been sent to Afghanistan in 2002. Nakabayashi

was part of the Afghanistan aid effort in the 1970s, and Ushiki had met him once in Afghanistan in 1973.

When Ushiki studied the possibility of the existence of groundwater in Kabul, he discovered that Kabul Valley was filled with sediment that was almost 1,000 meters thick. There was the possibility that an extremely large groundwater seam could exist in the deepest part of the valley, but to confirm this they needed information on the structure of deposits down to the very foundations.

Revisiting Afghanistan after 28 Years

In June 2003, Ushiki visited Afghanistan for the first time in 28 years, to undertake surveys on the water in Kabul and Kandahar.

At that time, Ushiki learned that the water situation in Kabul was indeed in a very abnormal state in another aspect. Infectious gastroenterological diseases were proliferating in the city that summer, and many Japanese had contracted typhoid. Not only was there a water shortage in Kabul, but the absence of a sewerage system had caused the widespread practice in the city of dumping sewer seepage and contaminated water into the ground, and these discharges had polluted the shallow water wells.

Russian Language to Reveal Information

In Kabul, Ushiki met with experts from the Department of Geo-Engineering and Hydrogeology (DGEH) of the Ministry of Mines and Industries. Communicating in English was difficult. When the topic became technical, the English to Dari translators were effectively helpless. Ushiki tried Persian, which he had learned in the past, but to no avail. Then he tried Russian, which he had also learned, without any expectations. All of a sudden, everything became clear, as if a fog had lifted. The engineers at DGEH were technocrats who had survived the Soviet occupation and the civil war, and had been university graduates prior to the invasion. Chief

Engineer Asadullah Yosuf was a 1970s graduate who had received his specialist education in the Russian language.

When Ushiki asked about survey results during the time of the Soviet occupation, numerous documents and drawings in Russian and Dari appeared from a corner of his office. During the civil war, many materials had been scattered and lost, and many anti-Soviet factions had immediately destroyed any Soviet materials. Many engineers had to secretly keep their documents at home. The Soviets had conducted boring surveys that reached a depth of almost 1,000 meters, and this provided an excellent insight into the state of Kabul Valley's foundation as well as its sedimentary structure.

Many engineers had to secretly keep their documents at home.

In fact, Ushiki was aware from his experience in the 1970s that Russia and the Soviet Union had had a major impact on science and technology in Afghanistan. Since Afghanistan had remained politically neutral during the Cold War, it had received considerable aid from the Soviet Union, and in higher education, the National Kabul University had both a Russian-language faction and an English-language faction in the science and technology courses. After the Soviet invasion, there was a generation gap of almost 20 years among Afghan engineers, and the Afghan engineers who survived the war and had a strong desire to carry out post-conflict reconstruction were, in fact, those from the Russian faction.

Ushiki spent two months from the summer to the fall of 2002 in Uzbekistan. When he asked about groundwater development in Afghanistan during the period of the Soviet invasion, he received many survey reports from the Institute GIDROINGEO (HydroInGeo) of the Republic of Uzbekistan. He also learned that there were many materials about Afghanistan in GIDROINGEO archives, including surveys of the Kabul area. This was because during the time of the Soviet invasion, many of the groundwater engineers and researchers working in Afghanistan were sent from the Soviet Union's Central Asian republics, such as Uzbekistan.

Discovery of Russian Survey Information

On his return to Japan, Ushiki explained to JICA Headquarters that to make progress in groundwater development, they needed to study the results of surveys conducted by the Soviets. Plans were already being proposed to draw water from the river valley branch of the Logar River or the Panjshir River watershed outside Kabul Valley. However, these plans required large-scale civil engineering work outside Kabul. Given the instability of security conditions, if deep groundwater could be used, that would likely make it easier to secure water.

To gather further information, in February 2004, a younger engineer, Shinsuke Sugino from Nissaku Co., Ltd., was sent to Afghanistan. Sugino discovered a huge volume of documents from Soviet researchers stored neatly in the archives of the Ministry of Mines and Industries. These materials were from surveys conducted between 1980 and 1983, and included deep boring histograms of 300 locations. There were boring data on five locations more than 400 meters deep, with the deepest going down approximately 700 meters. The Soviet materials stored in the Ministry of Mines and Industries had not been made public, so their existence was not known to foreign donors or other ministries, which had few interactions with the Ministry. The fact that other donors did not pay sufficient attention to materials in Russian or Dari was another factor that kept their existence concealed.

Sugino only obtained these results because he had gained the trust of the Afghans. After two short-term assignments, Sugino remained in Afghanistan for one year, from July 2004 to June 2005. One of the high-ranking officers of an Afghan state organization had sent his sons to work as Sugino's assistants. These two sons, a freshman at university and a junior in high school, both reported to Sugino's office, assisted in his work, and were under his supervision. Parents in Afghanistan had been known to place their sons with people whom they considered important in the hope that they

would learn directly from that person and develop into respectable adults. Ushiki had seen this tradition being followed in Kabul in the 1970s, but he believes that Sugino was the first one to have earned such strong trust after sizable foreign aid was resumed in 2001.

Delay of the Groundwater Development Plan Survey

Helped by Sugino's actions, data gathering slowly proceeded, and as a result, a preparatory mission for "the Study on Groundwater Resources Potential in Kabul Basin" was dispatched in February 2005, with Ushiki as its leader. Takao Kume of Sanyu Consultants Inc. joined the team. Ushiki had met Kume in Afghanistan in the 1970s, and the two were now joining forces again in Afghanistan 30 years later.

Through Sugino's efforts, it became known that Kabul Valley was filled with sedimentation almost 1,000 meters deep. However, the boring survey conducted by the Soviets was still not sufficient to estimate the deep groundwater of the entire valley. The survey by Ushiki and his team was expected to open up the possibility of using the deep groundwater. However, the political instability that followed kept delaying the project.

Ushiki believed that in a country like Afghanistan, it was important to carry out short-term plans for immediate results and improvements in living conditions, which would help build trust in state institutions and stabilize order, which would in turn create a virtuous circle of national reconstruction. He felt that by starting and continuing this process, establishing and executing medium- and long-term plans would become more realistic. He regrets that the survey could not get started a little earlier, because if the water supply in the capital had been increased right away through the use of this source, it would have had an immediate impact on the lives of the residents, and a virtuous circle could have been established, with the citizens having more trust in the government, which would have fueled their support for the government, which in turn would

have stabilized the nation.

Water Resource Development in Rural Areas

It was not just urban areas that had serious problems with water resources. The drought of 2001 had a critical impact on the lives of the people, in addition to the effects of the civil war, indicating that the water shortage was a major problem in rural areas as well. Peace Winds Japan (PWJ), which was planning to provide emergency relief in response to drought in Afghanistan even before 9/11, shifted to livelihood support for returnees once the emergency need for the affected and displaced people had eased. However, the lack of sufficient water resources was still an important issue that needed to be addressed.

PWJ started providing aid in multiple sectors—for water, basic infrastructure, the empowerment of women, and agriculture, among others—in 2002, planning for the integrated regional development of Sar-e Pol Province in the north of Afghanistan. Sar-e Pol Province, located to the southwest of Mazar-i-Sharif in Balkh Province, had sustained widespread damage in the civil war, and this together with the three-year drought that ran until 2001 had created a large number of internally displaced persons in that year. However, there was little aid coming from donors, and donor coordination meetings were organized in the UN office in Mazar-i-Sharif. Hiroshi Miyashita of PWJ insisted that it was vital to organize a donor coordination meeting particularly for Sar-e Pol from the early days of reconstruction. As representatives from Sar-e Pol did not attend meetings in Mazar-i-Sharif, Miyashita believed that donors should meet in Sar-e Pol and listen to the governor and other local representatives. The UNOCHA eventually designated PWJ as the lead agency for the province, and the donor meetings started to be held in the PWJ office in Sar-e Pol. Finally, the people of Sar-e Pol could take part in the crucial discussions on aid to their own communities.

Geologically, wells could not provide a stable water supply for the Sar-e Pol area, so they were not widely used, and many in the suburbs used water from reservoirs that collected rainwater during the rainy season. Since there was also little rainfall in 2004, fears of a water shortage had been growing for some time. As soon as the dry season came, drought prevailed, and securing water not only for farming but also for drinking was proving difficult.

As an emergency stopgap, Yuko Shibata of PWJ designed an emergency water supply project that used tank vehicles to provide safe water and prevent the spread of disease, child mortality, and the forced displacement of people who had just returned. Many donors, believing the country to already be in the reconstruction phase, had placed a higher priority on sustainability of assistance projects, and the option to provide an emergency water supply that appeared to be unsustainable was largely ignored. For Shibata, however, faced with people having difficulty obtaining daily drinking water, it was evident that the first priority was to secure water. To do this, PWJ sought the financial assistance from the Japanese government, and decided to start a water supply project using tank vehicles as emergency aid.

Sar-e Pol Province faced drought again in 2006 and once more in 2008, and PWJ again led emergency water supply projects and also assisted in the construction of water-holding tanks. However, the organization could not provide enough tanks to cover the entire area. It was a difficult situation, providing medium- to long-term support while assigning priorities to the staggering needs, and also continuing to respond to emergencies such as droughts.

Around the same time, Atsushi Kojima of PWJ was working in Sar-e Pol Province. Kojima was an expert in hydrology and proposed a regional comprehensive reconstruction project based on water resource surveys, which would measure hydrometeorology data for the Sar-e Pol River watershed in order

to share the limited water resources with local residents and utilize it for economic activities. It was estimated from the rainfall that Afghanistan's water resources could be sufficient to stabilize agricultural production if it were well managed, and by accurately measuring data, establishing a water management plan, and devising both a hardware and software infrastructure, Kojima believed that he could create a model for sustainable reconstruction.

The deterioration in security conditions halted plans for comprehensive development, but the water resource survey to organize hydrometeorology data continued from 2003 to 2011. Using a method called "water balance analysis," Kojima believed it would be possible to establish plans for practical water resource use if rainfall data could be found for the Sar-e Pol River watershed, including information on how much flowed into the river or soaked underground, and how much evaporated. To do this, it would be necessary to obtain daily data through a measurement network like the Amedas system in Japan. Creating this observation network was the first step. A total of 20 measuring points were established, including snowdepth measuring stations in three locations and a water level indicator in nine locations on the Sar-e Pol River, each about 30 to 40 kilometers apart. Kojima cooperated with his Afghan colleagues and paid weekly or monthly visits to each measuring point to confirm the observation equipment data, and to make inspections of and repairs to the equipment.

In April 2009, an agreement was signed with the Sar-e Pol Water Management Bureau under the Ministry for Water and Energy, so that this measurement network could be maintained and managed by the Afghans in the future, and the creation of irrigation maps and other joint studies commenced. Focusing on the water surveys and PWJ's expertise, the Water Management Bureau started consulting with them, asking questions such as "What is your opinion on repairs for flood damage?" and "Please provide a survey on how to distribute spring water." The

hydrometeorological observations drew the attention of the Afghan government, and the Ministry of Water and Energy has now established hydrometeorological observation points in 174 locations nationwide.

Villagers' Desire for Groundwater Development

Water is a precious commodity to the Afghan people. In many cases, water-related aid provided by Japanese NGOs turned out to be a stimulus that encouraged local residents to get involved. Local communities' active participation led to a significant success with a well drilling project conducted by the NGO JEN in Parwan Province.

In Parwan, which had accepted large numbers of returnees, access to safe water was in short supply even in the provincial capital of Charikar, and many people were dying from diarrhea. Because of this, from 2005 to 2006, JEN began a project involving digging wells in 10 villages in the Charikar district to set up a healthier and more comfortable living environment by securing safe water, especially drinking water.

Initially, 20 wells were planned. In the areas targeted for drilling, many villages were excluded from the plan because they could not be accessed by vehicle due to insufficient infrastructure and their geographical location. However, once the project started, with the help of the local residents it became possible to increase the number of wells.

To enable the passage of heavy machinery into one village's drilling site, the villagers simultaneously constructed a 500-meter stretch of road and a bridge to cross a river. The construction work on the site required the mobilization of up to 60 laborers for two to three weeks, and volunteers from the village fully satisfied that number. In another village, even though it was during the high farming season, 50 local residents helped widen the road for one to two weeks to allow heavy machinery to pass through. When

large old buildings stood on the site where the well was to be dug, many worked on their demolition under the supervision of the well management and maintenance committee, which comprised the local government official and villagers, and with the support of JEN. In another village where the passages were too narrow for heavy machinery, heavy steel pipes about three meters long were carried by hand to create a small alley through the farmland to start the drilling. With these efforts by the residents, four extra wells were ultimately drilled. In addition, after the actual work began on the wells, the residents themselves provided lodging and three daily meals to the laborers, took care of them when there were injuries, and helped secure the safety of the site.

The residents were naturally aware of the need for safe water, but once JEN began to work with the local community on the project, positioning self-help as its first priority, the local residents started to take initiatives and nurture hopes for the future. There were signs that indicated an increasing willingness among villagers to participate in helping their village grow. At a meeting JEN held with the leaders of each village before the project got underway, only around nine people were able to seriously discuss the future of the village, but this increased to around 15 after the project was implemented.

3) Kabul Metropolitan Development Urbanization Problems in the Metropolitan Kabul

Improving living conditions for Kabul residents was a major challenge. Ushiki had struggled with the issue of water, and that was certainly one problem, but the underlying factor was the rapid population increase caused by the influx of people from rural areas and the domestic and overseas returnees. From 1999, Kabul's population reportedly increased at an average annual rate of 4.0% and even though basic infrastructure began to be restored with aid from various donors starting 2002, it was impossible to provide

sufficient roads, water supply, or housing to keep up with the rapid population growth.

Kabul is landlocked and located in a basin surrounded by mountains, so there were limits to the extent to which the urban environment could be improved. The issue of water resources that had so troubled Ushiki was among the problems. JICA's water resource potential survey had calculated the upper limit using all potential water sources. The annual amount of usable living water in Kabul was 166 million cubic meters, while the average required daily amount for urban living by one person is 90 liters. This meant that the water supply was limited to five million people. That is Kabul's current population, so the city has already reached its limits. The population is expected to continue to rise, and even low estimates have it reaching 7.7 million by 2025. Potential water from groundwater alone is believed to accommodate less than four million people, and with the falling groundwater level, shallow wells have already begun to go dry.



Downtown Kabul traffic
Photo: Sayad Jan Sabawoon

Without intervention, urbanization problems will escalate with obvious negative effects, including a deterioration in order as squats turn into slums, an increase in the population of urban poor, chronic water shortages and contamination of water sources, the spread of infectious diseases due to deteriorating sanitation, environmental pollution caused by traffic jams, and resultant regional economic stagnation. With the influence of armed anti-government groups growing in Afghanistan's rural areas, destabilization of the capital through the escalation of urban problems is a serious concern that could politically and economically destabilize the entire nation.

Progress of Ideas for Area Development Plans

With the rapid urbanization, the need for the construction of a new capital, particularly given the expectation of a high number of returnees, was raised immediately after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2002.

In 2005, with the strong intentions expressed by the Afghan government, inspired by Senior Economic Advisor to the President M. Ishaq Nadiri, the concept of the Kabul metropolitan area development was proposed. In 2006, at the behest of President Karzai, the Independent Board of Kabul New City Development consisting of ministerial-level members was established, and the Dehsabz-Barikab City Development Authority (DCDA) was formed as the working organization. Gholam S. Hassanzadah, from the Afghan business sector, was chosen as the CEO for the DCDA.

The Independent Board consisted of Senior Advisor Nadiri, Minister for Urban Development Mohammad Yousef Pashtun, Minister for Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, the Kabul Mayor, and experts in urban development and urban economics. In addition, the Office of the President, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Mines, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Water and Energy, the Afghanistan Investment Support

Agency (AISA), and other officials were taking part in this initiative as supporting organizations. This structure was clear evidence of the Afghan government's strong enthusiasm for the project.

Japan would play a central role in the Kabul metropolitan area development initiative, partly because of the faith the Afghans had in the technical competence that Japan and JICA had in urban development and partly because of their respect for the history of Japan. The Afghan government looked at the experience of Japan, which had recovered from the devastation of World War II to achieve economic prosperity, and hoped that it could be used to benefit the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

As a result of negotiations between the Afghan government and the Japanese, with the presence of JICA President Sadako Ogata visiting Afghanistan in December 2007, an agreement was signed between Senior Advisor Nadiri and the Resident Representative of JICA Afghanistan Office, Masataka Nakahara, for cooperation to design a master plan for Kabul metropolitan development. In March 2008, a 25-member team of Japanese experts in areas such as urban development, water resources, roads, electricity, waste management, economics, and environmental/social considerations visited Afghanistan and worked together with Afghan experts until March 2010, completing the master plan with the support of Professor Takashi Onishi and Associate Professor Tetsuo Kidokoro of The University of Tokyo, and Professor Tetsuro Hyodo of the Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology.

Concept for New Kabul City development

One Friday in the spring of 2008, as part of the Development Study on Kabul Metropolitan Area, members of JICA Afghanistan Office viewed Kabul from the air, aboard a helicopter. During the Soviet invasion, guerrilla fighters in Afghanistan had shot down helicopters using portable infrared homing rockets (stinger missiles), and those who recalled this felt a certain nervousness

during the flight. The helicopter crew assured the members that there were no longer spare-parts for stinger missiles and the normal rockets that were occasionally fired did not have the ability to aim at a target. With its anxious members aboard, the helicopter circled the brown-colored city of Kabul.

The helicopter then left urban Kabul and headed northeast to Dehsabz. The JICA team could see the spreading below them the wadi, where rivers flowed during the rainy season. Also visible were nomads, and sheep travelling from Pakistan with the arrival of spring, as well as a single road heading north. To solve the problem of expanding the Kabul metropolis, the master plan called for the construction of a new town in this wilderness. As the helicopter flew further north, the light suddenly reflected off a flowing river, the scenery turned green, and the team was able to view a long-forgotten landscape. It was spring and flowers of apricot and almond were beginning to bloom. People were making preparations for sowing, or were gathered around mosques for Friday prayers. From high above, the JICA members could sense the remnants of the lush Kabul of old lingering in these nearby districts.

Kabul Metropolitan Area is located in a mountain valley, with a dry climate. It is an oasis with only a closed cycle for water resources. Because of this, the urban development strategy employed in other Asian metropolises, namely expanding the metropolitan zone as the population increases, is not an option. Other Asian metropolises have a monsoon climate, with a large river and flatlands in the suburbs, and abundant water resources can be developed to accommodate population growth. In Kabul, the existing urban environment will inevitably deteriorate dramatically unless new land is provided to accommodate the growing population.

Three options were discussed within the Afghan government as measures to respond to Kabul's rising population: (1) Leave the

increasing density of Kabul as is; (2) Expand the city out within a 30-100 kilometer sphere; and (3) Create a new city nearby. A study found that if they left the increasing density of Kabul as is, the urban problem would escalate. Consequently, the first option was dropped. With number two, Kabul residents wanted jobs and would not think about living 30-100 kilometers away. Moreover, relations between the government and local leaders in each area was delicate and politically challenging, so this plan was deemed quite problematic. In the end, establishing a new city in the wilderness that extends north of Kabul became the basic policy for solving the urban problem.

At a glance, there still seems to be ample capacity in the Kabul Valley, and it may seem possible to urbanize the streets within the valley to accommodate the increasing population, without developing a new city. Yet there is a mix of urban and agricultural land in the valley, and the agricultural land had kept the groundwater replenished. The valley offers only a closed system of water resources, making it necessary to respond to population increases under the constraint of restrictive water resources. According to Tsuyoshi Hashimoto of RECS International Inc., who was the central figure on the Japanese side in preparing the master plan:

The water resources of the upstream Kabul River watershed that has supported Kabul are facing their first crisis in several thousand years, and human ingenuity is being put to the test in trying to survive this. Because of the Kabul Valley's hydro-geological conditions, urbanization needs to be guided away from the Kabul River watershed, to the Panjshir River watershed. To achieve this, the new city needs to be built in the Dehsabz-Barikab region adjacent to the north of the Kabul Valley but under a different watershed.

Thoughts about the New Metropolitan Kabul

Tsuyoshi Hashimoto has a long career as a regional planning consultant in developing countries. In the late-1980s, before he had even turned 40, Hashimoto was responsible for a comprehensive development plan in southeast Anatolia for the government of Turkey, leading an international team of about 60 members from Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, and other countries. This project had to surmount numerous difficulties, including an unexplained explosion and a week-long interruption to the water supply. Hashimoto worked in Baghdad, Iraq, during the Iran-Iraq war and completed projects in situations where the security was highly unstable. Remembering the words “judgment is a science,” he believed there would always be a solution if analysis was made based on the accumulated information.

Hashimoto first set foot in Afghanistan in February 2006, and since then has been involved in the urban planning of metropolitan Kabul. After having lost bids for JICA and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) projects in Afghanistan in the past, he felt a certain thrill at just imagining himself descending into Kabul Airport looking at the peaks of the Hindu Kush below. When he did arrive in Kabul, he could see that the city had been devastated by the civil war, leaving him speechless at first. Gradually, though, he came to understand the city’s beauty with the remaining hints of its original farm-like atmosphere.

In Afghanistan, Hashimoto led a large team of 25 expert consultants, calling it “Japan United.” He claimed his job was not to “put together work” but to “put together people,” and made sure that the experienced team members were all looking in the same direction.

Future Image in the Master Plan

These 25 Japanese experts worked together with urban development specialists in Afghanistan to create the Kabul

Metropolitan Area Development Master Plan. Under Hashimoto, the Japanese consultants had built strong trust with Yousef Pashtun, Minister of Urban Development, one of the central figures on the Afghan side in the process of creating the plan. Given the security concerns, there were a number of restrictions on the activities of the Japanese consultants. At the same time, many people and organizations were participating from the Afghan side, and coordination alone proved extremely difficult. The master plan that was ultimately created through this joint effort represents difficulties overcome through profound levels of trust and presents a rich future vision for Kabul.

- To achieve peace, coexistence, and the reintegration of ethnic groups, create a new capital that is the pride of all Afghan citizens, irrespective of whether they are Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, or other ethnicities, and despite the history.
- To resolve the serious future urban concerns of Kabul, create large-scale employment through new urban development projects and the development of service industries accompanying urbanization, in order to provide jobs and a stable life for the 6.5 million residents of the Kabul metropolitan area.
- In addition to promoting the region's economic activity through urban development, make Kabul and the surrounding area, historically the crossroads of culture on the Silk Road, a center for regional trade (Global City) in landlocked Afghanistan, contribute to the economic growth of all Afghanistan, increase the revenue of the Afghan government, and provide sustainable possibilities for reconstruction development that is now dependent on aid.
- By creating a high quality of life and an environment conducive to business inside Afghanistan, prevent the drain of skilled workers to foreign countries.

Realizing the Master Plan

For the master plan to be realized, especially the construction of the new city, the broad range of required initiatives includes further detailing of urban and business plans, establishing and organizing infrastructure plans for roads and water supply, and coordination with landowners. To build the capacities of stakeholders with urban development in Afghanistan who are needed to do this work, Hashimoto and about 50 Japanese consultants and JICA staff continue to work amid strict security restrictions.

A number of problems typically surface as a project moves from the planning stage to the implementation stage. These include land sales by private developers without permits, disputes over land ownership rights, securing the initial development budget, and securing water sources for initial development. Many issues need to be addressed. Toshiyuki Iwama, the Project Leader of JICA in Kabul, said:

Of course you can't conduct a mega-project like new city development without a master plan. But in a master plan, you can draw up "dreams." In contrast, a project implementation



Iwama, JICA Project Leader for Kabul metropolitan development
Photo: Mika Tanimoto

is “reality.” For example, cadastral records are notably almost non-existent in Afghanistan, which has been devastated by many years of war. This makes land transactions very difficult. In times of war, force also trumps systems or rules. Illegal occupation of land by those with influence is very common. Though these negative aspects hamper the start, you can't blame the Afghans for not acknowledging the hard reality once they have seen the “dream.” Our role as Japanese experts is to nurture their ability to face reality head on and their ability to solve their own issues. It is easy to cover up an issue but if you do the problem will come back to haunt you in the future and it will be much stronger. What the Japanese experts and JICA staff can do is only to provide advice from the backseat to the driver, the Afghans, on how to proceed in the right direction without causing an accident. We should not take over the gas pedal and steering wheel to speed things up, and in some cases a detour may be proposed. If this will build a city with strong foundations, then this drive through the wilderness of new city construction will become an asset for Afghanistan.

What Japanese can do is only to provide advice from the backseat to the driver, the Afghans, on how to proceed.

With a future vision for Kabul, the drive continues, moving from one achievable destination to the next.

4) Rice-Based Agriculture Improvement in Jalalabad Agriculture and Rice Production in Afghanistan

About 80% of Afghanistan's population lives in rural villages, and 59% are engaged in agriculture and livestock. After more than 20 years of war, however, agricultural infrastructure has been devastated, and human resource development has stalled. Agriculture is vital to sustaining livelihoods, but people needed to overcome immense challenges to improve their productivity: crop varieties and farming methods appropriate for the climate of

Afghanistan need to be ascertained and then introduced widely to farmers. Especially in remote areas, unstable security conditions also pose a huge barrier to supporting agriculture.

In Afghanistan, rice is the second staple food after wheat, and people consider it important. It is an indispensable food, especially for celebratory occasions and for greeting guests. The volume of rice consumed has risen each year, and more than 100,000 tons are imported every year from Pakistan and other countries. Rice productivity is at an extremely low level in Afghanistan, with a yield of 2–3 tons/hectare, and taste, form, shine, and other quality characteristics are also very poor. An important issue for rice production in Afghanistan is to raise the yield and enhance the quality by upgrading post-harvest processing technologies.

JICA, which has in the past linked Japan and Afghanistan through agricultural development, decided to resume support for rice production to bring benefits directly to rural villagers. Mitsuhiro Ota, who as fate would have it already had ties with Afghanistan, worked in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province, helping to improve rice production.

Returning to Afghanistan after 28 Years

Mitsuhiro Ota visited Afghanistan three times between 1977 and 1978 as a JICA staff member. He undertook surveys to begin a project to support the Rice Development Center in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province. Ota has always been fascinated by the Silk Road and had read many books about it, and was enchanted not only by the glamorous, busy, and beautiful city of Kabul, but also by the rural areas near Jalalabad, where the people greeted guests in a relaxed and hospitable manner. He enjoyed the magnificent views of the Khyber Pass, the Asian Highway Network, the Buddhist ruins in Hadda and Bamyan, Salang Pass, and other places. After the survey, it was decided to start the project, and Ota was appointed to a long-term assignment in the Rice Development

Center in Jalalabad starting in 1979. He was very excited about the opportunity.

However, with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the rice production technologies project was canceled, and Ota's dream was dashed.

Twenty-eight years had to pass before Ota's dream could be realized again. In 2007, JICA decided to resume the Improvement of Rice-Based Agriculture in Nangarhar Province Project (RIP) in Jalalabad, where it had planned an agriculture development project 28 years ago. Ota had already retired from JICA, but was dispatched in September 2007 as team leader and rice researcher. At the same time, while bemused by the way fate had unfolded for him, Ota had to face the inescapable reality that his assignment was not taking place in the beautiful and compassionate Afghanistan he had dreamed about, but in an Afghanistan that was continuing to fight the Taliban after over 20 years of war, where no one could walk freely in the towns and rural villages, and where the people were emotionally exhausted.

When he was offered the assignment, Ota wondered what he could do given the current unstable security situation. He needed some time to make a decision. However, he made up his mind that he could not back out for security reasons, and privately promised to commit himself to improve rice-based agriculture in Afghanistan, where the people have suffered for almost 30 years and had been left behind compared to the rest of the world.

Ota always thought that if there had been no war and Japan's rice production project had been carried out 30 years ago, modern and improved rice production technologies would have been disseminated throughout Afghanistan just as it had in Pakistan and Iran, and the country would have enjoyed incomparably greater productivity than it does now. No information was available on rice, rice production, or rural villages, and the project team had to begin by trial and error, relying only on experience and intuition.

Ota made up his mind that he could not back out for security reasons.

However, the researchers, extension workers, and farmers were all hardworking and kind-hearted, just as they were 30 years ago. At the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (DAIL) in Nangarhar Province, Ota was sometimes stopped by older personnel who had been involved in building the Rice Development Center in the past. Today, Ota is very happy that he came to Afghanistan.

On September 20, 2007, Ota arrived in Kabul on a UN plane from Islamabad in Pakistan. When he disembarked, he found himself deeply moved as he took in the clear sky and the cool and comfortable air, just as he had 28 years ago. He knew that there was no going back, and was filled with a determination to accomplish his mission, no matter what the circumstances.

He was reminded of reality as soon as he entered Kabul in the bulletproof vehicle that picked him up at the airport. There was nothing left of the beautiful city he remembered; instead, he saw roads surrounded here and there by thick, concrete protective walls. Everywhere he looked there were armored trucks, military personnel, and police officers with guns in their hands, and the debris of buildings destroyed in war. When Ota arrived at the JICA office, he first received a security briefing that reminded him that they were still on the frontlines of the fight against terrorism.

On his arrival at his new post, after getting settled in, he began making courtesy visits to the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), the Governor of Nangarhar Province, the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) for the province, and the Sheshambagh Agricultural Experiment Station (SAES), which would actually carry out the project. In all cases, Ota was welcomed effusively, but as he anticipated, local officials were only expecting Japan to bring gifts, and knew little about the project. Ota felt that they were both in the same position, as he knew almost nothing about the general socioeconomic

situation or about agriculture and rice production in contemporary Afghanistan. In short, they were both starting from zero.

Jalalabad in Nangarhar Province

Nangarhar Province experiences a continental climate with large differences in temperature. In summer, the highs can reach around 45 degrees Celsius, while in winter the lows are around 0. degrees Celsius. Even though the annual rainfall is about 200 mm, the plain where the Kabul and Kunar rivers converge abounds with surface water and groundwater. Many crops are grown, including wheat in the winter and rice, vegetables, and fruits in the summer. With the support of many donors and NGOs, the region has played a major role in the agricultural development of Afghanistan.

The provincial capital of Jalalabad is a major commercial center in eastern Afghanistan, populated mainly by the Pashtuns. Located midway between Peshawar in Pakistan and Kabul, it is an important strategic location for both the government and anti-government factions. However, national and regional finances have been tight, preventing government from functioning fully given a severe shortage of money to pay officials or undertake public works. The development of electrical, water, and sewerage utilities, roads, other infrastructure, and governmental facilities and installations had been significantly delayed. The residents of the province, except for people such as business owners and government, military, and police officers, were poor and lacked job opportunities, even in the cities. In rural areas, farmers have been forced to live in even greater poverty and very severe circumstances.

Public attitudes toward the Japanese are generally good, but both the government and private sector were heavily dependent on aid from other countries. Almost no knowledge existed on self-help efforts and technology transfer from the kind of collaborative projects that has been a focus for Japan. Ota felt it was quite a challenging environment for providing assistance.

Just looking at agriculture, support was being provided by the United States at the top of the list, as well as Japan, the EU, Italy, France, Germany, and international organizations such as FAO and ICARDA. Several dozen international and domestic NGOs were also active. Government officers relied on donors for all their monetary needs with the exception of salaries, regardless of their rank or position. Only a very small number of people understood English, so interpreters were indispensable. Very few records had been kept and almost everyone spoke without confirming the facts, so accurate information was very difficult to obtain. Activities had been restricted for security reasons in various ways, exemplified by home confinements, restrictions on activities within the city, the need to obtain a permit every time someone wanted to make a trip to remote areas, a prohibition against walking and shopping, a prohibition against travelling to Kabul on land, and the requirement to use bulletproof vehicles.

Attempt to Disseminate Knowledge of Rice Production

In this environment Ota thought that the initial half-year period until April 2008, when preparatory work would begin for the first year's rice production, was the most crucial.

First, a Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC) meeting was held at MAIL in Kabul, explaining the nature and background of the project (RIP) in detail, and the tasks allocated to the Japanese side and the Afghan side in the initial year, with the aim of obtaining approval from the Afghan side. It was revealed that in Nangarhar Province, agricultural production personnel from Sheshambagh Agricultural Experiment Station (SAES) and the provincial authority (DAIL) lacked even basic knowledge about rice production except for their somewhat random experience as farmers, and that almost no systematic tests or studies, technical training, technical support, or provision of information to farmers had been done for a long time. It also became clear that offices and

other buildings and facilities could not be used unless they were renovated, that even the most important irrigation water was scarce because of pollution and a lack of water supplies, and that the only feasible method was to excavate deep wells and use groundwater.

Ota promptly decided to remove the walls of three rooms on the second floor of the SAES administration building and use the space as the project office, while integrating two rooms on the other side of the corridor to use as the office for the Director-General of SAES. This decision proved to be quite successful, enabling the Director-General and other SAES researchers and staff to interact daily with Ota and the other JICA experts. As a result, communication among the SAES staff improved dramatically. Next, agricultural field management experts arrived from Japan. They promptly developed facilities for drilling wells and installed irrigation pumps, power generators, and other facilities. Thanks to their efforts, these facilities were in place just in time for crop planting in the first year.

As a rice production expert, Ota sought to devise ways to ensure that researchers—who had almost no knowledge or skills in rice production—extension workers, and farmers understood the value of a better low-cost rice production technology and were motivated to enthusiastically participate. Ota decided to first hold seminars for all the researchers and extension workers. The seminars were about rice production technology and agricultural production, and held six times a year to coincide with the growth cycle of rice crops, providing them with a thorough grounding in the theory and practice of an improved low-cost, high-yield rice production technology. Ota and other Japanese experts developed sensible plans that considered the capacity of the Japanese experts as well as the expertise, skills, and personalities of the Afghan researchers and extension workers, and continued to give lectures. They always remembered to prepare visual materials for the seminars,



Ota working with Afghan researchers
Photo courtesy of Mitsuhiro Ota

to motivate researchers and extension workers by giving them opportunities to speak, and to make sure they understood the roles of research and dissemination and helped promote cooperation between them. Ota gradually came to feel that the capacity of the researchers and extension workers had improved, and collaboration and joint endeavors became possible as a result of the training seminars.

Over the three-and-a-half years between September 2007 and March 2011 when they worked with the Afghan researchers and extension workers, Ota and his team identified the best times to sow seeds and transplant saplings, and the optimum amount and method of fertilization for the four excellent high-yield species they selected. The project team also prompted extension workers to convey to farmers all the measures necessary to increase rice production efficiency, such as the need to remove weeds in rice paddies. The extension workers organized demonstration paddy fields in 25 villages in eight districts, and attained high yields of 6-9 tons/hectare in most of them. Training was provided at the demonstration paddy fields to farmers in neighboring communities,

gradually disseminating among the farmers of Afghanistan the improved rice production technologies that Ota and his team had devised.

As a result of the efforts of Ota and the others, the project was featured on the United Nations website and began to attract attention. The project became widely known among Afghan government officials and the donors and NGOs that were active in Afghanistan as well as, other rice growing provinces in the country. In addition, JICA President Sadako Ogata and Ambassador Shigeyuki Hiroki, visited Jalalabad to visit the project site, motivating Ota to work even harder.

Safety Precautions and a Suicide Bombing

Six months after the project got underway, Ota and his team established a temporary office in the JICA liaison office in Jalalabad. They spent half of every day working at the Sheshambagh Agricultural Experiment Station (SAES) and the other half in the liaison office. During this period, no special security measures were in place. In April 2008, the project office was relocated to the Experiment Station, and five armed guards (two at the main gate and three near the experts) were assigned to the Japanese experts during work hours.

A little after noon on May 31, 2008, when Ota was in the project office, he heard the rumbling sound of a huge explosion. Looking around the room, he saw that all the glass facing the road had been shattered by the blast, and part of the concrete beneath the office entrance had been shattered. For a moment Ota was not sure of what had happened, and ran down the stairs, as he thought that the gas container in the kitchen on the first floor exploded. The first floor was protected by an embankment at the site, so nothing was destroyed, to Ota's relief. He went outside and heard from the guard that it was a suicide bombing targeting the armored vehicles of the International Security Assistance Force

(ISAF) that was driving along National Highway No. 1. The office was located about 60 m from National Highway No. 1, past the building for animal husbandry. Fortunately, no one was injured in the office, including the Afghan staff, because the experts that were sitting close to the windows were outside, and the curtains were closed at the time. In about 15 minutes, the ISAF closed off National Highway No. 1, and gunfire could be heard. Instructed by the guards, Ota and the other project team members climbed the outside wall and evacuated through the rear alley. When Ota looked at the site of the attack, he could see the smoldering hulks of three sedan vehicles.

It was the rice planting season of the first year, and Ota's mind was preoccupied with rice production, and he did not feel that frightened. This surprised him. He just thought, "So that was a suicide bombing. The blast wave was certainly fierce." The event seems to have given him courage, and he came to believe that a bombing incident was nothing to be afraid of, because once you heard the explosion, the outcome was already clear. Ota has interpreted this as being part of the mental self-preservation instincts of human beings.

Because of the threat to public safety, security measures were gradually strengthened, necessitating that JICA staff drive in bulletproof vehicles and be escorted by security vehicles when commuting to work. For security reasons, in June 2010 they were forced to leave Taj Mahal Guest House, which they had become accustomed to, and live in rather uncomfortable temporary lodgings at JICA's liaison office in Jalalabad until the project was completed in March 2011.

Two Directors Supporting the Japanese Experts

Two government officials, Mohammad Aziz Osmanzai from the central government and M. Hussin

Safi from the provincial government, provided assistance to

Ota's agricultural project in Jalalabad.

Mohammad Aziz Osmanzai, Director-General of the Agricultural Research Institute of Afghanistan (ARIA) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), was known as a hard-to-please officer who would make difficult inquiries and requests at meetings, leaving many foreign experts feeling unsettled. From the onset, his attitude when speaking to Ota gave the impression that, "I'm not officially a member of the project team, so I know nothing about the project." Ota contacted him a number of times at his office, and conveyed to him the message that, "Even though you are not an official member, you are the most important member of the Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC), which is the highest decision-making body for implementing these plans. As such, I cannot accept it when you say that you don't know anything about the project."

Director Safi of the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) in Nangarhar Province also made a number of difficult requests. Safi had authority over personnel matters involving more than 400 subordinates, was the only officer capable of high-level discussions in English. He was a capable technocrat with a quick mind. Ota thought that nothing might be accomplished unless he gained his understanding and won him over to his side. So he tried to maintain good relations with Safi, while patiently persuading him that some things were impossible, and taking every opportunity to give him credit.

One winter day in 2008, Ota was asked to come see the two Directors. Even before saying hello, Osmanzai said, "Your plan is strange. Research on agricultural improvement should be done first, and dissemination of the method should come later. It's odd to pursue both at the same time." Hearing this comment, Ota found himself in a fury, and with his voice rising, retorted, "That's nonsense after everything we have done so far! Agricultural development is possible only with the cooperation of farmers. The

“We will improve research and production at the same time, increasing rice production by combining the two.”

farmers of this country have suffered from low productivity and poverty, without any support for research or production, for many years. They could never afford to say that research should come first. We will improve research and production at the same time, increasing rice production by combining the two.”

Looking back now, Ota thinks that perhaps Osmanzai was testing Ota. After the incident, his attitude toward Ota changed completely. Thereafter, he participated in JCC meetings, workshops, seminars, and other occasions with enthusiasm, and visited the project site a number of times without prior notice. That made Ota feel very good, and he developed excellent ties with the Director-General. Osmanzai became the most reliable partner for Ota at MAIL in Kabul, and Ota became very grateful for his support.

Seeing Ota yell at Osmanzai, Safi also began offering Ota his unreserved support, and became an excellent partner. Especially after being invited to Japan for a two-week training course in June 2008, visiting rice production fields in the town of Senhoku-cho in Akita Prefecture and research institutes in Tsukuba, Safi seemed very happy, saying Japan gave him many ideas for developing agriculture in Afghanistan. He has been a fan of Japan ever since. He would bring the local TV station staff with him at every possible opportunity such as for workshops, seminars, the opening ceremony for a seminar house, and other occasions. At such times, he would make Ota stand by him and would then speak eloquently in Pashto with a pleased expression. Ota appeared on local TV programs more than ten times, but never understood what Safi was saying, and only stood by him to make him look good, nodding solemnly from time to time.

Thanks to the full understanding, cooperation, and support of these two Directors, Ota was able to proceed smoothly with his work. The people of Afghanistan, who have survived warfare and civil war while interacting with foreigners, are generally gentle and

quiet, but Ota felt that they knew how to read people. Farmers, who are dwarfed by merchants in income, are also vocal about money. Ota began to understand that the people of Afghanistan value self-esteem and honor, work for prosperity for their families, and won't hesitate to fight if someone has dishonored them. It was as if Ota had gone back in time to the Warring States Period in Japan, when samurai warriors were fighting for their honor. In order to win trust and introduce new technologies, Ota believed that he and his team needed to face their counterparts squarely and demonstrate that they were serious and sincere about their duties, while understanding the viewpoints of Afghan personnel and listening to their stories without bias.

Tragic Accident Involving an Extension Worker

In April 2010, the extension worker Khadi Gull of Sheiwa District (formerly Kuz Kunar District) in Nangarhar Province, who had been working with Ota and his team since the start of the project, was riding his motorcycle to SAES to participate in a workshop when he was involved in a traffic accident that resulted in the amputation of one of his legs and ultimately his death a few days later.

Ota and other project members were deeply shocked. The area Gull was in charge of was close to Dara-e Noor, where a Japanese NGO Peshawar-kai (PMS) was active, so he was very familiar to the dedicated Japanese agricultural experts who were working with the NGO. From the outset of the project he praised their activities and noted that he was happy to work with the Japanese people again. He was also a popular poet who frequently impressed his colleagues with impromptu poems after seminars and other occasions, with poems that translated into, for instance, "Thanks for coming, Japanese people/You will bring happiness to Afghanistan." When Kazuya Ito of the Peshawar-kai was killed in a senseless incident in August 2008, Gull lamented his death more than anyone, and

recited a poem in homage to him, sharing his sorrow with all. In the face of Gull's sudden death, Ota and his colleagues were grief-stricken. Everyone associated with the seminar attended his funeral and expressed their condolences.

A Brief Moment of Relaxation in Jalalabad

Every year around March 21, an agricultural and sports festival organized by the Governor of Nangarhar Province is held on the grounds of the governor's public residence to celebrate Afghan New Year. For the agricultural festival, a parade exhibiting honey, Holstein cows, camels, and other special products from each region marches through the grounds and captivates the audience that packs the venue. Ota and the other project team members brought a decorated trailer from SAES and had it lead the parade, and all the researchers followed wearing white robes. They all enjoyed the festivities. On the second day, students and other young people in uniforms from athletic clubs took part in a range of sports, holding soccer matches and taekwondo, karate, and cricket tournaments all over the grounds of the governor's public residence, entertaining the audience.

During the project period, on the day the rice planting was completed in the demonstration paddy field, a rice planting festival was held to reward people for their service and pray for an abundant rice crop. Brightly colored parasols stood in the open space by the paddy field, and all the guards, drivers, workers, and researchers were invited and treated to Afghan-style lamb stew, naan bread, and chilled watermelon. On the day of the festival, everyone felt free to express their feelings of achievement and satisfaction without reserve, calling out congratulations to each other. Participants enjoyed eating their fill, and had fun with watermelon splitting and other games.

5) Activities by Peace (Japan) Medical Services (PMS)

In Nangarhar Province, the NGO Peace (Japan) Medical Services (PMS) had been active since long before Ota's team started its project, with the support of the Japanese NGO Peshawar-kai. After establishing their first clinic in Dara-e Noor in Nangarhar Province in December 1991, PMS continued to provide medical treatment, with three clinics as their base, in doctorless villages in mountainous regions. Seeing many villages hit by drought in 2000, PMS started working to secure water resources by digging 1,600 wells. The "Fund for Life" was established in October 2001, supplying emergency food aid to the 150,000 refugees who were in the country after the air raid. In February 2002, the drought still persisted, and wells and karezes (traditional groundwater channels) were deemed insufficient for supplying water. Thus, the "Green Ground Fund for Afghanistan Programme" was developed to promote agricultural development, a water supply project, and an irrigation project. The irrigation project involved a large-scale operation, but about 1.6 billion yen was raised by February 2010 through private donations from Japan that covered the entire cost, and a water canal totaling 25.5 kilometers in length was built. The canal directly irrigated an area of about 3,000 hectares, and provided a total water supply volume of 300,000 to 400,000 tons per day. Also constructed were a mosque accommodating 700 people, a madrassa accommodating 600 people, and another madrassa accommodating 180 people (for children from remote areas, orphans, and the children of poverty-stricken families). About 45,000 people visited the clinic in 2010.

Dr. Nakamura and Afghanistan

These activities were initiated by Dr. Tetsu Nakamura, the Executive Director of PMS and the Representative of Peshawar-kai in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Dr. Nakamura began working in the leprosy ward at Peshawar Mission Hospital in Peshawar,

Pakistan, in 1984, treating leprosy patients and diagnosing and treating Afghan refugees. Peshawar-kai was organized by his friends in September 1983 to support Dr. Nakamura's medical support activities in Pakistan. Today, Peshawar-kai helps PMS provide medical aid, secure water resources, and support agricultural activities, with donations amounting to about 370 million yen in 2010.

Dr. Nakamura arrived in Peshawar amidst the Afghan invasion by the former Soviet Union. He also witnessed an incident in which several hundred refugees who had fled to Pakistan froze to death overnight. The majority of the patients who visited clinics were Afghan refugees, and when he started working at a medical institute, there was a lack of facilities for disinfection. As he continued to treat refugees from Afghanistan, where no medical care was available, the thought of establishing a clinic in Afghanistan began taking shape in his mind. In 1986, Dr. Nakamura established a medical team for Afghan refugees as well as medical activities in doctorless villages in Afghanistan. The team established clinics at three locations in the mountainous areas of northeastern Afghanistan—in Dara-e-Noor in 1991, and later in Dara-e-Pech, and Dara-e-Wama—and started providing medical care free of charge. In 1998, PMS Hospital was built in Peshawar as the main hospital.

Although Dr. Nakamura started providing medical support, a severe drought hit Afghanistan in 2000 and forced him to change his activities. Starting May 2000, the Dara-e-Noor PMS Clinic in Afghanistan remained extremely busy. With the great drought that struck the region, many lost their lives due to dysentery and the other diseases that accompany diarrhea. According to WHO, the drought “extended over a wide region from Iran to Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, northern India, and China. The most seriously damaged country was Afghanistan, with 12 million people

affected, including 4 million people on the verge of starvation and 1 million estimated to be on the verge of death.” Realizing that drinking water needed to be secured urgently, PMS began work to revive exhausted wells and karezes (traditional groundwater channels, or horizontal wells). Dr. Nakamura believed, “Safe water and food are more valuable than 100 clinics. Diseases may be treated later, but without water, people will die.” The activities continued, and in the end 1,600 wells were constructed.

However, the international circumstances surrounding Afghanistan also changed. When the United States initiated sanctions against Afghanistan in January 2001, many Western NGOs began withdrawing. PMS stayed, and established temporary emergency clinics at five locations in Kabul. PMS also provided food aid in Kabul when US forces bombed the city in October 2001.

When full support for restoring Afghanistan got underway, many NGOs then began leaving Peshawar and relocating to Kabul. Dr. Nakamura thought, “If everyone comes flooding in, someone will take care of what needs to be done. Go where others dare not go. Do what others dare not do.” He decided to close his temporary clinics in Kabul in April 2002, and concentrate his activities on rural areas in eastern Afghanistan. The avalanche of international relief aid to Afghanistan resulted in the side effect of soaring salaries of physicians and engineers, gradually complicating medical aid activities. Afterward, PMS was forced to transfer its clinics to other NGOs or withdraw, given the difficulty of securing human resources, the government policy to uniformly contract out health services to NGOs, and other factors.

However, at the root of the issues involving medical aid was the fundamental issue of the water shortage. Around this time Dr. Nakamura stated the following: “We are a medical organization,

“Safe water and food are more valuable than 100 clinics. Diseases may be treated later, but without water, people will die.”

“Go where others dare not go. Do what others dare not do.”

but have felt hollowed out while conducting our medical activities. We are aware that if there was water, clean drinking water, and sufficient food, 80-90% of those who died would still be alive. Because of this bitter experience, we have been fighting against drought.”

Constructing Irrigation Canals

The drought did not subside, exhausting not only the surface water but also the groundwater. The drinking water sources secured by PMS had exceeded 1,000 sites by June 2003, and continued to increase. However, many required re-excavation and maintenance was very difficult because the groundwater level had dropped. The falling groundwater level kept PMS busy with maintenance work, and the number of water sources secured by digging large wells and restoring karezes started leveling off at around 1,400. Reports started coming in that wealthy landowners were pumping out large volumes of groundwater, and in September 2005, the Karzai administration made the unusual announcement of prohibiting irrigation using groundwater.

It became necessary for PMS to radically change its policy. Increasing numbers of farmers suffering from water shortages started cultivating poppies, a crop that is durable in arid climates and brings about 100 times the cash income compared to wheat. Poppy cultivation, which had been almost completely abandoned during the reign of the Taliban, was revived on a large scale due to the drought. Those who were unable to sustain their livelihoods due to the water shortage left rural villages and relocated to large cities in other parts of Afghanistan, or left the country and became refugees. Many were unable to resettle after returning, and again seek refuge outside of the country.

“There could be no Afghan revival without the restoration of agriculture in the rural villages.”

Convinced that there could be no Afghan revival without the restoration of agriculture in the rural villages, in February 2002, Dr. Nakamura decided to undertake agricultural development, a water

supply project, and an irrigation project, and designed the “Green Ground Fund for Afghanistan Programme”. For the irrigation project in particular, civil engineering work on an unprecedented scale for the PMS was required, because the groundwater was becoming exhausted. The work involved constructing diversion weirs and irrigation canals to intake river water and revive regions where the rivers had run dry. One irrigation canal considered was in the area where the former Daoud administration had attempted an irrigation project 35 years ago but failed, and no one had worked on it since. Construction of this irrigation canal started in March 2003 at Jalibaba in the Sheiwa District in Kunar Province. It was called the Marwarid Canal, using a word meaning “pearl.”

The local Kunar River is a tributary of the Indus River, known for its rapid flow. Improving the river was expected to be difficult. The solution Dr. Nakamura found was the traditional irrigation technology of Japan. River conditions differ between countries that have extensive plains like Russia, Europe, and North America, and mountainous countries like Afghanistan. Even if excellent floodgates and water channels were built, they would all be washed away if the inlet weirs were insufficient. Not only that, without functional inlet weir, the depth and form of the river would be altered and the river water would be unable to be used in the winter. Both Japan and Afghanistan have many rapid rivers with water levels that vary greatly between seasons, and the Japanese water inlet technologies seemed appropriate for the environment of Afghanistan.

In search of clues, when he returned to Japan, Dr. Nakamura visited and observed irrigation facilities, especially those with a long history, whenever he had the chance. He studied and observed traditional construction methods that used natural materials and that were built by hand. He eventually found Yamada Weir, which is a “oblique dam” along the Chikugo River in the city of Asakura,

Fukuoka Prefecture, as an appropriate model for his project. When he observed Yamada Weir, Dr. Nakamura also confirmed that the landform around the weir was similar to that in Jalibaba, where the inlet weir was planned to be built. Utilizing the oblique dam design as a model, PMS performed construction work in which the river flow was backed up by filling-in stone materials between the inlet weir and an island (sandbank) in the Kunar River, to maintain a stable water supply despite significant water-level differences between summer and winter (2-4 meters).

Dr. Nakamura thought the Marwarid Canal would attract a lot of attention if it was completed successfully, so it would be ideal to use a construction method that anyone could apply with a little bit of money and ingenuity. As winter snowfall had decreased in Afghanistan in recent years, there wasn't much snow accumulation. Therefore, the snow that had accumulated in the mountains melted almost immediately when spring arrived, completely transforming the Kunar River into a gushing, muddy stream from the clear stream of winter. All the snow would melt away before summer arrived, so the local farming—which relied on snowmelt—had suffered severe water shortages since summer. Innovative river water inlet technologies that accommodated these changes in climatic conditions had been in demand. Dr. Nakamura thought that if he could find a technology that anyone could duplicate, it would be possible to diffuse the technique throughout Afghanistan. A classic Japanese construction method, jakago (stone basket), was applied where possible for that reason, and it was particularly found to be applicable in Afghanistan, where stone materials are abundant.

Constructing irrigation canals involves combating the overwhelming forces of nature. Completed weirs have often needed repairs after floods. Canals were sometimes destroyed after heavy rain, and filled with sediment. Human persistence is essential

in the face of the forces of nature.

The canal also offered job opportunities to refugees returning from Pakistan. Even though they were working only by hand at first, many Afghans are excellent stone workers. Relying on their techniques, construction work on the irrigation canal was done in a way that suited the local conditions. The canal collapsed from time to time, but Afghan workers efficiently repaired it. Having grown up watching the water, soil, and stones since infancy, they seem to have acquired the skills to live in an arid area. At old facilities built in rural Japanese villages, Dr. Nakamura would always find stone monuments commemorating the fact that “xx (number of) villagers volunteered to complete this work.” He felt it must be common in any country that villagers come together and cooperate to build infrastructure for their agricultural livelihoods.

A total of 600,000 Afghan farmers worked to build the irrigation canal, and it took seven years before it was completed in February 2010. The canal turned what had been an empty wilderness into a verdant land, and about 200,000 people returned to the area.

Dr. Nakamura commented that, “We don’t have a specific philosophy for aid. However, the bottom line is to stand in the shoes of the local people, honor their culture and values, and work for the good of the people in that area.”

“The bottom line is to stand in the shoes of the local people, honor their culture and values, and work for the good of the people.”

Collaboration between PMS and JICA

One day in the fall of 2009, Director General Masataka Nakahara of JICA’s South Asia Department attended a lecture by Dr. Nakamura of Peshawar-kai. Nakahara was a former Resident Representative of the JICA office in Afghanistan, and was very familiar with Dr. Nakamura’s activities. After the lecture, he was able to speak with Dr. Nakamura for the first time. The two discussed their activities in Afghanistan, and exchanged opinions

“Today, Afghanistan is in need of long-term assistance.”

about how they could support the people of Afghanistan going forward. Dr. Nakamura told Nakahara that, “There is no difference between NGOs and JICA when it comes to helping the people of Afghanistan. PMS has continued to provide assistance with about 300 million yen per year of its own funds, but NGOs cannot conduct projects on a larger scale. Today, Afghanistan is in need of long-term assistance. Only public organizations like JICA can continue to carry out projects of a certain scale that last for 10 or 20 years. For projects such as river improvement works, where interests conflict among people and regions, the national initiative is necessary to unite the people. In this regard, JICA can play an important role, because it is connected with the central government.” Nakahara decided to consider whether it might be possible to establish collaboration between the activities Dr. Nakamura was pursuing and JICA’s assistance work.

“Without the well dug by PMS, the returnees would have all gone back to Pakistan.”

In January 2010, Nobuhiko Hanazato arrived at JICA Afghanistan Office. Hanazato was returning to Afghanistan for the first time in about eight years, since coming to Kabul for emergency needs assessment in December 2001, immediately before the establishment of the interim administration. Hanazato had heard about PMS from Nakahara, and had decided to look for a way to collaborate on the ground. For security reasons, the activities of JICA experts had been restricted in terms of geographical areas, and it had been quite difficult for these experts to pursue technical cooperation. Under these circumstances, collaborating with an NGO that had been active on the ground for many years and that had won the trust of the local people seemed more than they could ask for. When Hanazato visited Jalalabad in early February to look around the villages, he found a well dug by PMS. What’s more, a man who had served as a driver for Dr. Nakamura appeared in front of him. The man said that without the well dug by PMS, the returnees in these communities would have all gone

back to Pakistan. Hanazato reconfirmed that the activities of Dr. Nakamura and his team had had a substantial impact on the local communities, and an overwhelming number of people appreciated them. Thanks to their efforts, the confidence of the local people in the Japanese seemed quite firm.

Hanazato revisited Jalalabad at the end of June, to observe the Marwarid Canal and the pilot farm at Gamberi desert built by PMS, and reconfirmed their impact on the local communities. Hanazato was the first Japanese national in the public organizations to observe the PMS project sites. Dr. Nakamura said, "In the future, we should cooperate with any conscientious person. The main mission is to help as many Afghan people in trouble as possible, rather than creating moving stories for ourselves. We should share the spirit and decency of the Japanese people."

To enable collaboration between PMS and JICA, Hanazato decided to consult, along with PMS, with the government of Nangarhar Province regarding future assistance. Since JICA assistance is conducted as bilateral ODA projects between the Japanese and Afghan governments, coordination with the Afghan government is necessary. Hanazato conveyed to the governor of Nangarhar Province that JICA wished to cooperate with PMS on the projects they had been pursuing as an NGO. The governor's name was Gul Agha Sherzai. He was the one who had supported JICA's assistance projects in Kandahar when he was the governor of Kandahar Province. (See Chapter 5.)

There was no need to explain to the governor about the importance and significance of the Marwarid Canal, since he had attended the opening ceremony at the site. Hanazato felt that he and Governor Gul Agha shared the same feeling of respect toward Dr. Nakamura, who had accomplished its construction. In PMS's assistance projects to date, people who needed water had participated in building their own irrigation facilities. Thanks to their efforts, the people no longer had trouble making a living,

and in the end were able to obtain their own farmland. The PMS project made a remarkable contribution, not only to fighting drought and developing rural villages, but also to accommodating returnees as workers and promoting their resettlement. In addition, as many as 600 people had participated over seven years as workers, leaving behind a large group who has experience working together to achieve development as the common objective. This would enhance the stability in the region. If JICA and PMS collaborated to integrate the accumulated technologies, knowledge, and experience of these 600 people into new development projects, it would be even more helpful in coordinating with the government and securing sufficient funds.

Through the discussions with Governor Gul Agha, JICA and PMS agreed to offer assistance mainly for the construction of the second Kama inlet weir and the reconstruction of the main irrigation canal. When these facilities are completed, a stable water supply will be possible for a total of about 280,000 people, including 180,000 in the Kama District and 100,000 in the Besud District.

Severe Flooding in the Besud District

A huge flood hit the Besud District in August 2010, with the death toll totaling about 100 people along the Kunar River. Flood damage was evident at various locations along the Marwarid Canal developed by PMS. Inlet weirs needed repairs and the canal had collapsed in varying degrees in several places. The flood was on a much larger scale than Dr. Nakamura had assumed. In Afghanistan, river improvement work is possible only between late autumn and early spring, when the water level becomes low. If the work was not completed during that period, it would be necessary to wait a year. Construction work on an unprecedented scale was needed in the fall and winter of 2010, and Dr. Nakamura paid a visit to the shura (council of elders) at Kama, seeking cooperation from

the residents. The shura at Kama told him it would be all right to skip a wheat harvest for the winter, and asked him to complete the renovation work during the period. It must have been a difficult decision, because many farmers were suffering from starvation. In any case, it was decided to start the work, since the residents of the local communities had offered to help.

Hanazato, who had returned to Kabul, was busy explaining the situation to the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) and the Ministry of Water and Energy, at the same time coordinating with USAID, which seemed to be interested in similar projects. He also needed to take steps to ensure security, and to coordinate other matters. As the project scale of about 3 million US dollars was unusually large for JICA assistance to a local NGO, coordination within JICA was also complex. Hanazato signed an agreement with PMS on October 31, after completing all the coordination work. The enormous flood had changed the river channel, and if the embankment in Besud, on the opposite bank of Kama, was not completed during the winter, the next summer would probably bring a major disaster due to the snowmelt. The work needed to be completed in the short period between November and February of the following year, when the water level

“It would be all right to skip a wheat harvest for the winter. Let us complete the renovation work during the period.”



Farmers working on inlet weir construction
Photo: Peace (Japan) Medical Services

went down. Hanazato had faith in Dr. Nakamura, who had risked his life to assist the Afghan people in spite of the many critical situations he had faced. Hanazato had determined to support him.

Completion of the Inlet at Main Kama Canal

The construction work on the inlet weir in the Kama District was completed on April 12, 2011. The local farmers worked to complete the weir until just before the start of the flood season in spring. What made completion possible in such a short period of time was the high morale among PMS staff members and the sophisticated technologies nurtured through eight years of practice. Compared to when the construction of the Marwarid Canal started in 2003, several hundred workers had acquired a range of skills and could now take responsibility even if all the Japanese staff members withdrew. This accomplishment was the evidence of the capacity that the people of the local communities had acquired.

The completion ceremony was scheduled for March, but nevertheless was held on April 12, because Governor Gul Agha insisted that he wanted to attend and thank the PMS and JICA personnel in person. Farmers were genuinely concerned about the



Governor Gul Agha and Dr. Nakamura at the completion ceremony
Photo: Peace (Japan) Medical Services

Great East Japan Earthquake that had struck immediately before completion, and they wanted to keep the ceremony as simple as possible. The facial expression of the farmers showed their feeling of accomplishment that an irrigation system had been completed enabling food to be supplied to 300,000 people. Even though Hanazato was sadly unable to attend the ceremony, he wrote a cordial message to convey his gratitude to the farmers, and the feelings of the Japanese people.

To Dr. Nakamura and the People of PMS, Kama, and Besud:

Congratulations on the completion ceremony for the construction work. Please accept my best wishes.

Your courage to challenge the river and water, by compromising your wheat planting for the season, is about to yield fruit. The completion of this work makes water available to 300,000 farmers in Kama, and will protect the lives of the people of Besud on the opposite bank from floods in the summer. It is a miracle. Let me express my deepest feelings of respect for Dr. Nakamura and to all of you in the local communities who made this decision and completed the actual construction work.

Now, Japan is facing a crisis it has never before experienced. It is a fight against earthquake and tsunami damage, and to contain radioactivity. It is a fight against a disaster of an unprecedented scale.

The Japanese people are doing their best. They are sharing water and food, building shelters, and trying to survive so they can resume their livelihoods. They are fighting for their lives against the fear caused by the radiation, in order to prevent the damage from getting worse.

Under these circumstances, nothing makes us happier than

the smiles of the people of Afghanistan, brought about by completing the construction work with the assistance of Dr. Nakamura and the Japanese people. Your happiness energizes our people. The peace and stability among you encourages the Japanese people to overcome their own difficulties and get Japan back on its feet again.

Japan hopes to continue assisting the people of Afghanistan, in direct ways.

Please use the water to produce many farm products and enjoy peaceful lives. That would bring joy to the Japanese people and give us encouragement.

I look forward to seeing your golden wheat fields some day.

Wishing you happiness and many gifts from the earth.

April 12, 2011

Nobuhiko Hanazato

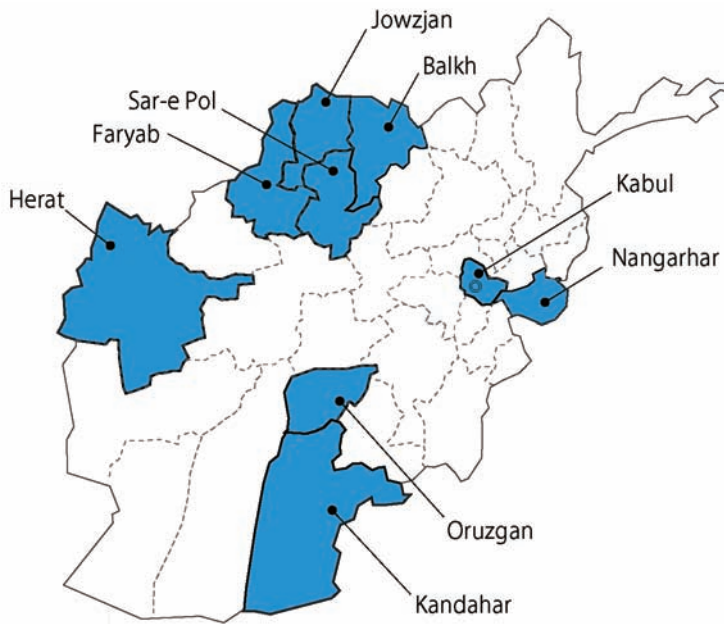
Resident Representative

JICA Afghanistan Office

Through the PMS irrigation projects, including the joint projects with JICA, 150,000 people—equivalent to half the population—returned to the Kama District in Nangarhar Province and resumed farming. An inlet weir was completed using a new construction method for the area, where food productivity had declined because conventional water inlet technologies were unable to cope with the recent climate changes. This newly introduced technology has enabled the people to overcome the process of desertification. Dr. Nakamura expects the construction method to be widely applied in Afghanistan, as the successful operation of Kama Inlet Weir will draw many visitors. As a tip for continuing large-scale projects, Dr. Nakamura says, “Continue to pay attention to what is going on, without being afraid to make mistakes. Never give up, even if you fail many times.”

“Continue to pay attention to what is going on, without being afraid to make mistakes. Never give up, even if you fail many times.”

Efforts to Rebuild and Improve Education



While improving the social infrastructure supporting daily life would provide a large “peace dividend” for Afghanistan’s population, education was another important way of enriching people’s lives and giving them hope for the future. Many donors and NGOs were actively involved in supporting education, but it was very difficult to spread its effects throughout the entire territory of Afghanistan due to problems with geography, security conditions, etc. In addition, while priority was placed on providing widespread primary education, many socially vulnerable people were being deprived of the opportunity to receive an education.

1) Primary Education

Primary Education in Afghanistan

By the end of 2001, 60% of the around 7,000 schools in Afghanistan had been damaged in some way. Despite this poor

environment, UNICEF started a Back to School campaign, which resulted in a large number of school-age children returning to school when the schools were reopened on March 23, 2002. The number attending general education schools (1st grade to 12th grade), which was 2.3 million in 2002, had increased to 6.2 million by 2008. However, a shortage of classrooms forced classes to be held in two or three shifts. These so-called classrooms were varied in their conditions; some were held inside tents, or just on rugs laid on the ground. Yet even though it was hot in summer and cold in winter, the children attending these schools had smiles on their faces.

Not only was there a shortage of classrooms, but it was also clear that there was a shortage of teachers able to teach the children. To supplement this teacher shortage, people were rushed into teaching jobs regardless of their knowledge or experience. The number of teachers engaged in basic education numbered 21,000 in 2001; by 2005 it had increased to 128,000. Yet from 2002 to 2005, the number of teachers trained in the Teacher Training College (TTC) was a meager 1,646. Although some may have been educated before the war, there is no question that there were quite a few teachers without qualifications.

A new curriculum was also introduced in Afghanistan in June 2003 with the support of UNICEF and UNESCO. New textbooks also began to be developed in June 2003 with financial assistance from UNESCO and technical assistance from the Teachers College, Columbia University. By June 2007, the development of textbooks for primary school (1st to 6th grade) had almost been completed. Not only were textbooks changed, but new subjects were also introduced. Teaching with unknown and untried methods had become a serious challenge in an environment full of unqualified teachers.

Challenges of Creating a Teacher Training Manual

To improve teacher quality, the Afghan Ministry of Education and JICA agreed to implement a “Strengthening Teacher Education Program” (STEP) to prepare tutorials and training manuals for teachers, conduct teacher training, and make policy recommendations regarding teacher training. Yumiko Ono of the Naruto University of Education, an educational expert who had joined the project, observed during her visit to primary school classes in Kabul in July and August 2005 that even though teachers had been trained through donor support, many had misunderstood “pupil centered” to mean “group learning session,” and had formed groups without giving clear assignments. Some were simply reading the textbooks aloud. She realized the difficulty of standardizing teacher quality.

The first priority for the project was to prepare teacher training manuals. A Training Package Development Team (TPDT) put



Japanese expert discussing the content of teacher training manual

together by Afghan Ministry of Education began preparing training manuals for teachers. From July 7, 2005, to February 28, 2006, the team met for approximately three hours three days a week, starting at 8:30 a.m., in a corner of the cafeteria on the top floor of the Ministry. Three TPDT members were assigned to each subject. Along with presently serving teachers, the Afghan members came from diverse backgrounds such as the Basic Education Department, the Curriculum Development Department, TTCs, and the Teacher Upgrading Institute (TUI). They were joined by Yumiko Ono and other experts from Japan.

Deciding on a format was not an easy task, and Ono could not simply chalk that up to culture shock. Yet Afghanistan had many unique ideas and educational mechanisms that were quite different from Japan.

For example, the Afghan people considered writing in textbooks to be inexcusable. It was strictly forbidden, as was simply noting something in red on a photocopy. For them, evaluation meant grading pupils, and they had almost no concept of using evaluations to measure how teachers achieved class objectives. It was also very rare for a child with low academic performance to be called in a class. To give an incorrect answer in class was taboo, and teachers never asked themselves why a child got it wrong or considered whether it might be due to a problem with their teaching. To begin with, teachers asked pupils very few questions. Because lessons were quite short—about 20 to 25 minutes—some things couldn't be helped; however, in many cases, teachers simply read from the textbook, pupils just listened, and then read the textbook aloud after the teacher. In rare cases when a teacher asked a pupil to solve a problem at the blackboard, the teacher would stay at the side of the blackboard, focusing on the chosen pupil, and the other pupils would just sit and look at the blackboard.

What was especially difficult for Ono was making the Afghans understand the concept that a class should consist of a structure

consisting of “introduction, development, and conclusion.” It is hard to say how much energy Ono spent getting TPDT members to understand this concept. In the classes she observed, more than five minutes would be spent on taking attendance and checking homework at the beginning of the lesson, and once this time was taken away from an already short class session, it was impossible to plan activities to introduce new content to pupils. Also, teachers never put on record which children made mistakes in their homework or which problems children often got wrong to use as a reference for improving teaching methods.

Another thing that bothered Ono was the concept of time. The Afghan people did not calculate the amount of work that must be done in a day by calculating backwards from the due date. Also, once an argument began, it didn’t matter if one person’s opinion was the same as someone else’s. They would carry on fervently declaring their opinion, without any regard to time, and when working hours were up, they would go out of the office and go home, regardless of whether or not the day’s work had been completed.

Ono and other Japanese experts would listen intently to the translator to try and understand what was being debated, but could not always understand the translator’s English. Their communication with Afghan colleagues solely depends on the interpreter’s ability. As some technical terms in mathematics and science do not exist in Dari, and not all translators have specific knowledge of mathematics and science, giving advice from Japanese experts through translators was sometimes difficult. Translators’ wages seemed to be in proportion to their abilities, yet competent, highly paid translators were already being employed by international organizations, and were hard to find.

Lessons for the Project Team

As shown, the project was challenging; however, the project

Afghan members can explain its purpose, intent, structure, effects, and other details.

were successful in encouraging active engagement and building capacity of local human resources. It gave the Afghan TPDT members immense confidence to have played a big part in helping to complete the teacher training manual. While the manual may look too elementary to international experts, it can easily be understood by teachers in Afghanistan. There would have been no point in creating a training manual that met high international standards if its content couldn't be understood by educational professionals in Afghanistan. If it couldn't be understood by local teachers, it wouldn't be used. For Ono, that would be a meaningless and complacent exercise. While the quality of the training manual they created might not have been very high, the TPDT members involved in its development could explain its purpose, intent, structure, effects, and other details.

In fact, the training manual changed schoolteachers' attitudes. Project staff members who were visiting Jalalabad to conduct an impact study on the training manual discovered that teachers at Bibi Hawa Girls School were holding voluntary in-school training sessions. Since March 20, 2010, two groups—one for the lower grades (grades 1–3) and the other for the upper grades (4–6)—had been conducting weekly in-school training sessions before the start of class or work using the manual Ono had created with her Afghan colleagues. As far as Ono knew, this was the first case in Afghanistan where teachers had started conducting their own voluntary training sessions.

According to the principal of Bibi Hawa Girls School, the impetus for these training sessions came from a training program he attended in Japan in January 2010, where he was impressed at the consistency among Japanese teachers in the composition and quality of the lessons. As he conveyed this impression to his teaching staff, they started their program soon afterward. Along with the principal's suggestion, teachers realized they had to

improve their capacity to increase students' knowledge because the Teacher Education Department (TED) was going to be conducting a teacher competency test. Yet although the principal was aware of the benefits of the training manuals and many teachers were using them, there were not enough copies to distribute to all teachers. To overcome the handicap of the shortage of manuals, the teachers formed a voluntary study group using the manual's lesson framework and instruction methods so all teachers could then adopt them in their lessons.

This was more than Ono had hoped for. The unique example of the Bibi Hawa Girls School, which started out autonomously and voluntarily amid serious security concerns, has become a “window of hope” for improving and developing education in Afghanistan, and Ono firmly believes that helping this seed grow and spread to surrounding schools is a matter of the highest priority.

Start of Teacher Training

Ono and her team started developing their teacher training manual in December 2005. The training was to be implemented using a cascade model, with TPDT members as the core trainers of 10,000 teachers in five provinces and one city¹. The cascade model disseminated training content from urban to rural areas in several stages. First, representatives from each region came to Kabul to be trained as master trainers. These master trainers then returned to their home areas and trained the teachers there, and those teachers then conducted training sessions in their districts. Through these steps, training content could be widely distributed.

Short-term teacher training using the training manual was scheduled to start in each area in July 2006. In June, the master trainers from each area came to Kabul to attend an 11-day training program conducted by the core trainers. By the end of the project, 10,000 teachers had been trained, as originally planned.

¹ Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Balkh, and Nangarhar Provinces, and City of Kabul.

While the cascade model helped training to be widely disseminated, there was the question of whether the content could be conveyed effectively. The cascade model was used out of necessity due to the unique problem of Afghanistan's security situation, which restricted people's freedom of movement. Under normal circumstances the cascade model is said to be effective in conveying information and knowledge, but may not be as effective in improving quality of teaching. Continued support—specifically, guidance based on observing classes—would be more effective in changing teacher behavior in the classrooms, as would conducting training closer to schools and classrooms. Given this difficult environment, Ono and her colleagues tried to maximize the training benefit by listing the objectives and educational aids for each session, what the trainers should mention, what questions they should ask, etc., and devising ways to include simulated lessons in their lectures.

Support for Teacher Training

From September 2007 to January 2011, Afghanistan's



Japanese expert giving guidance on a science experiment

“Strengthening Teacher Education Project” entered its second phase (hereinafter, “STEP 2”), providing tutorials and training support for presently serving teachers. In the tutorials for these teachers, the method used in STEP 1 to support the development of a training manual for grades 1 through 3 was followed, and training manuals for major subjects in grades 4–6 were created. To support the Teacher Training College (TTC), Kensuke Chikamori of the Naruto University of Education, an expert on training manual development in STEP 2, developed teacher guides for mathematics and science (physics, chemistry, biology) along with his fellow Japanese experts in mathematics, chemistry, and biology. Based on these teacher guides, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology teachers at Sayed Jamaluddin TTC (STTC) in Kabul developed lecture notes and student learning materials in conjunction with Japanese experts.

While the TTC learning materials were being developed, to start testing the text prototypes that had been created and to directly support the TTC teaching staff, remote lectures were conducted through video conferencing. JICA’s Shikoku office in Takamatsu, the Naruto University of Education, and JICA’s office in Afghanistan were connected through the JICA-Net video conference system, and university teaching staff specializing in mathematics, physics, and biology discussed the teaching methods for their subjects with the teaching staff of the STTC and TTCs in Jalalabad and Bamyan. Five remote lectures in mathematics were held in March 2008, and a total of ten remote lectures (five in mathematics, three in physics, and two in biology) had been held by May 2010. To overcome the language barrier in these remote lectures, and increase participants’ understanding, Chikamori and his colleagues incorporated an experiment that showed the physical properties of light. TTC teaching staff who had participated in this remote lecture later facilitated a sub-session (divided into subjects) during a TTC Text Sharing Workshop in Afghanistan, and

their sub-sessions were more productive than others. After 2007, textbook development training sessions for Afghan specialists were held three times a year at the Naruto University of Education in Japan.

The completed TTC textbooks were shared with TTCs across the country through a workshop held at STTC in August 2010. Approximately 140 teachers in mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology from the TTCs of 33 out of 34 Afghanistan provinces attended this workshop. Then, two months after the workshop, Chikamori and other Japanese experts visited TTCs in Mazar-i-Sharif, Bamyan, and Jalalabad to conduct surveys on teachers' use of the texts and evaluate their lessons using an objective evaluation method called a "rubric."

There were regional differences in how texts were used. At Balkh TTC (Mazar-i-Sharif), the teaching staff who attended the workshop immediately shared the teaching text with their colleagues. However, at Bamyan TTC and Nangarhar TTC (Jalalabad), teaching staff rarely shared the texts they received at the workshop. Interviews revealed that at Bamyan TTC, "Texts were not shared by the workshop participants" and "There were no instructions or indications from the Teacher Education Department (TED) on the use of texts in the lessons."

For the evaluations on lectures, 21 cases were observed. Regarding the structure of the lectures and their expansion, it was confirmed that all the TTC teaching staff had reached the desired level. In particular, teaching staff at both Balkh and Nangarhar TTCs had relatively high teaching skills, exceeding those at Bamyan TTC.

Chikamori and his colleagues also realized that each TTC had a different educational environment, including its natural environment, and its own unique features. One example of this was the fact that the school season had not started yet at Nangarhar TTC, because the progression of the school term differed by

region. Ono and Chikamori felt strongly that this regional diversity among TTCs had to be fully taken into consideration when studying support plans and methods, even though the objective to train teachers remained the same.

Hope for the Future Observed at Classrooms

Chikamori, who had observed class lectures in Afghan schools on various occasions, witnessed some unforgettable ones.

One of these was a mathematics class that Chikamori observed during a visit to the Bamyān TTC. The expansion of a mathematical formula was indicated in detail, step by step, and Chikamori, who did not understand Dari, could understand the lesson content, which enabled him to overcome the language barrier and enjoy the class. This class, taught by a mathematics teacher Mahmoudi, was the first time Chikamori really felt that mathematics was international. For example, in Mahmoudi's lecture he observed several cases of ingenious twists in his writing on the blackboard, such as leaving calculation results intact that would be used later, putting a box around the results derived from a formula to separate them from the calculation used for the solution, and much more. Every 8 to 10 minutes, the teacher gave the students several minutes to write down the notes on the blackboard while he walked around the classroom, checking the content of what the students were copying. In solving problems, he not only indicated the necessary formulas, but also showed students how to use them in a specific way, which seemed to really help increase their understanding.

Moved by the first class he observed, Chikamori observed another class three days later. Again, the lesson was easy to understand and carefully prepared, with one problem taken up for each class period. The class proceeded, taking the time necessary to provide a detailed explanation of the solution and related formulas, and how to expand the formulas. Chikamori felt he was a student

again, enjoying mathematics. It was nearing dusk, but the students remained attentive, and the classroom felt pleasant, with an expectant atmosphere. Chikamori believed that the students shared the intellectual excitement he was feeling.

However, after applying the objective evaluation rubric that Chikamori, Ono, and the team had developed, this lesson received a very low score. Attempting to objectively evaluate the detailed class being taught by the teacher resulted in a low rating because it was evaluated as a teacher-centered class management. But what Chikamori had observed was not a teacher-centered lesson, but a student-centered lesson, where student understanding took priority, and the joy of thinking was conveyed naturally. Chikamori became keenly aware once again in Bamyan that what is ultimately required in education is not “a form that is visible to the eye,” but “a mind that is invisible to the eye.” While there are still many issues and challenges in Afghanistan’s educational system, they have a fair amount of hope.

What is ultimately required in education is not “a form that is visible to the eye,” but “a mind that is invisible to the eye.”

NGO Activities in Rural Areas

While Ono, Chikamori, and their team were involved in human resource development and institution building to improve the quality of education around the country, NGOs from Japan were providing direct assistance to education for the people in rural areas in order to tackle the immediate issues. Save the Children Japan (SCJ), which began assistance to Afghanistan with emergency food aid in the northern region, had been providing educational assistance in Bamyan,

SCJ not only built and repaired school buildings and trained science and math teachers in Bamyan, but also established Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs) in each school in an effort to increase the interest and involvement of rural society in education. When Shunsuke Yamamoto of SCJ talked with villagers, he felt their parental yearning to “at least give their children an

“At least, we want to give our children an education, so they could have a better life than us,”

education, so they could have a better life than themselves,” and almost all parents were keen to educate their children. However, in poor agricultural villages, children are an important part of the work force, and it was easy to see that the labor lost by having children attend school was a burden on the household economy. If the quality of education was poor and school education was unable to meet parents’ expectations, then schoolchildren would inevitably be prevented from attending school. Yamamoto believed that unless educational assistance was combined with poverty reduction and improvements in hygiene, it would not be effective, so he decided to also provide programs in health and hygiene, and nutrition improvement to supplement education. SCJ is broadening its activities in the northern provinces of Sar-e Pol, Jowzjan, and Faryab.

SCJ’s support of a girls high school in Bamyan was actually an experimental approach that utilized the mobility and flexibility of private donations from Japanese companies and individuals.



Girls high school supported by private donations from Japan
Photo: Shunsuke Yamamoto (Save the Children Japan)

Focusing on the problem of the shortage of female teachers, this project helped students at the Bamyan girls high school obtain a teacher qualification upon graduation. As a way of increasing female teachers in Afghanistan's rural areas, it attracted the attention of the Ministry of Education. Armed with the successful results of this experimental endeavor, NGOs are now using this method as a model, and have expanded the program to the provinces of Oruzgan and Nangarhar.

Challenges in Getting a School Library Program to Be Accepted

In 2003 the Shanti Volunteer Association (SVA) started a library program for primary schools in Nangarhar province. However, it faced continual challenges until teachers understood the virtue of the program. Schools with their own libraries were scarce in Afghanistan, even in metropolitan areas, and even if a school had a library facility, it was often used as a storage room or was locked. There were no libraries in rural areas.

In order to improve the libraries in Afghanistan, SVA started preparing picture books. They organized a publication committee consisting of teachers, TTC teachers, and writers, and created stories based on local folklore. Because no professional illustrators were available, they asked a local signboard painter to draw the illustrations. In this way, picture books and picture-story shows were created every year in the Pashto and Dari languages, and by 2011, 61 picture book titles and 14 picture-story shows had been published. SVA also looked for and purchased children's books written in Dari, and created picture books by pasting Pashto translations into Japanese picture books they bought from Japanese publishers. These activities allowed SVA to establish libraries in the schools by giving each school a set of 712 books, along with bookshelves and reading chairs.

After this, so that lots of children would use the libraries, they

trained teachers in how to run them, including in storytelling skills. Twice a year for two years they conducted a five-day training course at each school for 90% of the teaching staff, including the principal. During one course, a teaching staff member came up to the trainers and asked, “What do I do if the pupils laugh at me when I tell a story?” The concept of teaching with dignity was still prevalent in Afghanistan, and a library program designed to increase children’s knowledge and imagination and nurture their sensitivity was likely too new for him. Also, many teaching staff contended that picture books were iconolatry, and against Islam. So it was repeatedly emphasized during the training course that picture books were not iconolatry, and did not conflict with the teachings of Islam.

Once or twice a month, SVA staff visited designated schools to monitor the spread of reading habits and library use, and told stories in the classrooms and libraries. Through storytelling, the children learned to enjoy stories, laugh, and begin to like them, and started to read picture books on their own. In the beginning, teaching staff members called the SVA staff “jokers (those who made children laugh with jokes),” but the SVA staff was determined to continue with its mobile library program.

Nine years after the library program was started, libraries have been established in 73 schools, 110,000 children can now read books, and 2,600 teaching staff have received training in library activities. In Jalalabad, the provincial capital, library teachers have been assigned to all 22 public primary schools, and over 80% of the pupils use the library at least once a week to borrow books. Ninety percent of the teaching staff use the library and library books for their lessons.

None of the teaching staff call the SVA staff “jokers” any more. Teachers now understand the value of books, and have started telling stories on their own. One teacher said, “I used to hold a gun as a Mujahideen commander. I now enjoy holding a book as a teacher. In the beginning I was reluctant to tell stories. But doing it

“I used to hold a gun as a Mujahideen commander. I now enjoy holding a book as a teacher.”



Children in library
Photo: Shanti Volunteer Association

and seeing the children intently listen to the story and enjoy it made me realize that this was a very good activity. The good thing about using books for classes is that children can actually experience what is being taught. For example, when I teach them about fruit, they can see an actual picture of the fruit itself.”

2) Literacy Education

Joy of Reading and Writing to as Many as Possible

Improving formal education in regular primary and middle schools is an important endeavor; however, in a country like Afghanistan, this does not cover all the educational needs of its citizens. The long war has left a large number of adults deprived of the opportunity to receive an education.

As of 2005, it was estimated that more than 7 million Afghans were illiterate. Specifically, women were deprived of the opportunity to attend school due to the prohibition against

women's education under the Taliban regime. As a result, the literacy rate stood at 34% for adult men, but was at 5% for adult women. In these conditions, the provision of literacy education not only to children, but also to adults beyond school age, was another important task in education.

Beginning in 2002, the National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan (NFUAJ) started to support informal education programs, and coordinated with JICA to conduct the Terakoya (CLC: Community Learning Center) program as a form of literacy education. In order to provide broader literacy education to a vast number of people, it was necessary to involve the government of Afghanistan. Thus, as a new project to enhance the Literacy Department of the Ministry of Education and provide a new literacy education program, JICA launched the "Project to Improve Literacy Education Management in Afghanistan" (LEAF) in March 2006.

To enhance the capability of the Literacy Department, the LEAF project supported improving the accuracy of information on literacy classes; enhancing the monitoring of literacy classes; devising plans based on monitoring of these classes; improving the system used for managing teaching materials for literacy classes; increasing the capability of literacy class supervisors (those who manage literacy teachers); and promoting coordination and cooperation with local NGOs. Japanese experts were sent to Kabul from Japan to support data management, creation of a manual and its training for literacy class supervisors, management of teaching materials, and expansion of literacy classes. The project worked jointly with the Afghan staff of the Literacy Department to solve Afghanistan's literacy problem.

Building the Capacity of the Literacy Department

Kaori Tanaka of KRI International Corp. was one of the Japanese experts sent to the LEAF project. She lived in Kabul

from 2006 to 2008, and worked to expand literacy classes. Prior to the launch of the LEAF project, she had been involved in social development projects to support women in the Islamic countries, and had worked on a different JICA project in Afghanistan. Tanaka participated in the project to fulfill a desire to convey the joy of being able to read and write to Afghans who had been deprived of the opportunity to learn, but she would encounter unexpected obstacles.

For example, the project's important goal was to enhance the capacity of the Literacy Department. However, the Department had become accustomed to methods of emergency relief in which it received all the materials from donors, and it took them a long time to understand JICA's philosophy of encouraging their self-help initiative and ownership, with the aim of long-term sustainability. In fact, the capacity of the Literacy Department at the time made it difficult to distribute textbooks and notebooks from the Department to its rural offices for use in literary classes. There were areas where they could not raise funds to cover transportation costs, or local offices received the materials too late for the start of classes, or in some cases, some texts were sold in the market. The budget for distributing equipment and materials for the Literacy Department was insufficient.

To begin with, Afghanistan lacked any accurate data on its population, making it difficult for the Department to even come up with a complete picture of literacy education in the country. At the time, many of the literacy education programs for preschool children, out-of-school children, and adults in Afghanistan were conducted by local and international NGOs. The Afghan government did not have any information on these programs, such as the number of classes, locations and the number of students. Although the Literacy Department required NGOs to register their literacy education programs, many NGOs continued to provide programs without registration. They did not see any merit

in registration. On the other hand, it was necessary to go to the Literacy Department's registration window in Kabul to register, making it inconvenient for NGOs that were based in remote areas.

Meanwhile, insufficient coordination and discussions between donors and NGOs led to unexpected results. For example, one NGO had talked to the representatives of a village and opened schools based on the principle that a woman or female student could walk up to three kilometers to attend school. This NGO urged the villagers to operate the school on their own, with an eye toward sustainability. However, at a neighboring village, another donor started a program that provided food to students attending the school. This was aimed at enabling women to attend school, but because food was provided, parents ended up sending their children to schools that were over five kilometers away. This program prompted the NGO to launch a complaint as it threw a wrench into its plan. Due to a lack of coordination, this situation created a dispute between the donor, which had thought that providing food would prompt parents to allow their daughters to go to school, and the NGO, which had worked on deepening the community and parents' understanding of education and creating a system from a long-term perspective.

For the Literacy Department, preventing such problems from occurring among different donors was an important challenge. The first step in designing a plan was to collect sufficient information on programs by different actors; what kind of literacy education was provided; who received these programs; at what location; and what kinds of support do people need. Because the capacity of the Literacy Department was limited in terms of its budget and human resources, coordination with donors and NGOs was essential. Thus, Tanaka's team started out by setting up a coordination meeting with donors and NGOs in order to strengthen the partnership between the Literacy Department and NGOs. As a step in this endeavor, a selection committee was set up with the task

of evaluating proposals submitted by NGOs. Here, officials of the Literacy Department, together with Japanese experts, experienced the process of comparing the quality and costs presented in the proposals to select new contractors. Also, meetings were set up with the NGO staff on the ground, so as to allow Literacy Department officials to get a first-hand account on the actual conditions of the projects.

The Balance Between the Official System and the Actual Situation on the Ground

Another difficult issue was the discrepancy between the official system the Literacy Department was aiming for and the problems the programs faced on the ground.

The Literacy Department limited participation in literacy education to those aged at least 15 years on the assumption that regular basic education was provided to children aged below 15 years old. However, the reality turned out to be much more complex than what the Literacy Department was trying to solve through its system. Many of the literacy classes were conducted in gardens in a residential home or took place in one portion of a residence, making it easier for students to attend these nearby classes instead of attending a formal school far away. Thus, literacy classes had a supplementary function to formal education.

More specifically, there were many instances in which literacy classes were the only education opportunity available to women. Assaults targeting girls schools, girls school buses, and female students on the way to and back from school continued relentlessly, and thus, more than a few parents were hesitant to send their daughters to school. Also, daughters were often responsible for household chores and doing work at home, making it a burden for a family to send their daughter every day to a school several kilometers away. There were many parents who ended up sending their children to nearby literacy classes that involved shorter



Women studying at literacy school (Balkh)
Photo: Kaori Tanaka

commuting time.

Amid this situation, Tanaka understood the feelings of parents who “wanted to but couldn’t” send their children to formal schools, and “wanted to prioritize my children instead of me.” When questioned in meetings, Tanaka replied that “Children should attend formal schools,” and added that the literacy classes were aimed at adults, but in reality, it was difficult to stop parents who wanted to send their children to the literacy classes.

Strict age rule was causing another problem. To enforce the regulation that “School-aged children may not attend literacy classes,” attendees were asked to submit their ID cards when registering for a literacy class. And in some cases, younger applicants were denied the opportunity to participate, which resulted in age being falsified at the time of registration. If this had continued, the administration would not be able to understand the actual status of the literacy classes, which would have a detrimental effect. So as a last resort, Tanaka’s team did require attendees of

the literary classes to present their IDs, but also decided to permit those under 15 to participate, placing priority on learning about the status of the age groups attending the literacy classes. They decided to utilize the acquired data for planning projects in the future.

The Literacy Department and UNESCO had instituted a unified curriculum for adult literacy education to ensure that literacy classes maintain a certain quality. The Literacy Department's curriculum covered reading, writing, and arithmetic for grades 1-3 in nine months. Tanaka and the team followed the Literacy Department's rules of completing the program in nine months, and refusing to allow the same person to attend a literacy class twice.

However, once the classes started, it became apparent that the pace of learning varied from one person to another, with some students requiring more than nine months to reach a sufficient proficiency level. It was especially clear that the rate of achievement among students over 40 tended to be low in mid-term and end-of-term tests. Also, many men had difficulty attending class during the day because of their work. Some of them said that they would like to complete the curriculum even if it took them over nine months, and prefer having reduced class hours per day for periods longer than nine months.

Also, there were requests to modify the classes to make them more directly useful for generating income and work. In fact, many NGOs provided literacy classes in conjunction with vocational training, without registering with the Literacy Department. Their curricula were their own -- not consistent with the unified curriculum from the Literacy Department -- and combined the necessary basic knowledge of reading, writing, and simple arithmetic to match the progress in acquiring skills in needlecraft, sewing, embroidery, or carpentry. While these NGOs provided the minimum knowledge needed within a limited period of time, they were unable to secure a standardized quality in education because

even the basic factors such as teaching materials and school term were determined separately.

Striking a balance between uniformity and flexibility posed a dilemma for Tanaka and her team. Faced with this situation, Tanaka deeply understood the need to be flexible to deal with various situations and provide supplementary classes. The LEAF project did not look into these requests, but by the time the project ended, some 10,000 students, including the oldest student aged 75 years old, had completed their adult literacy course, with only a few dropouts.

It was also difficult to establish a unified policy regarding upper limit age of eligibility for literacy education. For its 2005 program, the Afghan Ministry of Education submitted a plan to limit eligibility for adult literacy education to those between the ages of 15 and 45. This seemed to be based on the idea that 45 is the oldest age where it is still possible to enjoy the benefit of education, given the education program aims to nurture human resources that can contribute to society with their newfound literacy. However, from a different perspective, literacy education is a human right that ensures everyone acquires the most basic level of reading and writing. With everyone or the majority of the population having the knowledge acquired in basic education, the society may benefit from improvements in poverty, health and hygiene, domestic education, sanitation, and nutrition status. In the face of a deprived population and budget limitations, it was difficult to make a judgment as to whether the purpose of education was to invest simply in economic growth or to create a society that would allow each individual to lead a happy and fulfilling life in a much broader sense.

Collaboration with Other Projects

Tanaka and the team presented ideas for collaboration with

Japanese experts in other JICA projects, to make the project more effective and to promote activities that would be more helpful for the Afghan people,

One idea of collaboration with JICA's "Project on Enhancing Women's Economic Empowerment" helped women generate income through the production of bags for the LEAF project. When the literacy education program distributed texts, notebooks, pencils and other school supplies to students, there were strong requests from students that they also wish to receive bags to put the supplies in. Trying to find a way to assist in income generation for the poverty-stricken people of Afghanistan, Tanaka, with support from other experts, approached several groups actively supporting women's income generation. Each group was asked to submit a sample and a quotation for their bag, and two of the groups were selected to produce a bag with an embroidered LEAF project logo. The women who worked on the production of these bags earned income for their output. The bags were not only used by literacy education students, but after seeing the samples, they started to receive orders placed by aid workers from JICA and other donors for these bags as souvenirs.

Also, amid discussions with healthcare experts, Tanaka realized another idea that involved collaboration with healthcare campaigns. She noticed that the notebooks distributed in literacy classes would also be effective in disseminating messages through a campaign on healthcare and hygiene. After talking with healthcare experts, they decided to launch a campaign to promote healthcare for mothers and children as well as tuberculosis prevention through notebook distribution. Even if a student were unable to read the words yet, the notebooks had illustrations that were easy to understand on the flipside of the front cover. The notebooks were not just distributed, but the healthcare workers in each locality visited the literacy classes to explain the content in simple terms, thereby promoting the understanding of maternal and child healthcare and tuberculosis

prevention.

The Reality of Afghanistan

During her career as a development consultant, Tanaka had always sought to achieve sustainable development that will last for a long period, and her work in Afghanistan was based on the same concept. However, an Afghan colleague from the Literacy Department once said to her, “We have never experienced a time of peace that lasted for ten years. We have lost a lot of family members and friends in the conflicts. Even if I make an effort for something ten years from now, I may not be alive in ten years’ time. Or I may be alive, but it doesn’t mean that the organizations we are building now will survive these next ten years.” Tanaka thought that this sentiment was in the hearts of all Afghan colleagues, and was in fact a reality for the country, given the situation in Afghanistan at the time. With terrorism and bombing incidents happening all the time, it was very difficult to constantly keep a long-term perspective in mind. What does long-term development mean to them? This conversation reminded Tanaka of the uneasy question for the Afghan people.

“We have never experienced a time of peace that lasted for ten years. I may not be alive in ten years’ time.”

Still, toward the end of the project, Literacy Department officials seemed to have arrived at a renewed sense of the importance of their own work. During seminars and meetings with NGOs around the end of the project, they repeatedly explained to their colleagues at branch offices in rural areas and other stakeholders that, along with establishing a monitoring system and collaborating with NGOs, having a long-term perspective is critical in providing literacy education.

3) Inclusive Education Education for Disabled Children

Adult illiterates weren’t the only ones not receiving educational support yet. Another problem of education not reaching the whole

population was disabled children's access to education. Along with the landmine injuries sustained from the war for more than 20 years and the consanguineous marriages rooted in tradition, various inherent and acquired factors have pushed the number of disabled in Afghanistan to an estimated several hundred thousand. Of these, about 150,000 are school-age children (7–14), but only 36% of them attend schools. Even if they do attend schools, they aren't able to receive a proper education because of their disabilities, and many children fail classes and leave school.

The government of Afghanistan has listed improving educational opportunities for disabled children and establishing an environment of acceptance in schools as its priority issues in education, and in 2003 JICA began sending short-term experts in education for disabled children. Based on the results of the “Strengthening Special Education Project” conducted in 2005, the Faculty of Special Education was established at Kabul Education University, and teacher training began. In 2008, through the “Project for Strengthening Teacher Training on Special Education,” the necessary teaching materials (textbooks, syllabus, lecture materials) to teach special education subjects—which became compulsory subjects in the teacher training curriculum—were developed.

Textbook Written by the Afghan People

Two experts who participated in this project, Professor Hideo Nakata of the Center for Research on International Cooperation in Educational Development, University of Tsukuba, and Associate Professor Yukio Isaka of Osaka Kyoiku University, agreed that it was important for the Afghan people to write their own textbooks, so a team was formed with lecturers from the Faculty of Special Education at Kabul Education University to write the textbook. The text was written in Dari, the official language of Afghanistan, translated into English, and reviewed by Nakata and Isaka. The

final draft was completed in Dari and then translated into the country's other official language, Pashto.

Nakata took a serious, accurate approach to the project. Any information that the four lecturers from Kabul Education University could not find after extensive investigation, Nakata would research at the University of Tsukuba Library when he returned to Tsukuba, and then provide the correct information. Translation into Dari was also done precisely, with the proofreading of the Dari manuscript entrusted to a professional proofreader, Khadija, who had worked for the Deputy Minister of Education. In addition, to ensure perfection, the editing of the work was further entrusted to a former Afghan national, Toropekai Surutani²—now a naturalized Japanese living in Tsukuba—including checking for any discriminatory terms and revising any inappropriate use of terms.

The textbook was confirmed by the official in charge of the Ministry of Education, and was officially approved as a national textbook for special education in March 2010 by the Afghan Ministry of Education. Copies of the final draft were used in



A school for the deaf
Photo: Raymond Wilkinson

² Surutani appears in Chapter 2 as the President of NGO “Kibo no Gakko.”

the classes that started out in TTCs in April, and as soon as the textbooks were printed, they were distributed to every student in the country who planned to become a teacher. Nakata and his team produced a DVD showing the premises of the school for the visually impaired, the school for the hearing impaired, and the special education school ³ in Kabul, which was appreciated as teaching material as it made comprehension easier, and this DVD has been used as a reference in lectures and as a way of understanding what goes on in special education schools in areas that don't have these schools.

The efforts of Nakata and his colleagues have paid off. In the 42 TTCs across the country, special education has been accredited as a required subject, and since April 2010, 32 lecture units for 2 credits each have been established. Syllabi, tests, and teaching materials are being used in TTCs across the country. In a survey conducted when training was introduced, 89.9% of TTC lecturers responded that the text was easy to understand, and 80.9% responded that it would be useful in their lecture. Nakata feels that writing the textbook enabled the Afghan lecturers to deepen their knowledge of special education and learn to write textbooks on their own, both of which are very important accomplishments.

Acquiring “Awareness” during Training in Japan

While the project was being implemented, officials from the Ministry of Education and TTC lecturers were invited to Japan for three weeks to attend a training course that would give them the opportunity to see special education in action. When asked for comments, participants responded, “Teachers in Japan handled disabled children as if they were their own, and educated them to bring out their potential,” “I now understand that even children with disabilities can make a contribution to society, and this has

“Even children with disabilities can make a contribution to society, and this has changed my consciousness.”

³ In Afghanistan, these are called “inclusive schools,” with the view that people both with and without disabilities should live and learn together.

changed my consciousness.”

In Japan, there are special education schools with center-like functions for disabled children to coordinate with local schools, and ordinary elementary and junior high schools are now aiming toward an inclusive educational system that doesn't exclude the disabled. The current special education system in Japan is a model for Afghanistan. The Afghan trainees who attended the training in Japan understood this, and some immediately implemented an action plan after they returned home.

One teacher who attended the training course in Japan worked on the local religious leader. He told him that disabled children have the same potential as other children, and are valuable beings who can contribute to society. Others visited local schools to conduct surveys on the attendance of children with disabilities, or spoke with local journalists who then wrote newspaper articles relaying what the teachers had learned in Japan.

Lecturer Ruhina Akbarzai of Sayed Jamaluddin TTC in Kabul said, “I have a class with a disabled student, and he started to cry. He was so happy to learn that he was a valuable member of society and had the power inside himself to change people. The attitude of the students around him also changed. Some have visited schools for the visually or hearing impaired and presented reports.” Special education has led to a transformation in the consciousness and attitude of TTC lecturers. They in turn are promoting changes in students' awareness and attitude, which is leading them to change their behavior.

The project ended in December 2010. It created not only textbooks, but also changed the understanding, knowledge, and consciousness of disabled children and special education. In the international community, efforts are being made through Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to ensure that every child is given the opportunity to receive an education, and children with disabilities are included

“He was so happy to learn that he was a valuable member of society and had the power inside himself to change people.”

among those children that have been left behind. Afghanistan's approach in responding to the educational needs of all children has only just begun.

Kandahar—A World Away



Kandahar: Hub of the South

Afghanistan's second largest city is Kandahar, the capital of Kandahar Province in the country's south. The city has flourished as a strategic crossroads since olden times with a history dating back to the fourth century BCE, when it was purportedly founded by Alexander the Great. Trade with neighboring countries was brisk, and Kandahar was an important city given its location on roads linking Iran to the west, Pakistan to the east, and the capital of Kabul to the north. The city remained a central hub of Afghanistan and was even made the capital of the Afghan Kingdom by King Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1747. More recently, the Taliban had declared Kandahar the capital of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001. After the fall of the Taliban, countries around the world provided a great deal of assistance to

Kandahar, but the future of these efforts remains unclear amid the resurgence of the Taliban.

In June 2002, when the Prime Minister's Special Representative Sadako Ogata visited Afghanistan to witness the Emergency Loya Jirga, she called for a "seamless transition from humanitarian assistance to recovery and reconstruction assistance" and a "comprehensive development plan for priority regions". These proposals would later be realized as the comprehensive regional development assistance program called "the Ogata Initiative".

At that time, with international assistance to Afghanistan having just commenced, most of the aid was concentrated in Kabul, but Japan was fast realizing the need for regional balance in light of Afghanistan's diverse ethnic composition. Because the Pashtuns were dissatisfied with the composition of the interim administration, which was comprised of many stalwarts from the former Northern Alliance, providing assistance to the predominantly Pashtun south became a pressing issue. Given its location near the Pakistani border, the need for support was especially strong in Kandahar as refugees began returning in droves. Another key issue was establishing the presence of the nascent government in what was once Taliban headquarters. At the United Nations General Assembly in September 2002, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi pledged Japan's support in rebuilding the Kabul-Kandahar Highway (KK Road), and this marked the beginning of assistance efforts in the southern hub city of Kandahar.

After the collapse of the Taliban government, most Taliban activists fled Kandahar, their one-time stronghold. Even still, very few women ventured out in public, and most of the men continued to wear thick beards and black turbans: it was an uneasy atmosphere for the Japanese who came to the city. When Tomonori Kikuchi,

the Deputy Resident Representative of the JICA Afghanistan Office visited Kandahar in 2002, almost no women—even those clad in burkas—could be seen in town, but then, all of the sudden, he noticed a woman and a child sneaking a cautious glance at him from the shadows of a building. The presumed mother and child appeared to be afraid of something, and a strange sense which almost made him feel the extreme fear and oppression they must have experienced hung in the air. Unlike Kabul and other cities, all of the men wore the traditional Pashtun garb and sported beards. It had been said that under Taliban rule, you would be whipped if you were caught wearing blue jeans.

Even Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden lived in Kandahar for a time under the protection of the Taliban, and some of the local staff that JICA hired said they had seen his convoy of vehicles under the protection of Taliban soldiers. Perhaps a reflection of the open mood immediately after the fall of the Taliban, local vendors sold Bin Laden Candy in boxes bearing his photograph and illustrations indicating he was the root of all evil; they also sold Saddam Hussein Candy. Apparently, it was manufactured in Karachi, Pakistan. When Shoji Hasegawa, a representative from the JICA office in Kabul, visited Kandahar on an official trip, he bought several boxes of these candies for souvenirs, which were a big hit upon his return to Japan.

Kandahar is a small town: the urban center spans an area of 3 kilometers by 2 kilometers, and the population is thought to be a couple hundred thousand. Unlike Kabul, most of the city was spared destruction in fierce civil war and other battles. It is a trading post, situated smack in the middle of the desert. At that time, Kandahar Airport had been essentially converted into a US army base, and over 3,000 troops were stationed there. With US fighter jets, decorated with huge shark faces, taking off and landing and unmanned surveillance drones and black helicopters sitting on the tarmac, it was no ordinary commercial airport. Kikuchi, who

recognized the need to devise an emergency response plan in case anything happened to the JICA staff stationed in Kandahar, visited the Kandahar base on several occasions to discuss the possibility of cooperation with the US Army for emergency medical transport. Since the airport was essentially a US base, there was a clinic, Coca-Cola vending machines, a barbershop, and even a dentist—there was literally a surprise around every corner.

Urgent Rehabilitation Program Team Enters Kandahar

In September 2002, the first JICA mission, a nine-person Urgent Rehabilitation Program team including Takeshi Naruse of JICA and Shozo Kawasaki of Pacific Consultants International, entered Kandahar. Naruse spent time in some of the world's danger zones. He was stationed in Kenya, which had serious security issues, and Palestine during one of its armed conflicts. His first assignment after returning from Palestine to Japan was Kandahar. The team entered Kabul on a United Nations plane from Dubai and transferred to a nine-seat charter flight to Kandahar operated by AirSery, an American NGO. After boarding, the plane, which could only hold 960 kilograms including luggage, was found to be 270 kilograms over the limit. The flight managed to leave, but only after one of the team members, who weighed over 100 kilograms, exited the craft and some of the supplies and baggage, as well as some emergency rations from Japan, were unloaded. Before takeoff, the two pilots stood on the edge of the runway calculating the weight with a calculator. When they discovered they were heavier than expected, they checked to see if they had sufficient fuel. "It'll be okay since we'll be empty on the return flight", they said as the plane left the ground.

Kawasaki, who ended up using this charter service several times on future visits, became friends with the pilots and came to enjoy the relaxing flights. However, the plane always hit turbulence and the cockpit windshield was cracked. The pilot once told him, "We

can't fly too high today or the windshield might break, and the replacement will take two weeks to get here”.

Peering out the airplane window at the landscape below, Naruse had a gut feeling: reconstruction and development here is going to be tough. He wasn't able to locate one expanse of greenery for the entire trip. The team arrived in the dusty city center of Kandahar after a bumpy ride on the poorly-paved road from Kandahar Airport. Naruse had seen many developing countries, but he was unable to hide his surprise at the dirt-colored cityscape, dust, broken-down cars, horse-drawn carts, and bearded men with piercing eyes. He thought to himself, “is it really the 21st century here?”

In 2002, there were only two places to stay in Kandahar: UNICA (United Nations International Community Association), a guest house for UN officials, and Kandahar Guest House, which had just opened across the street. With the increasing number of aid workers in the area, UNICA could not accommodate the whole team, so Naruse stayed in Kandahar Guest House. On the night of his arrival, Naruse could hear helicopters and airplanes roaring through the night from his room at the guest house. The next morning, he went across the street to get his breakfast at UNICA where he saw the reason for last night's cacophony on CNN. “An assassination attempt was made on President Hamid Karzai during his visit to Kandahar. Some of the members of his entourage are presumed dead after a spray of machine gun fire.” It was thought that the attack, which was probably the work of dissidents, could lead to an attempt to overthrow the Karzai regime. If that was the case, a battle might even break out between the Taliban and government troops in Kandahar. The US helicopters had probably been flying all night in anticipation of a rebel attack.

Naruse's satellite phone rang. It was Tsuneo Kurokawa, the Director of the Security Information Office at the JICA Headquarters. “How are things on the ground? Is the team safe?”

We have decided we want you to evacuate immediately? Is that possible?” His questions came in rapid-fire succession. Even if he wanted to, Naruse had no way of leaving Kandahar, but his instincts told him the situation would not escalate any further. He couldn’t hear any gunfire, and the helicopters had stopped flying around. He thought that if there were going to be a large-scale rebellion, then it would have started last night. In the end, Naruse confirmed the situation with Kurokawa over the phone, and Kurokawa chose to delegate the final decision to Naruse who was on site. This reaffirmed in Naruse how important it was for supervising officers on the ground to possess the ability to make on-the-spot decisions amid rapidly changing circumstances. Luckily, the situation did not escalate. Kawasaki and the other team members felt the city was surprisingly peaceful and wondered if assassinations were really an everyday occurrence.

The team continued with its investigations as planned, but word arrived that the Governor of Kandahar Province, Gul Agha Sherzai, would not be able to meet on the scheduled day. That being said, the team wanted to make an appointment with him since he was the de facto ruling force in the region. After a few more tries, the meeting was rescheduled for two days later. Governor Gul Agha met Naruse and the team at the Governor’s residence with his head wrapped in gauze. It turns out the Governor, who was seated next to President Karzai during the assassination attempt, had taken a bullet to the back of his head. Fortunately, it only grazed him, so the wound was not severe, but he said he had to postpone the initial meeting for a hospital visit. Naruse expressed his sympathy for the injury, but the Governor only chuckled: he said it was the fourth time he had been shot. He realized that the Governor was truly an old warhorse who had lived through battle.

To Naruse, Governor Gul Agha came across like a tough and stern ruler. He did not understand English, so all of the conversations had to be interpreted. But his gaze was strong and

sharp. Naruse immediately knew that he needed to behave with respect, sincerity and dignity to gain the Governor's trust. After the meeting, the team was invited to the Governor's residence for lunch. A local dish of chicken was prepared. Naruse took the meat in hand, ripped off a chunk and ate it, and he did his best to ball up the rice with his bare hands and eat it. As the conversation continued, Naruse realized that it is essential to forge relationships with influential players like Governor Gul Agha in order to ensure the safety of future Japanese aid workers. When he left, Naruse told the Governor, "I promise I will come back to see you again."

Three months later, Naruse returned to Kandahar as promised and met the Governor for the second time. He said, "I came back to Kandahar as promised. Now I would like you to keep the Japanese workers safe as you promised when we first met." On this trip, Naruse was leading an Agricultural Study Team, but looking back he recounts that his primary mission was to fulfill the promise with Governor Gul Agha. Perhaps it was the result of his deft negotiations, but no matter the case, Naruse felt that

"I came back to Kandahar as promised. Now I would like you to keep your promise."



Governor Gul Agha (center) and Naruse (left) signing on the minutes

after getting the Governor to agree to cooperate with JICA, the inevitable friction between the Agency and the militia and the local community had been greatly reduced. With this weight off his shoulders, Naruse ended up falling ill on his return journey, and by the time he reached Islamabad, he even had trouble walking. He arrived at Narita via Karachi and Bangkok, but his condition was so poor the flight attendants had to take turns keeping watch on him. From the airport, his wife drove him directly to a hospital in Noda city where he was immediately admitted. He spent the year-end and new year holiday in the hospital receiving treatment for a viral infection.

The First Road Paving Project

Kawasaki and the rest of the Urgent Rehabilitation Team, which eventually consisted of 16 members, initially considered rebuilding schools, public health centers, and medical clinics as they did in Kabul. However, they were greeted by a constant haze in Kandahar: not only did the winds carry in sand from the surrounding dry desert regions, almost all of the roads were unpaved, so wind and passing vehicles whipped up dust clouds. Furthermore, waste from toilets drained directly onto the roads where it was left to dry, so every time the wind blew or a car drove past, it created a cloud of sand mixed with dried excrement. Upon seeing this, Kawasaki quickly made a change of plans and decided to pave a 6 kilometer stretch of road that ran east-to-west through the southern part of the city and served as a bypass for the main road. This road, which extended west into Iran via Herat and east into Pakistan, was also a key route connecting the city to Kabul, but it was not paved and only had simple ditches for runoff, so the odor of piled up garbage and excrement was atrocious. This road was both an important industrial route and a residential thoroughfare. Since there were no alternate routes available even when it was under construction, workers had to make sure that everything from

large container trucks to pushcarts, bicycles and pedestrians could still pass during construction. Furthermore, since the shops and small factories lining the road also used it to conduct their business and discard their trash, construction could never begin until the road was first cleared. But this merely led to a daily game of cat-and-mouse: even when workers were able to clear the road, it was littered with trash the next day.

The project required JICA to hire construction workers, but all of the local contractors were mom-and-pop operations, most of whom were returnees from Pakistan. Only a limited number of people had experience in the construction business, and the majority of workers had not participated in a construction projects in 10 or more years. While some of the contractors couldn't read or write, let alone read a blueprint, Kawasaki and his team tried to convey their intentions through interpreters. Communication was a struggle since these so-called interpreters only had high school level English, which they learned in the refugee camps in Pakistan. The interpreters conveyed information between Kawasaki and the contractors, but more often than not, they made their own opinions known. To top it off, they were stubborn and insisted their views were correct, so in the early days, every day was like squaring off for a fight. After several months, the interpreters' demeanors relaxed and Kawasaki even started to make jokes. But in the beginning, they could not understand even the simplest of jokes. It was as if their lives had been so unforgiving that they did not have time to make jokes. Kawasaki came to realize just how severe the aftereffects of war were.

What was more vexing than this was the mutual distrust among the local people. Kandahar is an extremely conservative place where, unbeknownst to outsiders, even the local Pashtuns possess complicated feelings of animosity toward each other. Contractors will only hire workers, be they skilled or unskilled, based on territorial bonds or blood relationships. So, despite the large

number of unemployed people and returnees in the city, JICA found itself shorthanded. This strong sense of mutual distrust probably stems from a long and tumultuous history.

When construction began, it took a long time to ship in machinery and supplies from Pakistan, so workers had to start with the minor project of building the concrete gutters. Aside from the sparse humanitarian assistance provided by the UN and other NGOs, there were no full-scale aid projects in Kandahar. Amid this backdrop, the people seemed filled with hope that something was about to begin, even though this was only a gutter construction project. The work was done by hand, but there were not enough workers and supplies, so it took longer than expected. The paving had yet to begin and some of the people expressed their dissatisfaction with not being able to easily enter and exit their homes and shops. That being said, the sense of hope that something was happening outweighed these complaints.

With nowhere in Kandahar to test the aggregate and paving



Road construction work in Kandahar
Photo courtesy of Shozo Kawasaki

materials, Kawasaki and his team had to rely on their years of experience to maintain the quality of the construction. They purchased a lone compressive strength tester in Pakistan to conduct strength tests on the pavement, and these fascinated the local engineers. Having never seen a test like this before, they were highly impressed, and this seemed to boost their motivation to increase the quality of the work.

But Kawasaki's problems didn't end there. His next challenge was paying the contractors. Since there were no commercial banks in Afghanistan, the contractors had to open bank accounts in Pakistan, but only two of the 11 companies that signed contracts with JICA could open accounts. Kawasaki's team ended up hand-carrying several hundred thousand dollars in cash from Japan. After wire transfers to the Central Bank of Afghanistan in Kabul became possible, Kawasaki had the contractors without bank accounts come to Kabul every month. Since monthly payments could sometimes exceed \$50,000, the central bank could not make payments with \$100 bills alone, so it had to mix in smaller denominations such as \$10, \$5 and \$1 notes. Since the exchange rates differed depending on the denomination and age of the bills, Kawasaki took caution to provide each contractor with a fair mix of large and small and old and new bills. The stacks of bundled bills on the counter were so tall they looked like a scene from gangster movie, but since Kawasaki was so busy trying to divvy up the cash, he was never able to take a photograph, which he regrets now.

Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting, started right after the construction began, so the project remained at a near standstill for almost two months, since some believers took vacations after fasting for as long as three to four weeks. As soon as the construction began in earnest in April, after the workers and staff had returned, the city was hit by a series of sandstorms. The storms were so powerful that they even made walking difficult, so the days passed as the team waited for them to subside. In July, daytime

temperatures soared to nearly 50 degrees Celsius, so the workers could only work on the road during the morning hours. The 8.4-kilometer section of road took nine months to build from start to finish, a project that would have taken about as half as much time in Japan, but it was successfully completed in September 2003.

Until the paving began, local residents bombarded the team with questions about what was happening as well as complaints. It was a difficult time, but when portions of the paved road started to reveal themselves, the complaints gradually turned into heightened expectations. In addition to the southern bypass, which was built to facilitate the passage of large trucks, the team also worked on a road in the north to help alleviate traffic congestion in a residential neighborhood. The northern road was the route that passed in front of UNICA, so the UN staff were extremely grateful that they would no longer have to worry about road dust blowing in their windows. While there were some tragic accidents and threats made on a Pakistani contractor during the project, the construction team was able to overcome these obstacles through sheer teamwork. Even Kawasaki himself was amazed at how dramatically the paving had reduced the amount of dust.

Opening of the JICA Kandahar Office

JICA decided to open its Kandahar Office as a hub from which it could provide assistance to Kandahar. JICA Project Formulation Advisor Shinichi Kimura was charged with setting up the office. Kimura, who had just returned from the Philippines, had years of experience in Kenya and several other developing countries, but this assignment was his first in Afghanistan and in an Islamic country. He arrived in Afghanistan at the end of January 2003. His stay in Kabul was short. After the weather cleared, he boarded the first UN flight to Kandahar and checked in at UNICA. The Afghan manager of UNICA explained the rules for staying there. Kimura was the first Japanese to make a long-term stay at UNICA,

so he decided to sit back and see how things went. The room was not very spacious, but there was an electric heater and the shower had warm water, so he felt that UNICA in Kandahar was more comfortable than his lodgings in Kabul.

As the newcomer, Kimura introduced himself to the UN staff from UNAMA, UNDP and UNICEF who had gathered there that evening for dinner, and explained that JICA was opening an office in Kandahar. Everything was new to him—working in Kandahar and living with UN staff at the guesthouse—but everyone gave him a warm welcome and said they would be glad to help. He realized that everyone was in the same boat: they were all far away from home in Afghanistan, and their first mission was the reconstruction of Kandahar. Since UNHCR and WFP had larger operations, they had their own guesthouses separate from UNICA. Until he could rent an office, Kimura used space at the office of Kawasaki's Urgent Rehabilitation Team, which was a three-minute walk from UNICA. Unfortunately, since this office was situated such that it received copious amounts of late afternoon sun, Kimura ended up drenched in sweat working there, so he decided he needed to open the JICA Office as soon as possible.

Kimura's first order of business was to hire Shamsdin, an interpreter and guide that Kawasaki introduced to him. After this, Shamsdin became Kimura's right-hand man, and the two worked side-by-side from the time the office opened until Kimura left Kandahar in April 2006. Shamsdin ended up performing his duties until the day the JICA Kandahar Office closed in March 2010. Kimura instructed Shamsdin to make appointments with the Governor of Kandahar province and other big-name players in the provincial government as well as representatives from UNAMA and other UN agencies. He told the people he met that JICA, on behalf of Japan, intended to open a Kandahar Office to provide reconstruction assistance while surveying the organizational capacity of the provincial government. As he spoke to various

*They were all
far away from
home to help
Afghans rebuild
Kandahar.*

people, Kimura realized the powerful role played by Gul Agha, the Governor of Kandahar province. Decisions on important matters could not be made without the Governor's presence.

When looking for an office, Kimura checked maps of the city to ensure easy movement in case of an emergency. He inspected properties thoroughly to see if they were out of the direct line of sight, had spacious grounds, and could be easily renovated into offices at a low cost. He found that the other donor agencies had already snapped up all of the good real estate, and the owners had raised their rents as the number of foreign residents was on the rise. Most of the cheap properties were old houses riddled with bullet holes. Since there were no good properties in good locations, he was faced with a tough decision. But a little over a month later, he heard that there was a good property on the same street as the WHO office, a few dozen meters from the bypass in the southern part of the city that the Urgent Rehabilitation Team was working to pave. With luck, he was able to contact the owner to show him the place. The property was almost exactly what Kimura had imagined. The walls were high, the house was simple and there was a spacious yard. The biggest advantage was the location right off the bypass that was being repaired, which was not nearly as congested as the main road that crossed through the city. The owner was a friendly businessman, and this was another important reason why Kimura liked the place so much. He knew he had to act fast, so he immediately reported to the JICA Kabul Office. After clearing up a few complications, a lease was signed. Security equipment was installed, the bare minimum of renovations was made, and office equipment was brought in. In May 2003, the JICA Kandahar Office officially opened.

Once he found the office space, Kimura began searching for staff. It was decided that, aside from Kimura himself, all necessary personnel would be hired in Kandahar. With some help from the UN and other NGOs, Kimura recruited people from the general

public and interviewed them for positions as office staff, security personnel, drivers, and guards. The interviews revealed that most of the people who applied were those who fled to Pakistan during the Taliban's reign, and almost none of them had any regular work experience. Despite this, the younger generation used the English they had learned in Pakistan to make a living as drivers and interpreters for the foreign reporters who visited Kandahar. That being said, they only spoke a smattering of English, and none of them had ever worked in an office job like JICA. First, Kimura drew up an organization chart to introduce the basics of JICA and teach the staff JICA's plan for reconstruction support in Kandahar as well as their roles and responsibilities in the office itself. Then, Kimura provided daily on-the-job training to teach them the knowledge and skills they needed in the office. He collected books on proper office etiquette and common knowledge and ordered the office staff to study on their own accord. He had the staff who could speak English give lessons to the drivers and guards, and he made them give monthly presentations. Looking back, the JICA Kandahar Office was like a community learning center. By studying together, everyone helped to create a strong JICA Kandahar team: the staff were like a family.

By studying together, everyone helped to create a strong JICA Kandahar team.

UNICA Lounge Bar

The guest houses in Kandahar at that time were bustling with UN staff, NGO workers and other foreigners, and many NGOs were able to work freely even within the city. Gradually, the security situation worsened, and the city would end up suffering heavy damage, but in the early stages, UNHCR and WFP made major strides in assisting returnees and providing humanitarian aid, respectively. Several organizations were working hard to provide support for demining, which not only provided local residents with work, but also helped move along the Japan-led construction project. One of these NGOs even let former Taliban soldiers

participate in the landmine removal work.

Meanwhile, in his private time, Kimura setup a lounge bar in the basement of UNICA with the UN workers. Two security officers, John, a Dane working for UNAMA, and Kobke, a German working for UNHCR, mentioned opening a lounge bar since there was no entertainment in Kandahar, so Kimura drafted a floor plan and did his best to help revamp the interior, thus giving rise to the UNICA Lounge Bar. With the help of WFP, they shipped a truckload of alcoholic beverages from Kabul. When it arrived, Kimura held back the urge to shout with joy and quietly lugged the precious cargo into the basement warehouse. Many were amazed to see they also brought in draft beer. The bar ran on donations from the residents, and workers from the UN, other NGOs and JICA would stop by on weekend nights. John, the UNAMA security officer, and Kimura tended the bar and enjoyed chatting and swapping information with their friends stationed in Kandahar.

Various Urgent Rehabilitation Efforts

Minister-Counselor Nobutaka Miyahara of the Japanese embassy led an initiative to implement Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects in cooperation with Mullah Naquibullah, an ex-Mujahideen commander with sway in the Arghandab district in the northern outskirts of Kandahar city, to repair roads and irrigation facilities and build schools in the area. Still unfamiliar with Kandahar, Kimura made every effort to accompany the team and ascertain the situation in the rural parts of the province. Their grassroots projects were small, but they enabled the swift deployment of humanitarian aid in rural areas.

After their road construction project, Kawasaki's Urgent Rehabilitation Team undertook a school building project. The children of Kandahar, where most of the school buildings were temporary tents provided by UNICEF, had high hopes for this

projects. During the Taliban's reign, most of Kandahar's schools were destroyed, and girls faced discrimination in that they were not allowed to receive education. Apparently, women could walk down the street freely without wearing a burka 30 years ago, but the Taliban's customs of not permitting women to leave the house, and in particular, not letting them be seen by adult men, remained even after their fall from power.

The school construction project began to pick up steam in the winter of 2003 when Kawasaki was invited to dine at the home of the provincial director of education. The director used to spend his days visiting construction sites accompanied by armed guards, which seemed slightly excessive given Kandahar's security situation at the time. Over dinner, the director told Kawasaki that he lived in hiding in the basement of his home during Taliban rule. Although he looked like an 80-year old man, Kawasaki assumed from their conversation that the director was actually younger than him, perhaps around 50, since he had a grandchild of four or five and an infant daughter. Kawasaki thought to himself that the director's rough-hewn face was the product of a war-torn era.

Three of the seven schools that Kawasaki's team rebuilt, Malalai Girls High School, Aino Girls Middle School, and Mirwais Mena Girls School, were schools for girls. The team successfully completed these seven schools without any interference from the Taliban and were able to see the children's smiling faces. Total enrollment at the seven schools now stands at 18,600. The construction workers also surely enjoyed a sense of achievement.

Another Urgent Rehabilitation Program Team focusing on agriculture worked on repairing the Tarnak Canal—a major irrigation channel that carries precious melted snow water from the mountains in the north to a reservoir and an important part of agriculture in Kandahar, where it rarely rains. While there was a variety of hazardous debris left over from the war in the canal,

the team completed the project without any major accidents. After completion, it became popular with the nearby children who came to play in the water. The team also renovated buildings that belonged to the Department of Irrigation, Water Resources and Environment, which managed the dam upstream. Kimura was impressed by the hardworking staff there. Kimura's next objective was to repair all of the tributary conduits that delivered water to the communities all along the Tarnak Canal, but the team was only able to refurbish one of them.

In the field of agriculture, the team also supported the rehabilitation of the Department of Agriculture's Kokaran Research Station, which would be used for experiments for breed improvement and training for agricultural extension workers. The team rebuilt experimental fields, reservoirs, wells and a training center. Unfortunately, the project did not including training on how to operate the machinery, so the Kokaran Research Station ended up struggling with a shortage of technical capacity and skilled labor.

In Daman, the team built a village road and a communal water supply facility as part of a model village project. During the Taliban's rule, this poor village made money by growing opium poppies, which were the main source of funding for the Taliban. Every time Kimura visited Daman or other villages, he noticed the beautiful poppy fields. He heard that the farmers were left with no choice but to make a living growing poppies because of a drought that lasted many years. Opium poppies grow well in dry climates and are easy to tend. Brokers used to teach the farmers how to grow them and would pay good money for the flowers. For these farmers, growing poppies was the only way they could survive. Kimura realized how difficult it would be to eliminate poppy growing.

The Urgent Rehabilitation Study Team also worked on projects in the field of public health and medicine. They renovated the kitchen and laundry facilities at Kandahar's main hospital, Mirwais

Hospital, after which Kimura drew up plans to build a clinic in Dand. Transportation in and around Kandahar was inconvenient. Many of the severely injured people who came from the rural villages passed away before they ever arrived at Mirwais Hospital. When he heard the Ministry of Public Health's plea to help save these patients in far-flung locales, Kimura set a goal to build the clinics required to make regional healthcare a reality. To assist the Ministry of Public Health in training personnel, the team also renovated a nursing school on the grounds of Mirwais Hospital and donated equipment for midwife training. They were gradually adding notches to their belt in this field.

From 2005, Kawasaki led the JICA Support Program for Reintegration and Community Development in Kandahar (JSPR), and together with Kimura, who was still working at the JICA Kandahar Office, they witnessed the joy and sorrow of Kandahar's reconstruction until all Japanese personnel left the city in April 2006 due to the deteriorated security situation.

KK Road: The Kabul-Kandahar Highway

The biggest assistance project undertaken in the Kandahar area was the rebuilding of the Kabul-Kandahar Highway, a project that Prime Minister Koizumi pledged to support in September 2002. The project commenced with Japan and the United States working on separate sections of the 483-kilometer road. This highway is an integral part of what is called "the Ring Road", which connects the major cities of Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat, and functions as the foundation for economic activities in Afghanistan. Despite its importance, since the highway and its bridges were destroyed during the civil war, the route between Kabul and Kandahar was transformed into a treacherous stretch of dirt and sand whose length took 17 hours to travel. The Afghan government requested the assistance of several countries to rebuild the highway, a project

that would symbolize the reconstruction effort, and the United States and Japan agreed to undertake the task.

Shoji Hasegawa, who was supervising infrastructure assistance for the JICA Office in Kabul, is the person who started referring to the Kabul-Kandahar Highway as “the KK Road”. Japan and the United States had initially agreed that Japan would begin construction from Kabul and the US would begin construction from Kandahar, but for some reason, the US officially announced that it would begin work from the Kabul end of the KK Road. Japan was thrown off balance, but Hasegawa, who had seen both of the sites, gave the embassy some frank advice: “The sites are not very different. In fact, starting from Kandahar might even be easier from a technical standpoint since we will have easy access to crushed stone and other road materials and we won’t have to worry about freezing in the winter. With the technical knowledge of Japanese construction companies, we can build either end of the road.” No one knows whether or not the embassy was influenced by this statement, but in the end Japan would build 50 kilometers of road starting in Kandahar, the US with build 389 kilometers of road, and existing roads would be used for the remaining 43 kilometers.

Later, Kimura received a surprise visit from the US Ambassador. He came bearing news that President Bush had ordered the entire highway be open to traffic by December 2003. He told the bewildered Kimura that if Japan could not finish its section on time that the US would do it for them. Kimura respectfully informed the ambassador that he did not have the authority to discuss the matter so it should be taken up with the Japanese embassy in Kabul; however, he expressed his personal opinion as an engineer that it would not be possible to meet the December deadline without changing the specifications or reducing the quality. To complete the project within the limited timeframe, Japan decided, for the sake of emergency recovery, to pave the road with a simple material that

would last two to three years by December 2003, and the complete full-scale paving of all 50 kilometers by December 2004.

The KK Road construction project was implemented by a joint venture among Taisei Corporation, Tobishima Construction and Dai Nippon Construction. Dai Nippon Construction's Toshiyuki Nose entered Kabul in April 2002 to conduct site inspections in anticipation of winning the contracts in upcoming reconstruction projects. Starting in September 2002, he inspected over 1,000 kilometers of roads from Kabul to Kandahar to Herat, all the while carefully examining the major routes connecting the country's major cities. He crisscrossed Afghanistan, surveying 250 kilometers of road from Kabul to Bamian, 400 kilometers from Kabul to Mazar-i-Sharif, 150 kilometers from Kabul to Jalalabad, and 100 kilometers from Kandahar to Spin Boldak.

When his company won the contract for the construction of the KK Road and he finally arrived in Kandahar, which would be the starting point of the project, Nose and his team rented a house and began work by dispatching a team of Afghan contractors, Japanese company workers, Japanese technicians, and construction professionals to the site. This project, which required landmine removal and other security measures, would be a new experience for Nose, unlike anything one can encounter in Japan.

According to a UN survey, 40 million mines were buried throughout Afghanistan from the beginning of the Soviet invasion until the end of the civil war. Before starting the construction, Nose met with the United Nations Mine Action Service to gather data. Since there was no landmine map, he had to rely on the data he received. He requested a landmine survey from a team of Afghan landmine detection experts. Like inchworms, mine detection dogs and detection experts carefully examined the ground a few square kilometers at a time, and the construction team followed in their footsteps. Sometimes during drilling, the workers would uncover a

landmine or an unexploded ordinance (UXO) that went undetected in the survey, but luckily they were never jostled enough to explode. In fact, the project was successfully completed without any explosions. The team was very lucky. Landmines and shells that the lead found were detonated by the landmine search team. The mine detection dogs were trained to sniff out the smell of gunpowder. If they picked up the scent, they would sit down and wait for their handlers. Once located, the search team members would slowly work by hand to expose the mine. While dogs have a keen sense of smell, they can only work for four or five hours a day. When the dogs were resting, Nose would glance at them in envy. Upon seeing the Afghans working hard to remove mines for the sake of their country, Nose felt that the people had not given up on their country yet.

The Afghans haven't given up on their country yet.

For security purposes, the joint venture hired a foreign security company which stationed armed guards at the office/living quarters, site offices and plants, and along the stretches of road



Construction work of the KK Road
Photo: Toshiyuki Nose

they were working on. At that time, the Afghan police and army had just been organized to keep the peace, but Nose and his team were concerned of the possibility that some police officers and soldiers might have secret ties to members of the Taliban. Along the stretch of the road that the US was building, there was a series of incidents involving the resurgent Taliban which was kidnapping workers, detonating remote controlled bombs, launching rockets and bombing machinery. In October 2003, a Turkish person was kidnapped, followed by two Indians in December. In February 2004, a helicopter owned by an American construction company was shot down, and three people were killed. That March, a Turkish engineer and an Afghan guard were murdered, and another Turkish engineer was kidnapped along with his interpreter. Meanwhile, the US continued to beef up security in a joint civilian-military effort. In November 2003, a bomb was planted at the UN office in Kandahar, and a series of bombings followed. 50 kilometers from Kandahar, within the Japanese construction zone, a soldier was shot and injured at an army checkpoint. On top of this, Nose's office received a threatening letter, so the company proceeded with caution: it imposed a temporary curfew and suspended work, all while keeping in close contact with the Japanese embassy. The armed guards at the construction site were all Afghans, but they were managed by former soldiers, police officers and mercenaries from the West. They gave the impression that they would not hesitate to make the first move and fire their weapons to protect themselves. With the worsening security situation, there were over 50 foreign private security firms jostling for position in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, where security was big business, Nose was firmly reminded that he was responsible for his own safety.

Cooperative Ties with Local Communities along the Road

Knowing that cooperation with local communities is essential for safety, the Japanese embassy, JICA, and the construction company



Hasegawa was welcomed by elders in shura.
Photo courtesy of Shoji Hasegawa

worked together to maintain close communication with the local people. Before beginning the construction project, they visited shura, or traditional councils of village elders, to explain the details of Japan's project.

Hasegawa, from JICA Kabul Office, went to his first shura with staff from the Japanese embassy. He recalls feeling scared as the bearded, bald-headed Pashtun elders walked into the room all glowering at them. He breathed a sigh of relief after the elders smiled their broken-tooth smiles and agreed to cooperate fully.

After construction began, Nose and his team visited local villages almost every day and spoke to the leaders through an Afghan intermediary, and they never missed the shura that the 21 roadside villages held on Wednesdays. At the meetings, the team sought understanding for their project and did their best to respond the leaders' requests to use their local materials and create more jobs. In return, the project team was guaranteed their safety, and the relationships of trust they built with the locals helped move the

project along smoothly. Local residents were hired as day laborers for the road construction project, literally paving the way to cash income. In addition, funds from the Japanese embassy's Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects initiative were used to repair irrigation channels and build water supply facilities, schools and the like for the local communities. On December 13th, 2003, a local resident reported a suspicious object. Upon investigation, it turned out to be a bomb. After this incident, the team presented a letter of thanks to the shura. Nose believed that most of the Afghan people understood that since Japan had not sent troops into the country, all the Japanese in Afghanistan were there for the economic and social reconstruction, and that the Japanese aid workers had to rely on the locals for security. For Nose, this experience taught him that the most important security measure was communication with the Afghan people living in the villages near the road, and he put this lesson to good use in future projects.

In December 2003, the first phase of the KK Road, i.e., the temporary paving, was completed, and the US and Japan held a joint completion ceremony with President Karzai in attendance. Since the president would be there, Japan and the US held a series of careful discussions in the months leading up to the ceremony. One month before the event, the frequency of these meetings, which were held in a special room inside the US embassy, increased. The special room was built like a nuclear fallout shelter. It was isolated so that contact could not be made with the outside, and meeting participants had to check their wireless radios and cell phones at the door. Hasegawa, who was part of the Japanese delegation, was taken aback by the unsettlingly sharp-eyed US embassy staff.

Amid these harsh conditions, the Japanese general construction joint venture boldly undertook the construction project and built a stellar road without any accidents. With this road, one could now travel between Kabul and Kandahar in about five hours. The

The most important security measure was communication with the Afghan people living in the villages

Japanese team not only met the deadline but did not sacrifice quality in building their section of the road, and as a result, it came to represent the high caliber of Japan's aid work in Afghanistan.

JICA President Ogata's Visit to Kandahar

In December 2004, JICA President Sadako Ogata visited Kandahar to observe the Agency's humanitarian and reconstruction assistance projects there. JICA opened its Kandahar Office because Ms. Ogata, as the Prime Minister's Special Representative, had stressed the importance to support Kandahar. Sent to setup the operation, Kimura was filled with deep emotion as he welcomed Ms. Ogata, who initiated the increasing supports to Kandahar. Kimura made the arrangements for President Ogata's visit, but it goes without saying that he received considerable cooperation from Governor Mohammad Yousef Pashtun (He later became the Minister of Urban Development¹), who took over the Governor's role from Gul Agha in August 2003, and other provincial officials as well as from the staff of UNAMA and UNHCR. It was Kimura's responsibility to ensure that security was in top form. With help from veteran UN security officers, he was able to take President Ogata to the Zhari Dasht IDP Camp without any issues. President Ogata, who previously served as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, was so popular, especially with the female staff of UNHCR, and everyone waited for a chance to speak to her directly. President Ogata visited the schools built by the Urgent Rehabilitation Team and spoke directly to the children, and she attended the phase two completion ceremony for the KK Road. Provincial Governor Pashtun and the Former Governor Gul Agha, attended the opening ceremony for the bypass road built in the city, and both men praised JICA for its help. Ms. Ogata, who had seen the devastation in Kandahar before, was greeted by the

¹ Pashtun appears in Chapter 3 as a member of the Independent Board for New Kabul City in the Kabul Metropolitan Area Development Project.



President Ogata at the completion ceremony for KK Road
Photo: Shinichi Kimura

successes of these reconstruction projects and appeared emotional.

Deteriorating Security

One day in 2004, a car bomb exploded on the street next to the office of UNAMA. Kimura, who had just finished work and was back at UNICA, saw the windows shake as if there was an earthquake. He rushed to the scene where he saw the remnants of the burned out car frame and shattered windows of UNAMA office; it was a chilling experience. Luckily, the roadside wall was high enough to prevent any major damage, but it is impossible to imagine how unsettling the incident was for the staff who were in the office at the time. That evening, the UNAMA area manager asked Kimura to make an exception and open the Lounge Bar so the staff could sooth their nerves. Some of them were still shaking, so he decided help them out by opening the bar. Kimura remembers a female UN staff telling him that they felt like they were in a prison without freedom to move about and wanted to

evacuate as soon as possible.

After that, the security situation in Kandahar gradually deteriorated. In 2005, the number of incidents thought to be linked to the Taliban, including failed attempts, steadily increased.

Pulling Out During Construction: The Kandahar-Herat Highway

After completing work on the Kabul-Kandahar Highway, Nose and his team began work on the next project: the Kandahar-Herat Highway (KH Road). The United States, Saudi Arabia and Japan agreed to work together on this 555-kilometer highway. Japan was to build the 114 kilometers from Kandahar to the city of Grishik in Helmand Province, with the United States and Saudi Arabia building 326 kilometers and 115 kilometers respectively. Before the construction began, it was thought that, given Japan's experience with the KK Road, this project would not be too difficult because, despite the longer distance, most of the terrain was flat and free of obstacles.

As with the KK Road, Hasegawa started by going to shura to explain the project to the local communities. Having come to be on good terms with the Kandahar Province and City government officials, the team was accompanied by them to the meeting places. This time, Hasegawa was surprised at the security detail that the Kandahar Provincial government had prepared. Men wielding AK-47s (Kalashnikovs) were stationed all about, and guards equipped with machine guns stood watch over Hasegawa and his team from the rooftops. This may have been a signal that security in Kandahar was steadily worsening.

The security situation continued to worsen. Nose and the HK Road team had their office/residence in central Kandahar, but the security situation in the city deteriorated with Taliban-led terrorist bombings and armed clashes with foreign military forces. Along the 114-kilometer stretch of the road, there were a handful of villages

where Taliban leaders and soldiers were born and raised. A spate of incidents occurred, including the remote-controlled bombing of heavy equipment and aqueducts, the sabotage of roads and other infrastructure, kidnappings and threats. The team took every measure it could think of: they increased the number of security guards, hired local residents, and negotiated through intermediaries to have obstacles removed. In the end, nothing worked, so they limited construction to the portion of the road within the city and suspended work on several occasions. The situation eventually escalated to the point where the Japanese staff and local workers feared for their lives. After consulting with the Japanese government and the procurement management agent, JICS (Japan International Cooperation System), the decision was finally made to evacuate all the Japanese personnel from Kandahar in April 2006. Construction was halted, and Nose and his team were forced to leave. For Nose and his coworkers in the construction company, it was heartbreaking to leave before the project was complete, but there was no other choice but to leave given the risk to their lives.

The KH Road project was handed over to a local construction company, and the Japanese portion of the road was completed in July 2009. Today, Nose still regrets having to leave before he could see the finished highway.

Nose still regrets having to leave before he could see the finished highway.

Assistance in Community Development

The evacuation of Japanese citizens from Kandahar in April 2006 also had a profound impact on “the JICA Support Program for Reintegration and Community Development in Kandahar (JSRP)” that Kawasaki had been running since 2005.

To help returnees reintegrate into society and establish sustainable livelihoods, this project planned to build capacity for community development for the Provincial Rural Rehabilitation & Development Department (PRRDD) of the Kandahar Province and provide supplies and equipment in an effort to realize self-

reliant community development. Under JSPR, PRRDD officials and members of local NGOs and community development councils (CDC) received capacity-building training, and small-scale infrastructure development projects with participatory decision-making processes were implemented as practical pilot projects for those stakeholders. (See Chapter 6 for more information)

As part of the training, Kawasaki led PRRDD officials and project staff on exposure trips throughout Afghanistan to learn more about their own country. They visited Herat in September 2005 and in Kapisa in May 2006 to see how officials in Rural Rehabilitation & Development Departments in other provinces in Afghanistan were implementing a similar initiative called the National Solidarity Program (NSP). Even after the Japanese left Kandahar, the PRRDD officials and project staff toured community development project sites in Balkh and Samangan in November 2006. The people of Kandahar, who are considered closed-minded even by Afghan standards, seemed very inspired by these trips to other parts of the country which are very different from each other.

In Kapisa, for instance, local female CDC members joined a workshop with the visitors from Kandahar. The officials from Kandahar were flabbergasted by the situation, which was nothing like back home, and were unable to speak with the female members.

When they visited Mazar-i-Sharif in Balkh province, Kawasaki tried to arrange accommodations with an Afghan staff he knew from his time on the Urgent Rehabilitation Program, but the members from Kandahar said they were afraid to stay somewhere that a strange Tajik had arranged. In the end, one of the members went in advance to check the lodging facility in the flesh. Even though Kawasaki said he worked with this person for several years, the members refused to listen to him. Kawasaki was taken aback that they would not trust someone of a different ethnicity even though he was a fellow countryman.

The security situation deteriorated, and all the Japanese personnel, including Kawasaki and his team, were forced to leave Kandahar in April 2006. The project office was moved to Kabul in June, but the Afghan staff remained in Kandahar. The Japanese officers in Kabul setup a system in which they maintained contact with Kandahar via e-mail and telephone. The project continued thanks to the efforts of the Afghan staff who stayed behind in Kandahar, but Kawasaki was saddened that he and his team could not be on site and had to manage the training project from afar. Eventually, even though strides were made in these community development projects on the ground, the team had to shift some of its focus to capacity building and system improvement for community development led by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), all while keeping an eye on future community development efforts. They beefed up training for MRRD employees and wrote guidelines and manuals for training and community development. When the project concluded in late February 2009, the project office in Kandahar was closed.

Security worsened even further, which made it difficult even for the Afghan staff to continue working on the project, so the JICA Kandahar Office was closed completely in March 2010.

Kandahar in the Following Years

Some of the Afghans who worked alongside the Japanese on their country's reconstruction efforts have since been lost.

Safia Amajan, the chief of the Woman's Affairs Department in the Kandahar Province who had worked with Kumiko Kasai, was assassinated on her way to work in September 2006. She was 63. A powerful advocate for the women's rights, she used to tell people about wearing mini-skirts in the 1960s and 1970s. She had been working to expand the bread-baking project for war widows that WFP had launched, but major obstacles toward independence for women still remained in Afghanistan, especially in Kandahar,

and there were probably some people who did not like the idea of independent women. Amajan had said that she wanted to visit Japan, if only once, before she died, so Kasai's only consolation was the fact that she was able to bring Amajan to Japan in July 2006 for JICA training program.

The former PRRDD director Abdul Latif Ashna, who actively worked to promote the JICA Support Program for Reintegration and Community Development (JSPR) in Kandahar and later became the Vice Governor of Kandahar Province, was killed by a suicide bomber in January 2011. Kawasaki, who worked with Ashna for a long time, was deeply saddened by his death. The poor security situation in Kandahar remained unchanged after 2010, and several of the local staff that Kawasaki's team worked with packed up their families and moved to Kabul in fear of being attacked for having worked at a foreign aid agency.

Over the years, the Japanese have left their mark in Kandahar. Kandahar's waterworks system was built in the 1970s with aid from Japan. When Hisao Ushiki entered Kandahar in 2003, he visited a water supply station and found that the Japanese pumps were still in working order more than 30 years later. Abdulaziz Abdullah, an engineer who had maintained the pumps, introduced himself as a student of Toshio Takakura, the last JICA expert stationed there before the Soviet invasion. He said, "What Afghanistan needs most from Japan right now is not money or equipment, but Japanese people who will train Afghans for the reconstruction effort." Takao Kume, who was involved in the installation of the Kandahar waterworks in 1973 as an OTCA (Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency; the predecessor to JICA) expert, revisited Kandahar in 2005. He was deeply moved to find that the large concrete tank built on a hill in the western part of the city to adjust the water volume and water pressure of the water distribution network could still be seen from the city. This large tank apparently continued to

“Afghanistan needs Japanese people who will train Afghans for the reconstruction effort.”

function during the Taliban era, after being repaired with assistance from WHO. It seems that Japan's time in Kandahar was well spent.



Concrete water tank built in 1973 by Japanese assistance in Kandahar (photo taken in May 2005)
Photo: Hisao Ushiki

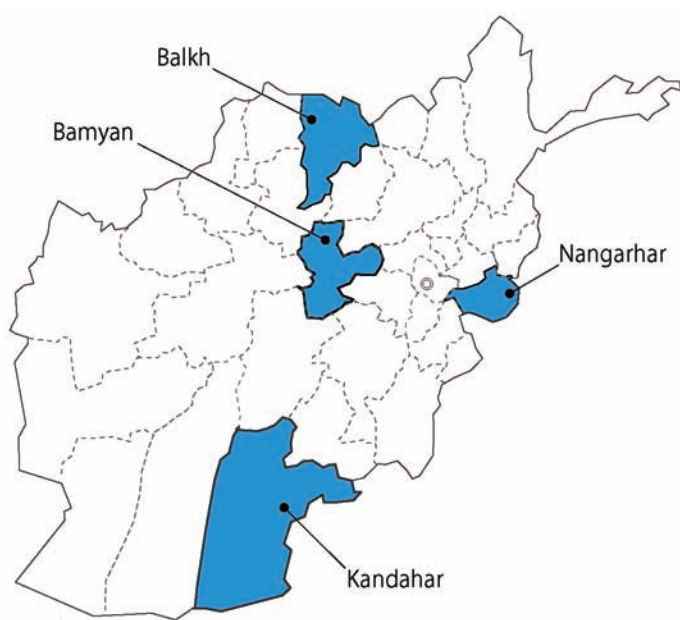
On March 13th, 2011, only two days after the Great East Japan Earthquake, the mayor of Kandahar, Ghulam Haidar Hamidi, announced that the city would donate \$50,000 to the disaster relief fund for Japan. He told reporters, “I know \$50,000 is not a lot of money for a country like Japan, but it is to show appreciation from the people in Kandahar”. With this, a new page was added to the long history of friendship between Japan and Kandahar. However, tragically, Mayor Hamidi was assassinated on July 27th, 2011. It is still unclear how the next chapter in this saga will be written, but there are many Japanese who hope that one day, after Kandahar stabilizes, they can go back and work with the local people in the reconstruction effort once again.

“I know this is not big money for Japan, but it is to show appreciation from the people in Kandahar.”

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Chapter 6:

Building a New State that Connects the Government and the People



Community-Driven Development

Since 2001, a massive amount of aid has streamed into Afghanistan, but given the Afghan government's extremely low institutional capacity, most donors have chosen to sidestep the government system and provide basic services directly to local communities. In contrast, other donors, including Japan, have been quietly working to bolster the government's administrative capacity. Efforts to develop human resources for the government are gradually making gains. However, there are almost no points of contact between the people receiving direct aid and the government, whose policy-making capacity is still weak. The formulation of a Constitution and the election of a president and national parliamentary members are events that are far-removed

from people's daily lives. Even if life has improved after the war, Afghan people cannot learn to trust the new government if most of the aid is provided by foreigners and NGOs.

Against this backdrop, community-driven development projects are being pursued in an attempt to build connections between the state and society in Afghanistan. These projects provide public services to respond to everyday issues about which the people have opinions. If there is not enough government funding, the people do not rely solely on foreign assistance, but contribute what they can. Starting from small communities, these initiatives aim to slowly but surely build a relationship between the government and the people that may be the norm in peaceful countries.

National Solidarity Program (NSP)

Afghanistan's civil society and economy has been battered by the more than 20-year-long civil war, and farming and stockbreeding have suffered tremendously from a series of droughts since 1998. Poverty is severe, especially in rural areas. A nationwide survey conducted in 2007 and 2008 revealed that approximately 36% of the people in rural villages were living below the poverty line. Only 19.8% of the people had access to safe water, and only 32.5% had electricity. Not only were local governing bodies and rural communities devastated during the war, but government services in rural areas were ignored because the warlords believed that controlling the capital of Kabul was a sign of the government's legitimacy. In Afghanistan, where 80% of the population live in rural areas and 59% are engaged in farming or stockbreeding, the reconstruction and development of farming villages is a must for peace and stability. Expectations are high for participatory community development projects to reopen the dialogue between the government and the people.

The World Bank spearheaded community development work in Afghanistan. In 2003, the National Solidarity Program

(NSP) was established in cooperation with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). Since there is no village-level government structure in Afghanistan, there are no systems that allow the local people to tell the government about their immediate development needs. Therefore, the NSP aims to bolster the management skills of communities, provide training, improve infrastructure, help invigorate economic activities, and create local councils to function as bottom-up community decision-making organizations as well as to encourage people to improve the infrastructure and services they require for day-to-day living. According to MRRD Deputy Minister Wais Ahmad Barmak, “The people and communities of Afghanistan have lost trust and confidence in each other because of the war. We believe that the NSP is extremely important because it aims to rebuild communities and improve basic services in a divided society.”

The first stage of the NSP is to organize Community Development Councils (CDCs), after which the second stage starts, which is to implement development projects chosen by the CDCs.

It takes about two years to implement both stages in a given community. MRRD’s regional bureaus, the Provincial Departments of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (PRRD), organize the communities by creating groups of 25 to 300 households while receiving advice and guidance from NGOs and international organizations acting as facilitating partners (FPs).

The next step is to establish Community Development Councils (CDCs), which are self-governing residents’ associations, in each community and to elect CDC members by secret ballot. Each CDC is composed of 5 to 15 members, who all work on a volunteer basis, and members elect four officials—chairperson, deputy chairperson, treasurer and secretary—from among their ranks.

In the second stage of the NSP, each community drafts a development plan based on their needs, selecting priority development projects. CDC members, with the help of FPs,

“NSP is important because it rebuilds communities and improves basic services in a divided society.”



Discussion in local communities

draft their proposals and submit them to the MRRD. The MRRD provides each CDC with block grants totaling \$200 per household, and the CDCs use these funds to implement their highest priority projects. Given the limitation of the funds, the role of the CDCs in selecting their priority projects is very important. One of the regulations states that 10% of the total project budget must be borne by the community, which the residents often cover by providing their own labor and materials. To maintain and operate the facilities that they build, residents may collect user fees or manage them on their own: the project emphasizes the responsible participation of residents. In addition, 10% of the budget must be used to fund projects for women. Residents either provide their own labor for development projects or subcontract the work, but most of the projects deal with improving the village infrastructure: building village roads, providing water to the village via shallow or deep wells, electrifying the village with small hydroelectric or diesel power generators, installing irrigation ditches, building schools and clinics, etc. Many of the projects targeting women focus on offering

literacy education or providing support for household industries such as carpet weaving.

In Afghanistan, the shura, traditional councils of elders and influential persons, used to handle all of the problems in a village. However, they are comprised primarily of elderly residents and religious leaders, many of them have never received a formal education, and they have not always represented the collective opinion of the community. In contrast, CDCs members are elected by secret ballot. As they have to hold regular meetings, keep meeting minutes, maintain accounting records, issue reports, and oversee negotiations with the facilitating partners (FPs) and construction companies, many communities have chosen to elect educated younger residents. Some shura that previously held a monopoly over local interests have demanded that their members be included



Local villagers working on construction

in the CDC without election, but the NSP—in accordance with its national standardized manual—insists on membership by election. In many of the regions where CDCs have been established, the roles of the CDCs and the shura have become clearer, with the former in charge of community development and the latter overseeing religious and social issues. In many cases, CDCs have taken over the role of the shura on issues related to community development. Shura members who are trusted by the people have been elected to CDCs, but there are also communities where shura have lost local support and have virtually disappeared. Residents who are capable of implementing development projects often work in the CDCs while receiving advice from the shura. The mechanism of having elected community leaders make decisions is gradually taking root in villages around the country.

The NSP has completed phase one (2003–2007) and phase two (2007–2010), and the Board of the World Bank approved phase three in June 2010. In the first two phases, CDCs were established in areas throughout Afghanistan with the focus on implementing development projects in response to the local needs. By January 2011, 25,093 CDCs had been established and 53,499 development projects had been approved, among which 44,747 were successfully completed. As it is estimated that 38,000 CDCs will be needed to cover all of the rural areas, CDCs for the remaining regions will be established in phase three of the project. Another aim of phase three is to strengthen existing CDCs. Those CDCs that successfully implemented development projects during the first two phases will be provided with a second round of funding for development projects as well as support to enhance their governance.

The Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF), funded by the Japanese government, in the World Bank has been allocated to the NSP and has made a significant contribution to its implementation.

Japanese Assistance to NSP

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the involvement of Japanese experts from JICA in community development projects began with assistance for refugee reintegration in Kandahar. JICA, which viewed Kandahar as a priority region, launched the JICA Support Program for Reintegration and Community Development in Kandahar (JSPR) in January 2005. By selecting the villages around Kandahar where refugees and internally displaced persons were living and strengthening the government and civic services that had been lost due to the long war and outflow of refugees, the program aimed to help returning refugees reintegrate into society and establish sustainable livelihoods.

International NGOs played an important part in implementing the NSP, but the JICA focused on training local NGO staff under JSPR since it realized the need to improve their capacity with an eye on the long term. Nevertheless, the local NGOs, while used to working on emergency reconstruction projects, were unfamiliar with sustainability-orientated community development, so Shozo Kawasaki and his team of Japanese experts, who have been working in Kandahar since the initial provision of Urgent Rehabilitation Support Project, taught them how to implement development projects from scratch. In the beginning, the local NGOs were unable to compete with the international NGOs, but after gaining some skills, they were able to hold their own because they were cheaper, more knowledgeable about the local situation and were involved for the longer term.

Some of these local NGOs became facilitating partners (FPs) for community development projects and worked on village water supply, rural electrification and retaining wall repair projects in 10 villages. To improve the living environment in rural areas, training was provided on hand pump repair. As a result, community technicians in Dand district learned how to make repairs that previously required a trip to the nearest town to find a repairman.

The 36 trainees ended up repairing 672 hand pumps in the year and a half from the time of training until August 2007.

JSPR community development projects minimized communities' reliance on external resources while bolstering the local residents' ability to carry out development work so as to make the outcomes of NSP community development projects more sustainable. JSPR assistance for development projects was a mere third of the funds provided by the NSP. Since outside funding was low, each CDC had to implement their development projects while keeping costs in check, so they increased the amount of labor provided by local residents, and in turn, accomplished projects with a higher sense of ownership. CDC members were tasked with discussing a long-term development vision in an effort to encourage the formulation of development plans that were as comprehensive as possible. A handful of CDCs have since used these development policies to request support from donors and government agencies.

JSPR was to conclude in March 2009, but given the deteriorating security situation, Japanese experts evacuated in April 2006 and were unable to provide direct support to the people on the ground. Since JICA was forced to limit its support for the program, it switched its focus to training MRRD personnel in Kabul and creating community development models.

CDC Clustering Efforts

Based on its experience in Kandahar, JICA recognized the significant impact of community-driven development projects and started narrowing down ideas for a new community development assistance project while examining the results of JSPR in Kandahar and NSP in other areas.

Yodo Kakuzen, a JICA Headquarters official involved in the designing of this new project, recalls that they had several other options in mind to support small infrastructure constructions, e.g., hiring local contractors, before his mission to observe the result

of the NSP. However, while studying NSP projects in Kandahar Province in the south, Balkh Province in the north and Bamyan Province in central Afghanistan, he learned about residents building schools, wells and roads by hand and was inspired by the achievements through community-wide cooperation despite each community's small size. What Kakuzen saw was the resilience of people who, despite there being little or no hope of receiving public works or government services, were trying to create their own living environment without merely relying on assistance from outside. The desire of JICA colleagues including Kakuzen to encourage these citizens' groups to actively engage in community development came in the form of the Inter-Communal Rural Development Project (IRDP).

Kakuzen was impressed at the resilience of people trying to create their own living environment.

The IRDP, run by eight Japanese experts from 2005 until 2010, was based on the NSP model but aimed to generate a bigger impact by improving cooperative ties among communities. It did this by grouping three to seven nearby CDCs into Cluster Community Development Councils (CCDCs) and providing assistance to these new entities. By creating larger groups, the project made it possible for residents to respond to development needs that exceeded the scope of individual CDCs. CDCs, for example, have only enough budgets to build a road within a CDC community. The members usually do not consider the collaboration with villages outside of the CDC. CCDC, on the other hand, can build medium- and long-distance roads that connect villages in neighboring CDCs, and dialogues between residents from different villages naturally give a higher priority to projects that benefit multiple villages. By expanding the relationship between the people and the government over a wider range, the IRDP aimed to promote bottom-up state-building akin to bricklaying.

JICA implemented IRDP in Balkh, Bamyan and Kandahar Provinces, thereby creating 19 CCDCs and executing 22 projects. Most of these development projects could be divided into two

types: infrastructure projects—such as the construction of roads connecting villages, clinics for multiple communities, and small hydroelectric facilities and irrigation dams—and livelihood improvement projects, such as skills training for goat breeding or carpet weaving. All of these development projects were decided in CCDC-level discussions. While CDC-level development projects were decided at meetings within the respective villages, CCDCs had to coordinate competing interests since each village had different needs.

Takao Mitsuishi, lead consultant of the IRDP expert team from Katahira Engineering International, experienced the difficulty of building CCDCs first-hand. Even if they were considered neighboring villages, some communities were actually several dozen kilometers apart, which made it hard to gather people. In many cases, the roads between villages were unpaved, and ruts would form when it rained, making travel difficult even with four-wheel drive. Sometimes it took several hours just to reach the next village. In particular, if the neighboring village was of a different ethnicity, it was difficult to organize the people since almost no one had experience working on joint development projects: the project manager's struggle was immense. In some areas, there was a past history of fighting between villages. For safety reasons, Japanese personnel were unable to freely enter the villages to oversee projects. One of the biggest conundrums for Mitsuishi and his team was not being able to assess the situation on the ground because projects were administered indirectly through the Afghan staff and local consultants on contract. Nevertheless, everyone hoped that by working to overcome historical differences and current problems, the goal of the NSP and community development to “rekindle social ties” between villages would become a reality.

Since there were not many examples of implementing community development projects with clustered CDCs such as

IRDP, JICA aimed to use its work in the first three provinces as a model for CDC clustering and expand the project to other regions. Mitsuishi and his team, while supporting the locals in their clustering efforts, formulated guidelines outlining clustering methods and processes, key considerations and examples, and held training sessions for Afghan government officials on these guidelines. Mitsuishi's goal was to provide the Afghan government with the ability to take over the community development projects implemented with the clustering method once the IRDP was concluded.

Since Afghanistan is a big country, having CDCs operating in isolation from one another would not allow the central government to sufficiently receive feedback from the people. If CDCs could collect opinions from the local people and hold discussions with CDCs in neighboring villages, thereby creating a consensus of opinion at the Cluster CDC (CCDC) level, and if, in the future, the CCDCs could provide this feedback to the provincial governments, the voice of each and every citizen could be conveyed to the central government. The clustering project has only just begun, but continuing these efforts will surely help create a new Afghanistan.

The voice of each and every citizen could be conveyed to the government.

Life-Giving Reservoir that Generated Solidarity among Neighboring Villages

Several small steps taken by communities to help rebuild their country have been witnessed.

The CCDC in the village of Sheberto in Bamyan Province built an irrigation reservoir. This region has a history of disputes over water resources, but relations among villages are starting to improve thanks to the establishment of a CCDC.

When Rumiko Nomura, who oversaw community development projects from JICA Afghanistan Office, visited Sheberto in May 2007, it was still snowing. The village of Sheberto is located at

an altitude of 3,000 meters and is a 90-minute drive from central Bamyan. When she arrived, Nomura saw the residents of three neighboring villages working together to build an irrigation reservoir. The deputy lead consultant, Yoshihisa Noda (Katahira Engineering International), explained the situation, “The project was suspended since we couldn’t work in the winter, but we’ve completed the flood gate, which is the most important part, so all we have left to do is finish the walls.” Located on a mountainside, the reservoir was designed to gather water from rivers fed by melted snow from the mountaintops. The collected water would be used to irrigate crops in the spring and summer when precipitation was low. It was a “life-giving reservoir” that made effective use of precious water resources.

Nomura left the construction site and went to a nearby village to participate in a meeting with local representatives. About 20 CCDC members had gathered at a house where they sat in a circle on the floor of a tiny room that measured around 16 m². Bamyan Province is predominantly inhabited by Mongoloid Hazara people, who have similar facial features to the Japanese, so Nomura felt at home there.

The CCDC chairperson told her about the positive effects of the reservoir. “Before this project began, there wasn’t much communication between the villages. If there was a problem, the village elders would just gather and hold a meeting. There were also many disputes about water among the villages since this area experiences water shortages in the summer. But those disputes disappeared after three of the villages started working on the reservoir. Last year, there was a drought affecting all of our villages, but there was no fighting like there used to be. We avoided fighting because we all had high hopes that the reservoir would be completed next year. Our treasurer is a leader from another village, but we were not on good terms before the project started. If we had issues with each other’s villages, we would complain to

“Those disputes disappeared after three villages started working on the reservoir.”

the government instead of talking to each other. However, thanks to this project, our relationship has improved to the point where we can talk to each other face-to-face.” When he finished, the chairperson smiled at the treasurer who was sitting next to him. The treasurer, embarrassed, turned away. Looking at these two men, Nomura realized the strong ties that this project was forging among the villages.

“Thanks to this project, we can now talk to each other face-to-face.”

Sheberto and the surrounding areas make the most of their income from herding and carpet weaving, but when the reservoir is finished, it will breathe life back into agriculture as well as herding by creating large expanses of pasture. One of the villagers told Nomura, “Once the reservoir is finished, the water table will rise. Before, our well levels dropped during the seasonal water shortages, and we didn’t have enough drinking water, but the new reservoir will solve this problem.” In a country like Japan where water is easily available, it is hard to grasp just how important water is in daily life. But in a country with poor water resources



Reservoir constructed by local villagers in Sheberto

like Afghanistan, water shortages lead to disputes among villages and can even lead to murder. Nomura was filled with joy when she realized that her job hadn't just improved people's lives—it had strengthened solidarity among villages.

In Sayedabad, another village in Bamyan Province, disputes over water raged between upstream and downstream communities. After using clean water, the upstream villages would dispose of their wastewater in the river, leaving only dirty water for the villages downstream. The CCDC in this region decided to build a simple waterworks system that would pipe good-quality water from further upstream to each village. Now completed, this facility provides clean water to all of the villages along the river. The village furthest downstream sits high upon a hill. In the past, the villagers, primarily women, would have to make their way down a cliff to fetch water, but with the completion of this new facility, there is now a water supply next to the village, which has greatly reduced the women's workload. To respond to the people's needs, this waterworks facility was later expanded, and now the CCDC collects water fees from residents to pay for maintenance. Before this, people never visited other villages and knew nothing about each other's lives, but this process has helped people within the CCDC's purview to share their views and interact with each other.

Solidarity Transcending Ethnic Divisions

There are also a handful of cases in which people of different ethnic backgrounds learned to understand each other by working together, or in other words, contributed to strengthening solidarity. When implementing development projects, CCDCs must first hold discussions to select projects that can be achieved within their limited budget. They must implement the projects under their own capacity and continue to maintain what they have built after completion. Over the long term, this system of discussions and

teamwork seems to have generated relationships of cooperation among residents regardless of ethnicity.

Among the IDRP project regions, Balkh Province was one of the more multiethnic areas, and some of the communities undertaking projects included villages that used to be hostile to each other. Despite the fact that multiethnic people had learned to coexist over the years, this ethnic diversity made it difficult to organize CDCs, and the ethnic composition of the overarching clusters was even more complicated. According to a local resident, the five CCDCs formed in Balkh Province with the support of the IRDP used the cluster approach to run sub-projects, which facilitated discussion among the different ethnic groups and subsequently strengthened solidarity among the communities.

Although Bamyan is predominantly Hazara, the Sayghan district is home to mostly the Tajik population. In fact, there is only one Hazara village in the district: Sayed Baba. Since it is the only Hazara village in a Tajik region, Sayed Baba had little contact with the surrounding villages. Disputes over water with the other villages on the river had continued for many years. The Sayed Baba CCDC decided to build a small hydroelectric facility, but they had trouble deciding on a location since it would restrict upstream villages' access to water. This CCDC gave villages that previously had no relationship with each other a chance to talk, and after mutual consultations, they all agreed on a location that allowed the CCDC to continue with project implementation and management.

The more they debate among different ethnic groups, the stronger solidarity among communities.

Women's CDCs

NSP rules state that 10% of the funds must be allocated to projects for women, but there are still parts of Afghanistan where women cannot freely express their opinions. The gender makeup of CDCs varies widely depending on each community's ethnic background, status and other social factors. It is easier to create mixed-gender CDCs in communities with a higher level

of education, communities near urban areas and regions with abundant water resources where women have more economic clout. On the other hand, separate women's CDCs have been established in communities where CDCs are dominated by men and cannot easily reflect the opinions or wishes of women. Since the NSP scheme only allows each community to establish one official CDC, the women's CDCs transmit their opinions to the men's CDCs where priorities are set for projects. It was said to be hard to administer mixed-gender CDCs and easier to incorporate women's voices by creating women's groups within the CDCs.

Based on these experiences in the NSP, separate CCDCs were established under the IRDP. Under this system, the men's and women's CCDC each create a prioritized list of sub-projects, which are converted into a single list and taken back to each CCDC for consideration, upon which the priorities are decided. This gave the CCDCs the opportunity to both compare each other's project priority rankings and reconsider the other group's ideas. This technique made it possible for communities to realize projects in response to women's needs.

The CCDCs have given women an opportunity to voice their opinions and participate in economic activities, which, in turn, has increased women's economic influence and raised their status within the community. Increasingly more men are showing respect for women who have a source of income and can earn money for the family. In Balkh Province, for example, one CCDC ran a sewing sub-project, from which some of the participants were able to earn a steady cash income. The participation of women has improved livelihoods, and is starting to have a positive impact on the increasing role of women in the community.

Nayak in the Yakawaran district in Bamyan Province not only has separate men's and women's CCDCs, its men's CCDC has official female members who actively participate. This CCDC built a small hydroelectric power facility and transmission lines, and



Women voting for project selection (Bamyan)

since its completion, women have played a part in the operation and maintenance of the plant. The power plant operation requires the community to collect fees from residents to cover maintenance costs, and the women have provided their know-how to ensure higher collection rates. Since the electricity is used for indoor lighting, ironing, and other day-to-day activities, the women are more in tune with how the electricity is being used. Their knowledge has contributed to plant maintenance.

In Sheberto, Bamyan Province, the men's CCDC built a reservoir, while the women's CCDC decided to start a carpet weaving project. Since each 10-meter carpet fetches \$80 to \$100, the project has been invaluable in increasing women's income. In fact, the reservoir project has also helped improve the lives of women, especially those who are pregnant and those with children, since it is no longer necessary to walk long distances to fetch water. When starting their CCDC and electing a chairperson among themselves, they devised their own election method. According to them, the women now feel that they are active members of society since they each fulfill a certain role, such as proposing project ideas or gathering ideas. More fully aware of their identity

Men have grown accustomed to consulting with women and asking their opinions.

as CCDC members, there are some women who now participate in meetings with men and actively voice their opinions as part of the community's decision-making process. The men, who have grown accustomed to consulting with women and asking their opinion, can sometimes be heard commenting on how they respect women's roles. With this new-found confidence, women have become increasingly active outside the IRDP. In one case, the women launched a literacy education project with help from another international organization. Many of the women cannot read and write because they could not attend school during the war, but they are hoping to further boost their confidence by advancing literacy education.



Carpet weaving project by women in Sheberto

Future Challenges of Nation-Building

To further expand upon the community development methods derived from the clustering of CDCs under the IRDP, the Government of Japan used \$1 million from the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) to begin providing support to the

World Bank's NSP-II Clustering Project. Under this project, the World Bank's NSP teams, which were already active across 60–70% of the country, applied the clustering techniques developed by JICA to undertake CCDC-led community development projects in the three provinces of Balkh, Bamyan and Nangarhar.

While the World Bank applies its operations manual for NSP project implementation and supporting NGO and UN agencies engaged in activities based thereon, an annex on the clustering process was added to the manual. This annex was created in close cooperation between Japanese experts working on the IRDP and the World Bank's NSP staff, which allowed Japan to enrich the manual with its experiences and lessons from IRDP. JICA continued to support clustering efforts by sending Mamoru Osada as an advisor to the Deputy Minister of the MRRD on community development and the clustering process. Isa Imazato was also dispatched as a JICA expert to the NSP, especially for enhancing project implementation and the clustering process.

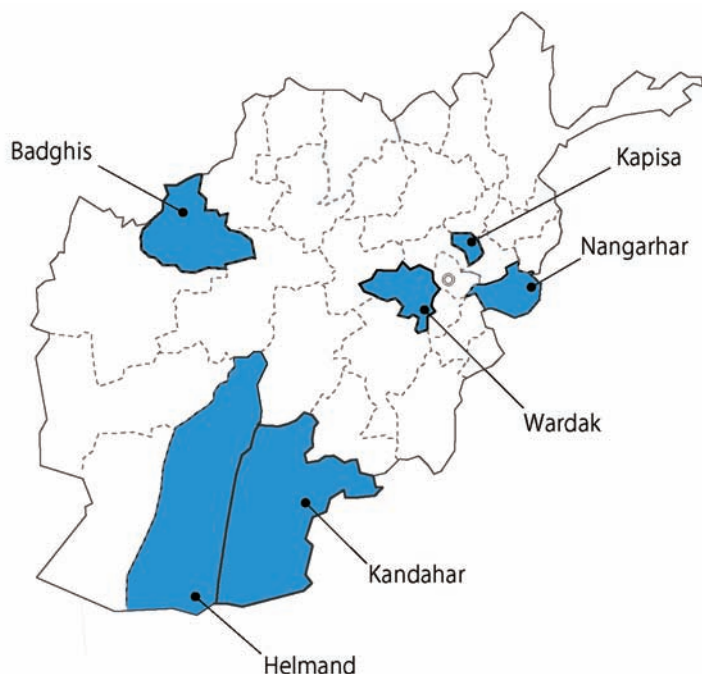
Clustering was still in its infancy, but given the situation where Afghan local governments were not functioning, efforts were undertaken to build a system that would deliver the voice of the people to the government, and these continue to this day. Nevertheless, the biggest challenge has been security. It is difficult for Japanese personnel to move around freely in Afghanistan's remote areas. Experts traveled with armed guards in Balkh Province. In regions such as Kandahar where Japanese personnel were forbidden to go, project administration had to be delegated entirely to local staff. Administering projects from a distance made it difficult to grasp the situation on the ground. The greater the technical expertise required, for example when building small hydroelectric power plants or simple waterworks systems, the more likely projects tended to fall behind schedule. Nomura, despite being in charge of rural development in the JICA Afghanistan Office, felt frustrated when she couldn't visit the villages. The few

times that she was able to visit a rural area, the village landscape that she saw and the discussions she had with villagers involved in projects left a lasting impression on her. She met people who were working hard to get by despite the harsh natural environment and living conditions. The more villagers she met, the more painfully aware she became of how important human security is for post-war reconstruction.

Another challenge is sustainability. While the NSP continues with the help of the international community, the aid will not last forever. The NSP is a national program under the jurisdiction of the MRRD, but budgets for program staff wages and development projects are covered entirely by external funding. This means that NSP personnel are not public servants, but contract workers who risk losing their jobs once the money runs out. Anticipating the conclusion of the NSP, the MRRD established the Community-Led Development Department (CLDD) in 2006. It began assigning two social organizers (SOs) to every district in the country, but improving their skills will continue to be an issue as public servant salary is low and talent is hard to come by. The MRRD continues to work on institution building within the ministry and the provincial authorities. One such effort was realized by the JICA's support in creating the Change Management Project for the Ministry to bring the lessons of community development experiences such as the NSP into the entire operations of the MRRD.

At present, CDCs and CCDCs are simply volunteer organizations, so there is no way of knowing how long their community work can be sustained. There is a debate on the possibility of turning CDCs into a formal public institution as village councils, but no firm decision has been made. Strengthening ground-level community organizations based on the experience with CDCs and CCDCs and fortifying and stabilizing the relationship between these groups and the district and province-level governments remain major issues for nation-building in Afghanistan.

Reconciliation and Its Challenges



Two major challenges to nation-building in Afghanistan are creating systems to reconnect the state and society and considering how to incorporate those citizens who do not agree with the shape the country is taking. Many areas are still unsafe because of people who are unhappy with the government's approach to rebuilding the nation. Creating some kind of system to alleviate this dissatisfaction is essential. Efforts are under way to move the nation-building process away from one based on weapons and force, to one that ensures peaceful participation in society and provides opportunities for people to voice their opinions.

Widening Disparity

Takuro Fujii, who has been keeping tabs on Afghanistan through his work for an NGO, the Japanese embassy, and now at JICA, for more than 10 years, even before the US military actions, sees signs of danger in the country's distorted environment.

The reconstruction effort undertaken with assistance from the international community since 2001 has certainly bolstered

Afghanistan's economy. In the 10 years since this new nation-building effort has begun, medium-rise buildings have been sprouting up in the cities, and the number of buildings visibly scarred from the civil war has decreased. Dazzling new shops and eateries now line the shopping districts. In addition to medium-rise apartment buildings, new high-rise luxury condominiums have been built, and there are even some Afghans who can afford to live in them. One of the more noticeable sights in Kabul is the giant wedding halls bedecked with neon signs. It is not unusual for couples to get married in a hall with room for 1000 guests. The shopping center (more like a giant convenience store) that was bombed on January 28, 2011 had shelves stocked with imported foods. Even though the prices are almost the same as those in Japan, most of the customers were local Afghans. The number of people walking the streets clad in dusty traditional garb has fallen as more and more people have started to don stylish western clothing. Afghanistan has certainly grown more prosperous. The progress in the capital of Kabul is remarkable, but even other cities are seeing an improvement.

However, as inflation remains high, there are still many people who have yet to see this prosperity, and are forced to live in harsh conditions. Conditions in the rural villages have improved since the Taliban era, but this is often due to drug trafficking. In regions where efforts to eradicate drug production have damaged the local economy, a suitable replacement crop has yet to take root, and the disparity with bustling urban areas is growing wider by the day.

The Need for Reconciliation

In the political as well as economic spheres, not every citizen has been involved in the ongoing nation-building efforts. In today's Afghanistan, peace cannot be won through war alone. Most experts agree that to rebuild Afghanistan, reconciliation between the government and the armed insurgents is essential. The inability

to reconcile with the Taliban, which effectively controlled 95% of Afghanistan until 2001, was a missed opportunity that is seen as one of the reasons for the country's current instability. Discussions are under way on how to win back that "missed opportunity".

In 2006, the British army that was stationed in the Musa Qala district of Helmand Province withdrew and delegated authority over security to the local residents. Peace came to the district, but it was temporary, only lasting a few months until US military intervention. This is said to have happened because leaving security in the hands of the local residents allowed the Taliban to run rampant in the district. However, looking back after the long battle and huge loss of life, some observers now think that Musa Qala could have been used as a peace-building model.

Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General from 2001 until 2004, made several cautionary statements including the following: "One of my own biggest mistakes was not to speak to the Taliban in 2002 and 2003. It was not possible to get them in the tent at the Bonn Conference (in 2001) because of 9/11....But immediately after that, we should have spoken to those who were willing to speak to us." The report issued by the Century Foundation Report¹ that Brahimi co-chaired noted in 2011 that now is the best moment to begin serious negotiations with the Taliban. The report points out that since neither the government nor the Taliban can expect to vanquish the other militarily, the realistic option is to seek a political solution. It suggests that since the US and most other countries have announced military withdrawals in the coming years, the administration must, before these foreign forces leave, agree on a new political framework as well as ways to involve the Taliban in the political process by way of negotiations that guarantee that the foreign military presence will not be indefinite.

¹ Lakhdar Brahimi and Thomas R. Pikerling. 2011. "Afghanistan: Negotiating Peace." Report of The Century Foundation International Task Force on Afghanistan in Its Regional and Multilateral Dimensions. The Century Foundation Press.

“It is so crucial for peace-builders to have reconciliation in the initial stage of peace-building.”

Presidential Advisor Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, who administrated the DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration) and DIAG (Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups) disarmament programs and served as the minister in charge of Afghanistan’s reconciliation program in 2010 remarked, “One of the biggest lessons from Afghan peace-building is that it is so crucial for peace-builders to have reconciliation in the initial stage of peace-building and to encourage the involvement of as many political forces as possible in politics during the initial stages, including those who were your enemies during the war. The history of Afghanistan shows us that nation-building will face major difficulties if we fail to make this effort.”

Most of the Pashtun representatives who attended the Bonn Conference in 2001 were exiled political leaders, and the Pashtun people in the southern and eastern parts of the country, where the Taliban had strong support, did not recognize them as their representatives. Experts indicate that this sense of alienation was a major reason behind the Taliban’s subsequent resurgence in primarily Pashtun regions.

Failure of the PTS (Strengthening Peace Program)

To combat the erosion of government control in the growing number of regions where the Taliban were regaining support, the Karzai administration launched a reconciliation program called PTS (the Dari abbreviation for the English “Strengthening Peace Program”) in 2005. Daisaku Higashi, who left his job at NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) to pursue doctoral research at the University of British Columbia in Canada, conducted field work in Afghanistan in February, May and June 2008, in which he closely examined the PTS and its achievements, problem areas and potential areas for improvement.

Higashi conducted a survey in the provinces of Kandahar, Wardak and Kapisa and concluded that the PTS was almost

entirely nonfunctional and had lost credibility with both the rebel forces and the international community. Between 2005, when the PTS was launched, and 2008, Higashi found that implementing the PTS had become impossible due to the dwindling area that the government effectively controlled and the spread of the Taliban presence. Higashi's research revealed that even if insurgents agreed to reconciliation, attacks from the US military would not cease, they would have no means of support and would not be able to protect themselves from Taliban reprisals. Taliban commanders were dissatisfied with the fact that, even if they agreed to reconciliation, their names would not be removed from the UN sanctions list. Meanwhile, the international community was displeased with the opaque accounting standards and the credibility of the lists of people who agreed to join the PTS.

Higashi's research also indicated that an overwhelmingly large percentage of the general public wanted the government to reconcile with the Taliban and other anti-government forces. In a survey of 260 people, over 90% of Pashtuns and 86% of Tajiks responded that reconciliation with the Taliban and other insurgents was the first priority in establishing Afghan peace. Likewise, 98% of Pashtuns and 69% of Tajiks supported "the idea of a coalition between the Karzai government and the Taliban." Higashi was surprised at how strongly the Afghan people felt about seeking peace through dialogue and reconciliation.

Based on his research, Higashi provided an analysis of the situation in a report submitted to the UN PKO Department in October 2008. In it, he stressed the need to establish a radically overhauled reconciliation program in order to break the vicious cycle in which the Taliban insurgency worsened security, thereby cutting off government services and leading to increased support for the Taliban. More specifically, he proposed to (1) "...initiate rearranging a new reconciliation committee composed of every important actor, such as the Presidential Office, Ministry of

Interior, Ministry of Defense, UNAMA, ISAF, and American Forces engaging in counterterrorism; (2) Start a massive program to create vocational centers throughout the country for both Taliban soldiers and non-Taliban people; (3) Pass a UN resolution to remove Taliban members from the UN Sanction List if they join in the new reconciliation program” in order to “... shake the ‘moderate Taliban leaders’; [and] (4) Negotiate with national Taliban who dislike the al-Qaida or Pakistan-driven terrorist infusions” to seek a political solution.

Moving towards a New Reconciliation Program

After coming to power in 2009, US President Barack Obama announced a new strategy for Afghanistan in March of that year. He declared, “In a country with extreme poverty that’s been at war for decades, there will also be no peace without reconciliation among former enemies. But there are also those who’ve taken up arms because of coercion, or simply for a price. These Afghans must have the option to choose a different course. And that’s why we will work with local leaders, the Afghan government, and international partners to have a reconciliation process in every province.”

“Those who’ve taken up arms because of coercion, or simply for a price must have the option to choose a different course.”

Against this backdrop, Higashi reworked the findings of his field survey in Afghanistan and his proposal for a new reconciliation program into a book in which he continued to stress his argument: “Japan should take the lead in creating a new reconciliation program that can be trusted by people at every level of Afghanistan society”. After his book received media attention, the frequency of Higashi’s meetings with the Government of Japan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and JICA increased. When he visited the US, he also sensed a positive attitude from the office of Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Higashi’s ideas for a new reconciliation program caught the eye of new DPJ (Democratic Party of

Japan)-led administration ushered in after the Japanese general election in August 2009. Higashi had the opportunity to talk directly to Foreign Minister Okada. When Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and Foreign Minister Okada visited the US to attend the UN General Assembly, they met with President Barack Obama and State Secretary Hilary Clinton and explained that Japan was examining a new reconciliation program that included vocational training for former Taliban soldiers. In his speech at the UN General Assembly on September 24th, Prime Minister Hatoyama echoed this sentiment, “Japan will proactively support Afghanistan’s ... reconciliation and reintegration of insurgents [and] ... will make vital contributions in these areas, including possible reintegration assistance, such as vocational training...”

In November 2009, the Government of Japan announced its new strategy for Afghanistan, which officially included assistance for an Afghan government-led program of reconciliation with the insurgent forces as part of a three-pronged support package. The previous month when he visited Kabul, Minister of Foreign Affairs Okada told President Hamid Karzai that Japan was considering proactive support for Afghanistan that included financial support for a new Afghan-led reconciliation program.

Discussions on a New Reconciliation Program in Afghanistan

Higashi was officially hired as a UNAMA political officer on September 16, 2009 and was assigned to UNAMA headquarters in Kabul on December 21. In October, a hotel in Kabul was attacked, resulting in the tragic death of six UN workers. The situation on the ground was tense. Higashi’s boss was Director of Political Affairs Talatbek Masadykov, a Kyrgyz national who assisted with his field work in 2008, and Higashi became the team leader for the reconciliation and reintegration program at the UNAMA.

President Karzai, who had just entered his second term, gave a speech at his inauguration in November 2009 in which he declared

that his administration had “placed national reconciliation at the top of its peace-building policy” for his second term, and he made it clear to both the international community and the Afghan people that he was willing to negotiate a settlement with the Taliban. Based on the President’s statement, Presidential Advisor Stanekzai began preparations for the establishment of a new reconciliation program.

Higashi decided to compile a list of recommendations from UNAMA concerning program content. Using UNAMA’s domestic network, he sent a 12-page questionnaire to the Mission’s eight regional offices in order to collect their opinions. Program development would face three major hurdles.

The first problem was how to determine who belonged to the insurgency. In most cases, Taliban leaders and regional commanders were relatively well-known and could probably be identified, but the task became much more difficult when dealing with foot soldiers. In fact, there were suspicions that PTS personnel were having applications completed by internally displaced persons who weren’t Taliban soldiers.

The second issue was the need for different kinds of assistance tailored to each person’s rank as an incentive for agreeing to reconciliation. The government would need to prepare a range of effective incentives for the leaders, mid-level commanders and foot soldiers, respectively.

The final hurdle was the dilemma of inadvertently encouraging the general public to join the insurgency if those individuals in the Taliban were granted excessive incentives. Some officials thought that it may be more effective to provide community support if individual support was seen as a dangerous option, but this did not rule out the risk of regions or communities with good security joining the insurgency once incentives were offered. In fact, the International Security Assistance Force’s (ISAF) Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were already providing

reconstruction assistance focused on hospitals, roads and schools in the more dangerous areas to help reduce the number of attacks, but were facing a negative cycle in which relatively safe surrounding regions were turning into battlefields.

Many of the responses gathered from the eight UNAMA offices said that lasting peace could not be achieved without promoting dialogue and reconciliation with the Taliban leadership, including members of the Quetta Shura in Pakistan, not just with regional commanders and foot soldiers. However, opinions differed on whether to reconcile with the Taliban leadership first or to conduct parallel negotiations with the leadership and the mid-level commanders/foot soldiers. Furthermore, many of the respondents said that it would be more effective to offer regional commanders positions in the regional government than to just provide economic incentives, while others stressed the importance of providing community support equally to all communities, as much as possible.

UNAMA's Five Proposals

Based on the responses from the regional offices, Higashi drafted “UNAMA's Five Proposals for a New Reconciliation Program”, which are as follows:

- (1) Undertake reconciliation with Taliban leadership, not just with foot soldiers and mid-level commanders.
- (2) Engage in political negotiations with mid-level commanders. For example, offer them official positions in regional governments (district or provincial level).
- (3) As much as possible, provide community support equally to all communities.
- (4) Provide community support only if a certain degree of political stability and improved security can be anticipated.
- (5) Provide vocational training in cooperation with regional development projects and guarantee employment after training is completed.

The search for the answer to the ultimate question on reconciliation should be “Afghan-led”.

In March 2010, Higashi and Director of Political Affairs Masadykov began holding information sessions with Afghan government officials to persuade them of the merits of these proposals because they believed it was obvious that the search for the answer to the ultimate question of the conditions needed to ensure reconciliation between enemies who used to kill each other be “Afghan-led”. UNAMA was involved as a third party, but since some of the armed rebel forces were not ready to suddenly sit down for meetings at ISAF bases or Afghan government offices, it was UNAMA staff members with which they were most often willing to meet.

The Afghan government leaders were very proud people who detested being told what to do by the officials of international organizations. This made Higashi realize once again the importance of listening to the Afghan government’s opinions via Masadykov while working to humbly yet clearly present those opinions to the other party. Masadykov held constructive discussions with Presidential Advisor Stanekzai and Higashi repeated explanations to Stanekzai’s staff, paying due respect to their pride the whole time, in order to increase their understanding of “UNAMA’s Five Proposals”.

ISAF: The Power-Wielding Player

As preparations for the reconciliation program moved forward, ISAF, in particular, leveraged its power to step up its involvement. ISAF established the Reintegration Cell with a team of nearly 40 staff members and cooperated on various fronts with Presidential Advisor Stanekzai and his office.

ISAF’s involvement in the reconciliation program was a double-edged sword. As the failure of PTS shows, successful reconciliation in Afghanistan is impossible as long as ISAF and the US military fail to take the process seriously. At the same time, if ISAF were to take a leading role in the reconciliation and start wielding influence

over program administration, then there was a risk that the Afghan people might view the program as a military-led program to force a Taliban surrender.

One of the areas where UNAMA and ISAF did not see eye to eye was the rank of Taliban members who should be the primary target for reconciliation. UNAMA felt it was essential to reach political agreement with the Taliban leadership in order to ensure reconciliation, but many ISAF leaders thought that it would be more effective to target foot soldiers and mid-level commanders, that is, the people closer to the ground, in the Taliban and other armed insurgency groups. The new reconciliation program was dubbed the Peace and Reintegration Program, partly because the term ‘reintegration’, which communicates the nuance of reintegrating middle-class commanders and/or low-class warriors, is more widely acceptable than the term ‘reconciliation’, which hints of political negotiation and reconciliation with the Taliban top leaders.

Some UNAMA officials were concerned about supporting a program that might not allow reconciliation with the Taliban leadership, but Higashi knew that it was important for the program to effectively include negotiations with Taliban leadership, even if the program title included the word “reintegration”. Both President Karzai and Presidential Advisor Stanekzai were of the same opinion, so UNAMA relayed its uniform stance on the matter to ISAF while repeatedly reassuring the Afghan government that the program would include reconciliation with Taliban leaders. In the end, the final document clearly indicated that reconciliation would be attempted simultaneously at all levels: the strategic level (top leadership), the operational level (mid-level commanders) and the tactical level (regular soldiers). In witnessing this process unfold, Higashi often felt that the final decision of the Afghan government officials is what would define the program content.

Another difference between the two groups was the traditional

American belief that negotiations were only possible from a “position of strength”. Most of the ISAF leaders seemed to believe that the Taliban would probably not agree to negotiate if they felt they were in a position of strength, so ensuring the government’s military dominance first and foremost would persuade the Taliban to sit down for negotiations. Because of this policy, the United States increased its troops in 2010 and stepped up its attacks on the Taliban in the south, but the sentiment among the Afghan people was that they could not trust a negotiating partner who bolsters its military campaign on the one hand while proposing reconciliation on the other. This only served to reaffirm the difficulties involved in promoting reconciliation.

Risk of Military Action

Military action also carries the risk of evoking a sense of aversion because of incidents like accidental bombing. In July 2008, Takatoshi Hasebe, the supervisor of the Afghanistan program for JVC (Japan International Volunteer Center), received word from a local staff member that a relative of Dr. Nassim had died in a bombing. Dr. Nassim was the head of the clinic—the only one in the region—that JVC was running in the village of Gorek in Nangarhar Province. According to the staff member, the doctor rushed to be with the victims as soon as he heard the news. The culprit, an American bomb, killed 27 people. Previously in 2005, the mother of one of the JVC Afghan staff members was critically injured after accidentally being shot by a US soldier. Hasebe thinks that incidents like that can make the Afghan people lose trust in the foreign military, and consequently the Afghan government working closely with them. Then it becomes quite difficult to get locals to trust the national police and the army that are supposed to maintain public security. The Taliban may gain support in the vacuum.

Support for Communities

One key to the new reconciliation program was providing development assistance to communities. Higashi proposed using the framework of the National Solidarity Program (NSP), which was seen as the most successful program of its kind in Afghanistan, and Presidential Advisor Stanekzai was of the same opinion. However, the NSP supervisor was extremely cautious about involving the NSP, which was purely a development program, in the political process of reconciliation. NSP Executive Director of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) Tariq Ismati expressed his deep reservations over the possibility that fighting could erupt in once peaceful communities to Higashi who, in turn, presented him with “UNAMA’s Five Proposals”. Higashi tried to persuade him by explaining that UNAMA was firmly against a program that only supported communities in war zones or where soldiers who agreed to reconciliation lived.

In April, Presidential Advisor Stanekzai proposed providing full assistance to all communities in the first 111 districts targeted for the program, at least during the initial phase of operation. In response, Executive Director Ismati proposed using both the Peace and Reintegration Program and existing NSP funding for the next five or six years to implement a total of two community development projects in every area targeted for reconciliation as well as every non-targeted area. This served to quell concerns over a disparity in assistance between war zones and peaceful regions. More specifically, Peace and Reintegration Program funding would be used to provide the first round of community support to those 111 districts (from among approximately 400 districts in all of Afghanistan) initially targeted for the Peace and Reintegration Program. In two years’ time, second-round projects would be conducted with NSP funding. Since the first round of development projects had already been completed in most of the districts not targeted for the Peace and Reintegration Program, existing NSP

funding would be used to provide a second dose of development assistance. Executive Director Ismati also agreed with the UNAMA proposal to “provide community support only if a certain degree of political stability can be anticipated.”

Executive Director Ismati came up with this idea of coordinating the NSP and the Peace and Reintegration Program, because he has extensive skills and years of experience, in Kandahar and elsewhere, as an Afghan involved in development assistance. Higashi was very impressed with this proposal. After this, Higashi repeatedly conveyed Ismati’s intentions at meetings in order to spread the word widely among Afghan government officials, UN agencies, ISAF and donors, and he strived to provide Ismati with his full support to ensure that everyone was aware of the program guidelines.

Higashi and his colleagues pushed ahead with the task of building a new reconciliation program, all while dealing with the conflict and confusion described above. On July 20, 2010, the final proposal was submitted to the Kabul International Conference where it was approved by representatives from over 70 countries. Not long after, the new Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program was launched. The whole process took 10 months from the time the Government of Japan pledged its support at the UN General Assembly in September 2009.

Future Issues

To implement the program, the High Peace Council was formed as the supreme executive body, and 70 members, led by former President of Burhanuddin Rabbani, were approved in October. The Joint Secretariat, which was formed under the Council, began deliberations on program specifics. Between the program’s establishment in July 2010 and January 2011, nearly 900 rebels, hailing primarily from the northern regions, have agreed to

settlements. Higashi completed his one-year term and left UNAMA in December 2010, but a mountain of major issues remains for the government in promoting genuine reconciliation with the Taliban and linking those efforts to improving security and ensuring political stability.

The biggest issue is providing the assistance touted by the program to the soldiers who agree to reconcile despite the fact that the nationwide deterioration of security has severely limited the areas where government employees can go (in one estimate, nearly 70% of the country is considered inaccessible). Rapid deployment of support is needed in northern Afghanistan, where a large number of Taliban soldiers have begun stepping forward to reconcile, but the government does not have the capacity to keep up, and considerable delays are predicted for community development assistance. There are grave concerns that this could lead to dissatisfaction in the communities. The lack of government capacity combined with the poor security situation has made it even more difficult to implement vocational training programs. At present, a local NGO in Badghis Province has begun attempts at vocational training and literacy education.

Despite the difficulties, continuing to provide assistance to former rebel soldiers and communities, and ultimately encouraging political reconciliation with the Taliban leadership, will likely be the primary focus in ensuring lasting peace and stability. However, the Taliban is not a unified whole, so it might not be possible to get all factions to agree on a uniform opinion about the conditions under which they would be willing to reconcile with the government. Even if it were possible for the Taliban to reach a consensus within their ranks, achieving reconciliation with the Taliban leadership will likely require a bold political compromise on the part of the Afghan government, and the question remains as to whether President Karzai could administer a cabinet comprised of various ethnic groups. On September 20, 2011, High Peace Council Chairman

Rabbani was killed by a suicide bomber, which has only added to the confusion in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, the majority of the Afghan people support reconciliation. In a public opinion poll conducted in 2010 by the Asia Foundation with the support of USAID, 83% of the 6,000 Afghans surveyed nationwide said that they support President Karzai's efforts towards reconciliation with the Taliban. The percentage of respondents supporting reconciliation jumped from 71% in 2009, which suggests that the new reconciliation program has won the support of the general public. When broken down by ethnicity, 79% of Tajiks, 89% of Uzbeks, 76% of Hazaras and 83% of Pashtuns said they support the government's reconciliation program, which shows that the desire for reconciliation transcends ethnic boundaries.

Can the government promote reconciliation with the insurgents and, in turn, improve security and guarantee stability? Is it possible to find a nation-building process that is agreeable to the majority of the Afghani people? Afghanistan now stands at a major crossroads, and the answers to these questions will determine the country's fate.

Given that the US military and other ISAF participants have clearly stated their intention to withdraw combat units from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, a major challenge for the future will be how to stop the kind of bloody civil war that erupted when the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan. Higashi, who had left UNAMA to become an associate professor at the University of Tokyo, was given the opportunity to speak on Afghan reconciliation in New York and Chicago in March 2012. While there, Higashi learned that most Americans consider "withdrawal from Afghanistan to be the US's primary goal at the present time," and was astonished at the dramatic shift in their opinion since 2008, when he had first conducted a survey in Afghanistan. On the

other hand, the primary goal for the Taliban is “withdrawal of all foreign forces, including those of the United States.” This suggests the possibility, at least theoretically, of a political agreement between the US and the Taliban. In particular, it is possible that an agreement to talk with the US could be reached if the Taliban can guarantee to the Americans that they will stick to their 2010 declaration to “not allow operations by either foreign militaries or foreign terrorists.”

However, the biggest hurdle will be whether or not the Karzai government and the Taliban can reach an agreement on Afghanistan’s form of government. Moreover, neighboring countries, which include Pakistan, must support the reconciliation process if such an agreement is to be realized. Ultimately, an agreement among the Karzai government, Taliban, United States, and neighboring countries will be imperative to Afghan reconciliation.

Both the US and the Karzai government acknowledged the fact that the US is attempting to build avenues for negotiation with the Taliban, which plans to set up an office in Qatar. Although an official Taliban office has not yet been established because the demand by Taliban leadership for the release of Taliban leaders from Guantanamo has yet to be fulfilled, the fact that US-Taliban and Taliban-Karzai government talks are under way was admitted by President Obama himself in a speech given during a surprise visit to Afghanistan this year.

Higashi is proposing that UNAMA set up a new office in a suitable Arab country (Dubai, for example) and dispatch teams specializing in reconciliation as a means of providing indirect support for political talks in this area. Of course, such support would have to be based on an official request from the Karzai government. However, Higashi believes that if these actions were realized and backed by Japan and other major supporting countries, then Japan could demonstrate to the Afghans who truly desire

An agreement among the government, Taliban, US, and neighboring countries will be imperative to reconciliation.

peace, as well as to the world, that it persistently supports political reconciliation as an initiator of new reconciliation programs.

Afghans Studying in Japan

Many donors focus on spreading primary education as a means of providing direct assistance to the people, and they work toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of universal primary education. That being said, spreading primary education is not Afghanistan's only problem in education. Afghanistan cannot ensure a brighter future if it does not cultivate a diverse range of talented people, including engineers, government officials, teachers and doctors, to support the country's development. Since education for women and girls was banned under the Taliban regime and many talented individuals fled the country during the bloody civil war, Afghanistan lost those people it needed to support the country's core needs. Looking at higher education in Afghanistan today, there are only five universities with Master's programs, and only half of the country's university faculty hold a Master's degree or higher. Having lost its capable talent during the civil war, Afghanistan finds itself in a dire situation since it does not have the system in place to produce new human resources.

In spite of this situation, the government of Afghanistan is currently struggling to rebuild the country on its own without relying solely on the international community for help. Higher education will be necessary to cultivate the human resources who will support Afghanistan and spur its future development. Many outstanding Afghans have been given the opportunity to study in Japan, and they have been working hard with an eye on their country's long-term sustainable development. Some of these students have already completed graduate school in Japan and returned home to Afghanistan. JICA is currently promoting new "PEACE" initiatives to provide even more Afghans with the chance to study in Japan.

1) Hasib: A JICA Trainee

Hasib's Dream

Hasib, an economist born in 1968, completed a Master's program at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in two years and has since returned to teach at his workplace, Kabul University. Yasuko Oda, a UNHCR official who was seconded to JICA at the time, met Hasib several times when he was studying in Tokyo as a JICA Long-Term Trainee.

Oda once worked in Iraq during her time at UNHCR, and she sometimes had dinner with Intisar, a young Iraqi woman in her 20s who was writing her Master's thesis at a university in Tokyo and staying at JICA Tokyo in Hatagaya, Shibuya. Intisar was a serious woman. Despite her concerns over possible terrorist attacks in her hometown of Baghdad, she humbly accepted the offer to study in Japan and worked diligently with the aim of properly graduating with good marks in two years. Intisar was a dedicated learner, but her excessive worry gave her acute gastritis, and she even had to be taken to the hospital by ambulance once. Intisar had a dependable friend who always looked out for her. He was also a JICA Long-Term Trainee and terrorism was also an issue in his home country of Afghanistan: he was Hasib.

Oda would meet the two at JICA Tokyo, and they would discuss many topics together, but the focus of these conversations typically turned to their theses. Hasib was researching economic disparity in Afghanistan, while Intisar was studying the causes of displacement in Iraq. All of the JICA Long-Term Trainees from developing countries had the best intentions in mind for their countries. They conducted research, read many books and discussed their topics with a variety of people. It is incredibly difficult to gather data when researching developing countries, let alone countries in conflict, but both Hasib and Intisar returned home once during their studies to conduct field surveys. When their friend who saw them off wished them a safe return, it was more than just a formal greeting.

In countries ravaged by years of war, such as Afghanistan, the young people and the working-age population in particular have had many kinds of opportunities taken from them. Countless families now stay with friends and relatives because they could not return home during the civil war and often later found their homes destroyed. Without food, clothing or shelter, there are many children who can't go to primary school or junior high school, and even those who work diligently to graduate high school cannot find

work. In other words, there are too few chances that offer hope for the future. For most Afghans, going to university to hone one's specialization, let alone going to graduate school, is little more than a fantasy. Amid this backdrop, being accepted as JICA Long-Term Trainees, spending two years taking the train to school without worrying about terrorist attacks, reading as many books as they pleased in the library and devoting their time entirely to their studies was a once-in-a-lifetime chance for Hasib and Intisar.

According to a talk Oda heard by a professor from the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, since the situation at home is so bad for students from conflict-affected countries, many of them tend to have poorer basic knowledge and skills, including English ability, than their counterparts from other developing countries, but they generally grow remarkably as soon as they are given the chance to learn. Once they receive this golden opportunity, these students dedicate themselves to studying because they want to contribute to their countries. This dedication becomes the energy that drives them, allowing them to overcome the handicap of having been robbed of so many previous opportunities. According to this professor, they are more than capable of collecting precious local information on conflict-affected areas, providing sharp analysis and presenting invaluable research outcomes at academic gatherings.

Oda would occasionally take Hasib and Intisar to see the sights of Tokyo for a change of pace. One of the trips she planned with JICA colleagues and many other trainees was a tour of an automobile plant in Oppama. The trainees, who were so dedicated to their studies that they were afraid to waste even one second of time, enjoyed their life in Japan to the fullest, studying and interacting with Japanese classmates and foreign exchange students from many different countries.

After two years in Japan, Hasib, his wife and Intisar all seemed to have adopted Japanese ways of bowing and walking. Even though they used English in their daily routines, they also mastered those



Hasib (front row, third from right) and Intisar (front row, third from left) at the commencement ceremony (Oda, back row, far right)
Photo: Yasuko Oda

unique Japanese phrases that do not translate well into English and sprinkled them throughout their conversations. Hasib and the other trainees especially like the Priority Seating signs in the trains because it was easy to understand, without knowing any Japanese words, that the seats were intended for pregnant women, the elderly and injured people. They also seemed to like the concept of priority seating itself. When they got on the train, they continued chatting near the sign. They smiled at an older woman they saw, and she, probably not knowing any English, smiled back and sat in one of the priority seats. The train was full of smiles that day. Everyone seemed to be having a good time.

Reunion in Kabul

The good times of study abroad, however, do not last forever. Hasib and Intisar both graduated with top marks and returned home. The situation awaiting them was sure to be harsh.

Six months after Hasib went home, Oda learned that she would

be taking an official trip to Kabul. The two communicated via Facebook, and during her one week stay in Kabul, Hasib visited Oda's hotel three times, each time bringing more cakes and fruits than she could possibly eat. Hasib wanted to invite Oda to his home, but she was not permitted to leave the hotel for security reasons. Oda had to settle for long talks with Hasib over tea in the hotel, promising that she would visit his home when Afghanistan becomes more peaceful. Hasib told Oda, "I want to start an NGO run by young people: a just organization with no corruption that seeks to build a society with hope for the future. I firmly believe that only we Afghans can change our society. The youth of Afghanistan are our hope." As a souvenir for the Tokyo office, Oda took back Afghan almonds, carefully selected by Hasib.

From his time in Japan, Hasib had been focused on one thing: hope and motivation for the future. He continued pondering whether the long-term training he received as part of Japan's assistance to Afghanistan could provide hope and motivation for the future. He felt that the value of assistance for Afghanistan, including the training program, could not be assessed in terms of the amount of budget or the number of projects, trainees and articles published. As security worsens, no one knows how many months or many years it can take for assistance to produce results. Despite the multitude of uncertainties, Hasib continues to state his case that motivating the youth is the key to the future.

“Only we Afghans can change our society. The youth of Afghanistan are our hope.”

A Message from Hasib

Oda decided to ask Hasib a question via Facebook. She wanted to know what he remembered most about Japan now that one year had passed since he left. He appeared to consider the question carefully since he took several days to reply via Facebook message.

“Oda-san, the thing I remember most from Japan happened not long after I arrived at JICA Tokyo. I wanted to buy some supplies, so I went to the bank for the first time and changed my money

“She was so kind that she helped me find my way back. I will never forget it.”

into Japanese yen, but on the way back to JICA Tokyo, I got lost. I knew there was a fire station nearby, so I asked several people for directions, but no one could speak English. I was at my wit's end, when a Japanese woman carrying a baby spoke to me in English. She was very kind: she helped me find my way back to JICA Tokyo. I didn't want to burden her, since she was carrying a baby. I tried to tell her I was okay, but she ended up spending more than 30 minutes helping me find my way back. This is my most lasting impression. I will never forget it.”

Despite having presumably made many memories during his busy two years in Japan, Hasib's most vivid memory was that of a typical Japanese woman's empathy toward him.

A little later, another message arrived.

“My supervisor made me realize that I should find out ways to make improvements, even if they were small, instead of giving up. I am forever grateful to him.”

“Oda-san, let me add one more thing. When I first started talking to my supervisor at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies about my Master's thesis topic, I thought I might write about corruption in the Afghan government and the economic stagnation it caused; I was even ready to give up on returning to my old workplace. But then my supervisor asked me if there was economic disparity among the regions and provinces. He suggested that I examine those regions and provinces where economic development was progressing and find out the underlying reasons. This topic gave me hope. My supervisor made me realize that I should find out why some regions in Afghanistan, despite the deplorable conditions, were developing and seek ways to make improvements, even if they were small. He showed me that I should view things positively, in an effort to make them even a little bit better, instead of being pessimistic and giving up. I am forever grateful to him.”

After that, Oda returned to UNHCR, and is now working as a UN official for international development. Every time she remembers this message from Hasib, she ends up thinking about the significance of Japan-Afghan relations, as well as strong

connections between human beings. Hasib's NGO may succeed. He may end up in a key position to build his country's future. Some of his students may end up becoming the future leaders of Afghanistan. While there is no way to know what may come of JICA's investment in Long-Term Trainees in the distant future, Oda believes that building ties between Japan and Afghanistan and cultivating human resources at the grassroots level are noble endeavors that can contribute to bottom-up social development and nation-building. She also hopes that many more Afghan exchange students with strong hopes and energy will come to study in Japan and that each of them will create a foundation for building their country.

2) Bridge to the Future : PEACE Project

Many agree that Afghanistan needs to develop human resources in advancing their nation-building effort. An initiative was recently launched aiming to provide the country with a large number of talented people, like Hasib, who will build the future of Afghanistan. This project will bring a large number of Afghans to Japan to acquire specialized knowledge through post-graduate education, with a hope that these people will also act as the bridges between Japan and Afghanistan to the future. The project will focus more specifically than typical student exchange programs on making a direct contribution to Afghanistan's development by having students work closely on JICA projects in Afghanistan after they return home. In order to achieve this ultimate goal, priority was placed on those who will study subjects closely related to the key areas where JICA is working.

New Initiative by the Government of Japan

This new human resources development project came to be known as the Promotion and Enhancement of the Afghan Capacity for Effective Development (PEACE), or its nickname

“Bridge to the Future”. Japan promotes this initiative to support Afghans in acquiring knowledge and skills through higher education, primarily Master’s degree programs, in order to cultivate leaders for nation-building. Education in Afghanistan is rife with problems from the primary to the tertiary levels, including a shortage of school facilities, imperfect curricula and poorly trained teachers. JICA has provided support for primary education, literacy education and special needs education in the past, but for the sake of Afghanistan’s future, this new project is a mid-to-long-term initiative that will develop human resources who will become the country’s future leaders.

Ravaged by civil war, Afghanistan is a country with a mountain of problems. After discussions on the kind of human resources that should be developed, JICA zeroed in on two fields that it considered its priority sectors and where its past experience in providing assistance could be best put to use: infrastructure development and rural development. Infrastructure is the foundation of people’s daily lives. Especially since Afghanistan is a landlocked country, promoting interaction with other countries via land and air is essential for its economic and social development. Rural and agricultural development is also essential for the country’s future stability and development, with nearly 80% of its population living in rural areas.

JICA President Sadako Ogata told President Hamid Karzai about this project to promote development of human resources who will undertake nation-building in the fields of infrastructure development and rural development on the occasion of President Karzai’s visit to Japan in June 2010. President Karzai welcomed the idea, and upon returning home, in the letter he sent to thank Japan for its hospitality, he also mentioned the project and expressed his hope that Japan would provide support. In July 2010, Minister of Foreign Affairs Katsuya Okada joined a donors’ conference in Kabul where he announced that “Japan will train

up to 500 administrative personnel in fields such as agriculture and engineering”. This was the Japan’s official promise to the Government of Afghanistan that it would carry out the project. JICA Headquarters staff member Kota Omiya was assigned to handle the project. Sensing the gravity of the task, he read the Minister’s statement several times and renewed his conviction to make the project a reality.

Realizing the PEACE Initiative

Omiya had worked in Kabul at the JICA Afghanistan Office, and after returning to Japan, he tried to learn how Japan in the past had overcome issues similar to those facing today’s Afghanistan. To relearn the history of Japan’s modernization, he visited several sites associated with the leaders in Japan’s Meiji Restoration and read books about them. Japan managed to modernize under pressure from the West over 140 years ago and has since become the advanced nation that it is today, despite the lack of natural resources or massive military might. It modernized by training young people and adopting Western thinking while maintaining a unique Japanese perspective. Although Japan hired foreign advisors and worked feverishly to learn Western know-how and technology, the Japanese people were able to modernize on their own terms. Upon realizing this, Omiya’ belief in the importance of human resources development for rebuilding Afghanistan had become even stronger.

To flesh out the project, Omiya flew to Kabul in August 2010 to examine the current situation of higher education in Afghanistan and survey the country’s needs. Having worked in Kabul for two years previously, this would be his return to a city that he had a strong emotional attachment to.

Upon arriving in Kabul, Omiya visited relevant government agencies to explain the project and its aims as well as to ascertain each agency’s human resources development needs. Officials

“We need a new generation of leaders to advance mid-to-long-term nation-building.”

in every agency told him that a new generation of leaders would be required to advance mid-to-long-term nation-building. Their comments were filled with passion: “We are happy that our Asian partner, Japan, has promised this kind of assistance.” “We would like to start planning by immediately assessing good talent within the Ministry”. When Omiya asked them what they needed specifically, the officials replied without hesitation: one ministry needed experts in water resource management and irrigation, while another requested economists. In no time, a big picture began to form. It was very clear to Omiya that the officials were more enthusiastic and welcoming of this project than of other projects.

Omiya’s survey was going smoothly, but he soon ran into a big issue: the results of a sample test of Afghan students. Upon testing 30 students in the Faculty of Agriculture at what was thought to be Afghanistan’s leading university, Kabul University, in the four subject areas of mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology, the results turned out to be well below the global average (Note: The test was a slightly modified one from the standard test used to survey students from around the world who want to study in Japan). The mathematics test results were disastrous: scores were less than half the average. After the survey, Omiya had planned to visit Japanese universities and ask them to accept students from Afghanistan, but the poor results troubled him and made him wonder if any Japanese graduate schools would accept them. Although this was a consequence of the devastated education system damaged by war in Afghanistan, Omiya had to think about how to have the Afghan students adapt to the level of graduate school education in Japan. His saving grace was the fact that scores on the same test conducted with 30 students in the Faculty of Engineering were average or above average. Omiya wrapped up his month-long survey and returned to Japan, still harboring major reservations about how to get Japanese graduate schools to adjust for Afghan academic ability and accept 500 exchange students.

Soliciting the Cooperation of Japanese Universities

After returning to Japan, Omiya began soliciting universities throughout Japan to find those that would accept Afghan students. Nothing could happen until he found universities that would take the students, so he hit the pavement and visited universities in every corner of the country.

He started by contacting universities that might be interested, regardless of whether they were national, public or private. Some universities responded with their honest opinion that the idea was inconceivable, while others claimed that their focus was on “Chinese student intake”. But Omiya was persistent, and some university officials agreed to meet him. Other universities said they wanted to hear what he had to say because they had been trying to increase the number of international students. Omiya literally crisscrossed Japan from Hokkaido in the north to Kyushu in the south.

More than anything, Omiya wanted universities to give positive consideration to student intake. He researched each institution’s basic information as well as the numbers and countries of origin of their exchange students, whether any Afghan students were enrolled and their policies on internationalization, and he strived to present his proposal in a way that would interest the university. Sometimes he would speak passionately about how to support Afghanistan or how he spent his time there, and other times he would listen as the officials discussed the role of universities in internationalization; he tried everything he could to persuade them to understand his opinions and objectives. Omiya’s main point was that Afghanistan, despite its struggles with poor security, needed future leaders to ensure peaceful development and that this project would create the future of Afghanistan. Actually, Omiya felt very strongly that Afghanistan needed young talent who loved their country and would work hard to rebuild it just as the youth of Japan

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during the Meiji Restoration undertook the task of modernization by studying feverishly.

Responding to Universities' Requests

While the university officials understood Omiya's intentions, they also told him that they wanted to accept competent students, that they prioritize doctoral students over master's degree students, or that they focus more on research than on education.

Omiya listened to the universities' requests, and naturally his biggest concern was the academic performance of the Afghan students. The majority of the universities said they would definitely admit students as long as they were competent.

Omiya decided to ask an Afghan—now back in Afghanistan—who had studied at a Japanese graduate school on a government scholarship for his opinion on the matter. He confessed, “I, too, had insufficient academic knowledge in the beginning and I struggled a lot. But I studied late every night, and my supervisor's guidance was thorough, so I was able to graduate.” A Japanese professor who had supervised Afghan students told Omiya that they struggle due to poor academic knowledge at the start, but they succeed because their enthusiasm and motivation are very high. In other words, they are “very competent”. Omiya and his team were reassured. If students could be selected based on their ability to adapt and thinking skills as well as motivation to learn, in addition to their academic skills, then they should be able to fill in the gaps in their learning.

“I also had struggled a lot, but I studied late every night and was able to graduate.”

In the end, Omiya and his team decided to handle the issue of academic knowledge by providing three months of preparatory education before students leave for Japan and providing a one year preparation period as research fellows in Japan before starting regular degree programs. In preparation, students would take classes at an English school in Afghanistan to beef up their English proficiency while improving their math and science

skills with self-instruction materials. The system would also help students acclimate to life in Japan by admitting them as research fellows for one year prior to regular program enrollment and having them enhance their academic skills during that time. These measures were well received by the Japanese universities, and some institutions even proposed providing their own supplemental study sessions during the fellowship period.

The next request from the universities was more precise information on human resources development needs. For example, if an Afghan agency requests an economist, the university cannot decide if it can accept the student if it does not know his exact field, be it econometrics, macroeconomics etc. While this question was justifiable, the fact was that the Afghan agencies did not have a firm enough grasp on their human resources development needs to determine the precise academic fields. Omiya was forced to ask the universities to accept students in broad-based areas since more detailed information was not available. In his mind it would be more effective to leverage the specialized knowledge of the JICA experts and staff on the ground to ascertain what was needed in as much detail as possible while having the universities in Japan list those academic disciplines into which they could accept trainees based on the generally understood needs, rather than wait several years for a concrete plan to emerge.

The final request was that many universities wanted to admit doctoral students since their mission was to produce PhD graduates. Since Omiya and his team wanted the Afghans to be able to contribute to nation-building as quickly as possible, they felt that doctoral level training, which could take up to four years, would take too much time; however, some team members remarked that some positions in the government, namely researchers and university faculty, would require more advanced specialization. As

these positions that need high qualifications are limited, JICA did not accept PhD applicants in the first year, and started to accept only a few PhD applications from the second year.

Building Bridges between Japan and Afghanistan

While he had difficulties dealing with the universities, the more people he spoke to, the more Omiya realized that this training project had much more potential than a simple exchange student program. He felt that cooperation between universities, which engaged in research and teaching, and JICA, which conducted development projects in developing countries, could create new Afghan-Japan relations.

Bringing Afghan students to Japanese universities would also contribute to their internationalization in Japan. Most of the universities Omiya visited, especially those in outlying regions, were having trouble promoting internationalization, and they wanted to use this project advance those efforts. Some universities said they wanted to accept several Afghan students in order to boost their incoming exchange student numbers, while others said they wanted to use this opportunity to admit students from South Asia and the Middle East, in addition to those already coming from East Asia, namely China and Korea, and Southeast Asia. The response was positive. The project would not only internationalize universities: cultural exchange in the universities' communities would deepen international understanding and understanding of Afghanistan.

In fact, accepting students from Afghanistan could also promote the understanding of Islam. Some of the university officials asked Omiya about the possibility that some of the trainees could be terrorists, and others were worried about the host of issues that could arise if the university had to provide a place for Muslims to pray. Omiya understood that these concerns arose from the fact that these universities had never admitted Muslim students before, so he used actual examples and introduced ways to welcome these

students. Many of the officials were very interested to hear about the history of exchange between Afghanistan and Japan and stories of pro-Japan Afghans, so when trainees finally arrive, their presence is sure to deepen Japan's understanding of Islam.

Bringing Afghans to Japan and increasing the opportunities for them to speak directly to Japanese people will likely foster a deeper understanding of Afghanistan and Japan's assistance programs in the country. In every corner of Japan, there will certainly be more opportunities to discuss the situation in Afghanistan as well as the future of the Afghan-Japan relationship that both countries are striving to build.

The Importance of Human Resources Development

On December 15th, 2010, the basic framework for PEACE was agreed upon by JICA and the Government of Afghanistan. Omiya believes that the unusual speed with which the process from the initial announcement to this agreement progressed was due of Afghanistan's high hopes for the project and Japan's dedication to the idea. Japan and Afghanistan both recognized that human resources are the most important driver for a country's development, and this allowed officials on both sides to move quickly.

Afghanistan won its independence after experiencing a series of foreign invasions at the end of the 19th century, and it began a period of modernization just after World War II. Many Afghans went to Japan and other countries to study in the 1960s, and they worked hard at nation-building. Since 2002, Afghanistan has been proactively training people by sending them to study in countries such as the United States, Germany, France, India and Pakistan. The 500 students slated to come to Japan will also likely become key players in the country's future.

This project, with its aims to support Afghanistan's development and train talented individuals who will create friendship between

Afghanistan and Japan, was officially launched in the fall of 2011. The first 47 students are now studying at 20 universities all around Japan. These students will surely become human resources who can lead Afghanistan into the future and give their fellow countrymen hope. After returning home, the students who studied in Japan and gained an understanding of its culture will also help to forge a new history in Afghan-Japan friendship. Slowly but surely, the work of human resources development will continue with the hope that stronger ties between people can lead to peace in the future.



Speech by the representative of the Afghan students



Opening ceremony for PEACE in Tokyo

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Conclusion

Overcoming Great Challenges

The situation in Afghanistan over the last ten years can be described as extremely unusual, even for a developing nation. The country faces a range of simultaneous challenges, including the problems unique to countries that have experienced many years of war; difficulties resulting from the diversity of ethnic groups, languages, and religions; and an extremely unstable security situation. This is the kind of country the international community, including Japan, has been working to help.

When recovery aid for Afghanistan began at the end of 2001, very few people had any knowledge of the situation under the Taliban regime. In the midst of this total lack of information, Japanese aid workers went into the field. While gradually gathering information, they had to consider the best way to provide aid. Those who went into the field as part of the initial recovery assistance tried to provide immediate support so the Afghan people could start to feel the “peace dividend” as soon as possible while they worked to build their local base in an environment where it was a struggle just to acquire food, accommodations, and communications.

Human resources development was necessary to provide aid effectively in Afghanistan, as most people had been deprived of educational and employment opportunities after experiencing a long period of war. The state framework, including the constitution, had to be rebuilt from scratch, and government administrative organizations had no semblance of organization. In these circumstances, some would train Afghan colleagues who had minimal experience, while others would doggedly work to improve dysfunctional government administrative organizations. Without rebuilding both human resources and public institutions, there was

Human resources development was necessary to provide aid effectively in Afghanistan.

no way that aid could have been continued to make an impact in Afghanistan.

Another challenge was Afghanistan's ethnic diversity. One aspect of Japanese assistance was attempting to distribute aid equitably between different regions and ethnic groups. In a situation where, due to the effects of war, the trust between fellow Afghans was strained, there was the hope that new relationships could emerge as a result of Japanese mediation. During times when public security was relatively stable, development aid tried to strike a balance between the northern, central, and southern regions. Along with taking ethnic groups and regions into account, aid was also directed to women—who tended to be excluded by traditional Afghan society—and to the disabled, whom donor assistance had failed to reach.

There was the hope that new relationships emerge as a result of Japanese mediation.

However, the unstable security situation made implementing aid programs extremely difficult. The challenge of delivering the necessary aid while adopting the maximum security measures possible was an issue for all aid workers in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, aid was carried out by exercising the utmost caution and using a variety of approaches, such as regularly exchanging information with the government, coming to a mutual understanding of each other's positions by talking with local councils of elders, and gaining trust by delivering effective aid to the people.

Aid workers tried to gain trust from the people by delivering effective aid for them.

Sustaining Foundations for the Afghans' Nation-Building Efforts

Aid to Afghanistan was not just limited to humanitarian aid, but also extended to supporting Afghanistan's efforts to build a new nation for the twenty-first century. The process of nation-building, starting with establishing a framework for the state, is a long road, but along with directly helping to strengthen the functions of administrative organizations—since government services remain

fragile—the Japanese people have been helping to deliver services directly to the people and to connect citizens to the state.

Creating a state framework and strengthening public institutions are initiatives that require a long-term perspective. Many partners were involved in helping Afghanistan establish a constitution and hold elections, but Japan could also give advice based on its unique perspective and experience as the first country in Asia to achieve modernization. Long-term assistance in building public institutions is the kind of aid that donors seeking short-term outcomes find difficult to implement. Japanese experts have been assigned to organizations including the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, and the Ministry of Education, and have been working with Afghan staff to help them develop their capacity. By working with them for a long period of time, many Japanese have also built up an enormous amount of trust with the Afghan people.

Improving the foundations for people’s daily lives was an urgent issue. Until the functions of the state were strengthened, it was necessary to deliver aid directly to the people. Many Japanese NGOs played an active role in providing food, water, shelter, and medical services. Japanese were also involved with improving infrastructure, especially for transportation. Good examples of this are the Ring Road that connects Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat—the major arteries of the Afghan economy—and the Kabul International Airport, which links landlocked Afghanistan to the rest of the world. There were all kinds of challenges during this process, such as difficulty procuring equipment and a lack of technical skills among Afghan workers, but these problems were overcome, and these projects allowed locals to feel the “peace dividend” directly. The local people involved in the construction also benefited by receiving employment opportunities and improving their technical skills.

Along with helping both the state and society, aid is also being carried out to link the state to society. It is hoped that aid directed

at community development through citizen participation—in the form of establishing Community Development Councils (CDC) and Cluster CDCs—will lead people to understand that they can influence government decision making. In the current situation, where government authority does not extend to the entire country, community development may only be a small step, but a continuous effort in the form of small steps forward is needed to give shape to the nation.

The individual activities of the Japanese people that appear in this report are connected to the process of new nation-building in Afghanistan.

Working as Partners

Many of the Japanese mentioned in this report talk about how they built a trusted relationship with the Afghan people, and how they lived and worked with the Afghans. Their activities involved racking their brains together with the Afghans in search of solutions in a difficult environment, rather than simply handing their money and materials over to Afghanistan. According to Yuko Mitsui, who worked in JICA Afghanistan Office, the Japanese have been there for the Afghan people, helping them help themselves while staying in the background, sharing both their joys and their sorrows. Working as partners of the Afghan people in this way nurtured talented people and led to a relationship of trust.

Moreover, the key focus of Japanese assistance to Afghanistan is to promote development and support people's livelihoods rather than to engage with the military. While a military response cannot be dismissed in an environment like Afghanistan, it is not possible to gain the support of the people by military means alone. And without the backing of the people, it is not possible to make progress in new nation-building. The Afghan people have very high regard for foreigners who work diligently in development. It is precisely this kind of trust that forms the groundwork for

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promoting development together. The US government has announced that it will withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by 2014, and other countries are also planning to withdraw their troops, but the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan are only half done, and there is a need for the continued involvement of the international community with a long-term perspective for the sake of development.

The international network that supports Afghanistan in partnership with the Afghan people is also expanding. Opportunities have been created for Afghans to visit Indonesia and Cambodia to receive training in the health sector. As a country that has also recently experienced war, Cambodia in particular offers a valuable opportunity to discuss how to promote post-conflict reconstruction. Other activities, such as vocational training assistance in Iran or training in anti-corruption measures in Singapore, have also come about through Japanese intervention. The foundation for these country partnerships has been the trust that the Japanese people have built through their aid projects in the past. The Japanese people have acted as catalysts for a broad expansion of the network of partners supporting Afghanistan.

A Lasting Legacy: Human Resources and Infrastructure

It is not easy to predict the future of Afghanistan. There is still no prospect of improvement in security conditions, and the direction of negotiations with the Taliban remains unknown. The year 2014 is expected to be a major turning point, with the planned withdrawal of US troops. At this stage it is difficult to see how the nation-building efforts of the last ten years will come to fruition.

However, what is clear is that the outcomes of the human resource development and infrastructure improvement that have proceeded as part of this nation-building effort will become the foundations that supports the future Afghanistan, whatever form it may take.

There is a need for the continued involvement with a long-term perspective for development.

Japanese have acted as catalysts for a broad expansion of partners for Afghanistan.

The human resource and infrastructure will become the foundations that supports the future Afghanistan.

The Afghan people who have received Japanese support as they work to carve out a future for themselves—from the staff of the Ministry of Public Health who have been involved in improving tuberculosis control measures and the healthcare system, to the women who bravely spoke up to express their views, to the citizens who participated in construction projects to build roads and irrigation canals, to the exchange students who came to Japan to study for the future of their country—will surely still be there in twenty or thirty years' time as testimony to the Japanese people's work. And the numerous infrastructure projects that the Japanese helped to build or upgrade—whether roads, airports, schools, hospitals, or agricultural research centers—will continue to be part of the physical infrastructure supporting Afghanistan.

The waterworks, hospitals, and television stations that were provided as a result of Japanese aid in the 1970s prior to the Soviet invasion, as well as the technical experts trained by Japanese, became the foundation for post-2001 nation-building more than twenty years later. The assistance programs for the reconstruction of Afghanistan over the last ten years are many times greater than anything that was provided in the 1970s. The outcomes of these efforts will surely continue to support nation-building for Afghanistan for many decades yet to come.

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This report also benefits from various books, articles, reports, and websites in Japanese language. The complete references of these sources are listed in the Japanese version of this report.

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This report was summarized by the project team of JICA Research Institute and JICA South Asia Department. The team collected information on activities of Japanese to support peace-building in Afghanistan, as well as stories and experiences of these Japanese, from various contributors. The report intends to record and archive on-the-ground experiences of those who worked in Afghanistan, as well as to disseminate these stories to a wide range of people.

This report is based on the summary of personal reflections of those who were involved in the reconstruction assistance in Afghanistan. The view expressed in this report does not necessarily represent the official positions of either JICA or any other organizations which appear on the report.

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