

DACAAR

The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees, DACAAR, is a humanitarian non-government organisation which supports the sustainable repatriation of Afghan refugees and internally displaced people, by working together with local communities (refugees and those who stayed behind) for the rehabilitation and development of Afghanistan.

DACAAR is an association of four Danish NGOs, formed in 1984 specifically to provide support to Afghans. DACAAR initially began by providing relief to refugees in Pakistan but since 1989 DACAAR has concentrated on rehabilitation and development work inside Afghanistan.

DACAAR is governed by a Steering Committee, appointed by the member agencies of the Association. Currently our main donors are DANIDA, UNHCR, EU, Christian Aid, and DIA.



Salaw village, Alisheng district, Laghman Province

BASIC PRINCIPLES

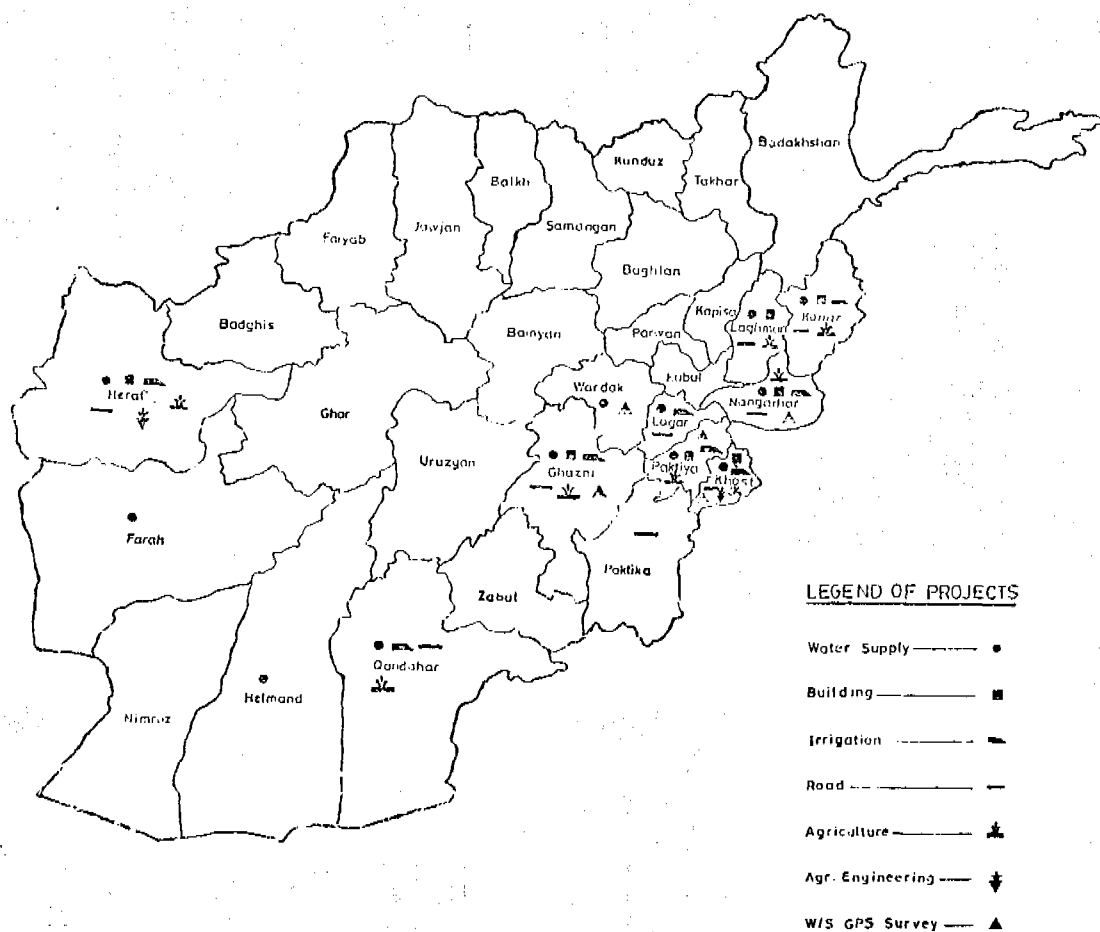
DACAAR's strategy relies on community participation in project identification, planning, operational implementation, maintenance and evaluation. Community participation is not only essential to achieve sustainability of project interventions, but also as a goal in its own right because it empowers local communities by strengthening their capacity to work together in the solution of common problems.

DACAAR's emphasis on political neutrality, local involvement in needs identification and operational flexibility is central to our implementation strategy in the changing and volatile conditions which exist in Afghanistan.

DACAAR's program interventions work on the basis of a respect for Afghan culture and universally accepted human rights, which include the basic right to personal security and freedom from harassment for all people as well as equal rights for men and women to employment and training outside the home and children's equal right to education. DACAAR believes it is of vital importance to the rehabilitation and development of Afghanistan to promote basic human rights in program implementation.

DACAAR's PROGRAMS IN AFGHANISTAN

DACAAR's programs cover a broad geographical area in East, South and West Afghanistan in the sectors of drinking water supply, irrigation, agriculture, construction, roads, agricultural engineering, and health education.



FUNDING REQUIREMENTS FOR 1997

Over the past few years DACAAR has maintained a yearly output level of between US\$7-8 million. For 1997 planned activities are budgeted at US\$7.2 million, of which US\$4.4 million are secured. DACAAR is seeking Donor support to cover the shortfall of US\$2.8 million.

DACAAR has a long term commitment to Afghanistan and the planning horizon for some of our development activities is up to 5 years. We would therefore also welcome long-term funding commitment from interested Donors.

Budget 1997

Program Item	US\$ in '000s
Rehabilitation Program	
Agriculture	270
Construction	1,930
Irrigation	440
Roads	520
Development Program	
Drinking Water and Health Education	2,930
Integrated Agricultural Engineering	510
Administration and Program Support	600
Major Assets	10
Total	7,210

Drinking Water

Water is one of the most basic of all human needs and its daily collection in most of Afghanistan, as in many other regions, one of the most arduous and time consuming tasks of every woman's day. In Afghanistan availability of water for drinking and for irrigation has always been a basic problem - a problem which 18 years of war have aggravated enormously. Much of the country's limited infrastructure was either destroyed by the fighting or by neglect as communities were forced to abandon their villages.

In Afghanistan 3 to 4 babies out of every 10 born do not live to see their fifth birthday. We know that water borne diseases are one of the major causes of child mortality. Since 1990, through our rehabilitation program, we have assisted communities with the provision of safe drinking water in towns and villages of East, South and West Afghanistan, which is essential to improved health.

In Dari Khel village, Matoon district, Khost, the only drinking water sources were a pond and the irrigation ditches. The water in the pond, pictured, is green and slimy - a perfect environment for frogs and parasites but less suitable for children to drink.



This well is one of two installed by DACAAR in Dari Khel Village in 1995. Now, instead of drinking water from the polluted pond, the village's 35 families have access to water which is "cool and sweet, as well as healthy for the children", in the words of one village woman.



Since beginning the program in 1990 DACAAR has provided safe and secure drinking water in the eastern provinces alone to about 220,000 families - or 1.8 million individuals. In the West, which began drinking water supply programs in 1993, a further 33,500 families - or 270,000 individuals - have been assisted.

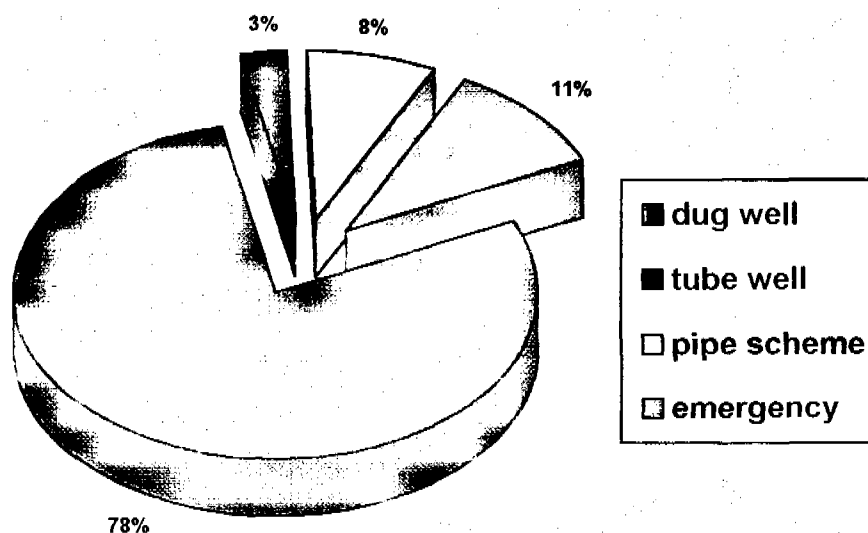
It is estimated that about 15% of the rural needs for clean drinking water have been met in Afghanistan at the present time. DACAAR has provided about 75% of that capacity. In addition more than 60% of all water supply related projects in the refugee camps in Pakistan were implemented by DACAAR Water Supply Section.

Water Supply Programs: 1990 - 1996

Type of Activity	Achievement	Cost in US\$	No. of Beneficiaries	Cost per Beneficiary(\$)
Improved Dug Well	9,291	6,330,706	1,545,500	4
Tube Well	341	674,513	54,500	12
Pipe Scheme	21	1,064,262	156,000	7
Public Bathhouses	6	30,256	16,360	2
Bath/Latrine	8,937	338,986	58,500	6
Emergency Projects		721,929	210,000	3
Total		9,161,652	2,040,860	

DACAAR currently provides access to clean drinking water - by improved shallow wells, bore wells or gravity pipe schemes - to about 50,000 people every month - 40,000 in the east and south, 10,000 in the West.

Distribution of Water Supply Activities by Number of Beneficiaries, 1990-96



This graph shows that the largest number of beneficiaries have been reached through our Dug Well Programs, at an average cost of only \$4 per beneficiary. In areas where shallow wells are not feasible, generally areas where water availability is a particularly critical need, either pipe schemes or tube wells are the alternative.

Women and Water Supply Programs

While serving the needs of the whole community, women and girls are the principal beneficiaries of drinking water supply programs. Through the provision of safe drinking water, at convenient locations within the village, women and girls are spared hours of arduous work in the daily collection of water for family needs. The improvement in family health, especially that of children, due to the availability of safe drinking water also lightens the burden of rural family life.

Up to 500,000 water collectors, mainly women and girls, can now more easily collect water for their families daily needs as a result of our Water Supply Programs in East and West Afghanistan.

Health Education, Sanitation and Water Supply Programs

To strengthen the impact of our drinking water supply programs we have complementary programs improving individual household sanitation and community health education. Since 1993 DACAAR has assisted about 9,000 households with improved bath and surface latrine facilities.

DACAAR health education program, running parallel to the drinking water supply programs, has been extended in 1996 to increase our capacity to provide health education to both women and men, focusing on the connections between clean water, hygiene and health. In the West a team of four women have been implementing a water education program with rural women since early 1996. In the East, since July, 6 teams (each team comprising a related man and woman) have been working in their own rural communities after having received training from our four health education trainers. We plan to deploy 40 teams altogether within the coming year.

Sustainability and Water Supply Programs

Communities participate in every facet of the Water Supply program, from their initial request for DACAAR to work in their area, to identifying, together with our engineers, suitable sites for new wells and selecting existing public wells for improvement, as well as contributing all unskilled labour to the project. Sustainability is aimed for by training a community-identified local mechanic in handpump maintenance and negotiating a system of payment based on traditional village arrangements whereby local artisans receive a share of the crop at harvest time. Availability of spareparts is arranged with local shopkeepers.

Supply of Handpumps

Since 1989 DACAAR has operated its own handpump factory, introducing and further developing the Afridev pump, which has proven very suitable for Afghan conditions. DACAAR has consequently been able to ensure a stable supply of high quality pumps for our programs as well as to influence product development. Should circumstances permit this technology may be transferred to Afghanistan in the future as it has been to the private sector in Pakistan in the past.

Planned Activities in 1997

In 1997 DACAAR plans to:

- improve about 2,800 wells fitted with hand pumps;
- construct and improve 6 pipe schemes;
- construct 200 tube wells;
- construct 1,800 baths and 1,800 latrines;
- extend health education;
- implement emergency projects in Kabul City;
- extend water supply projects into 2 new provinces;
- implement about 60% of water supply activities for the refugees in Pakistan.

Integrated Agricultural Engineering

Integrated agricultural engineering is an important new component in the continued refinement of DACAAR programs and demonstrates our greater commitment towards development approaches. The principal objective of this program is the development and implementation of a **participatory strategy for integrated agricultural development** in three pilot areas. The focus is on **increased agricultural production combined with soil and moisture conservation to ensure environmental sustainability**. The pilot projects will each encompass communities of between 100 - 200 families, but with the intention of acting as an example and hopefully a **catalyst** for others, communities and agencies, to take similar action.

Community Participation and Sustainability

While the transfer of technical knowledge about water and soil conservation is an essential component of the projects, experience has demonstrated this can only be effective and sustainable in the context of a genuinely participatory approach - an approach which directly addresses community priorities, supports village initiatives and facilitates on-going community participation, not just contribution. Establishing a participatory project with rural communities takes time because the approach itself encompasses a developmental goal beyond, and just as important, as the immediate primary objective. Therefore, the communities will play a pivotal role in each facet of the project cycle from project planning and implementation to evaluation and long term management.

Case Study: Khwaja Omari district, Ghazni Province

Soil and water conservation are critical issues in Khwaja Omari district, as in many parts of Afghanistan. A Participatory Rural Appraisal recently carried out in the project area confirmed that these issues are priorities for the farmers, particularly as water has become even more scarce due to environmental changes over the past twenty years. One measure to conserve water, and thereby increase the irrigated area available, is to reduce seepage and wastage through the improvement and rehabilitation of water courses and karezes, as well as through improved water management at field level. Appropriate soil conservation measures will reduce soil erosion and increase available land for range management, forestry and agricultural production. Together with an agricultural extension and social organization component, these project interventions aim to develop village communities through, firstly, strengthening the village's agricultural base, and, secondly, by strengthening local village structures so they can seek solutions to the other problems they jointly confront.

Pilot projects will also be implemented in Laghman and Herat provinces, focusing on the same aspects as in Ghazni along with the broader issues of forest resource conservation and management, and environmentally sustainable practices in general.



DACAAR staff conducting a participatory needs analysis with villagers.

Planned Activities for 1997

In 1997 DACAAR plans to:

- finalise the selection of the remaining pilot project areas;
- conduct two PRAs (baseline surveys);
- analyse and document results/findings from the three selected pilot project areas;
- establish the terms of collaboration with the farming community;
- design minor irrigation and water-management improvements;
- initiate trust building measures with the community by addressing their priority needs (i.e. water course rehabilitation, water intake reconstruction);
- establish fruit and forest tree nurseries in each pilot project area;
- train staff in irrigation, water management and soil and water conservation;
- investigate additional pilot project development opportunities.

Agriculture

Agricultural rehabilitation is clearly one of the principle needs for durable refugee repatriation and locally sustainable economic recovery. The vast majority of Afghan people depend on agriculture for their subsistence and income - prior to the war more than 80 % of national income derived from the agricultural sector. The displacement of large numbers of Afghan rural communities over the past 18 years of fighting severely disrupted the country's whole agricultural system.

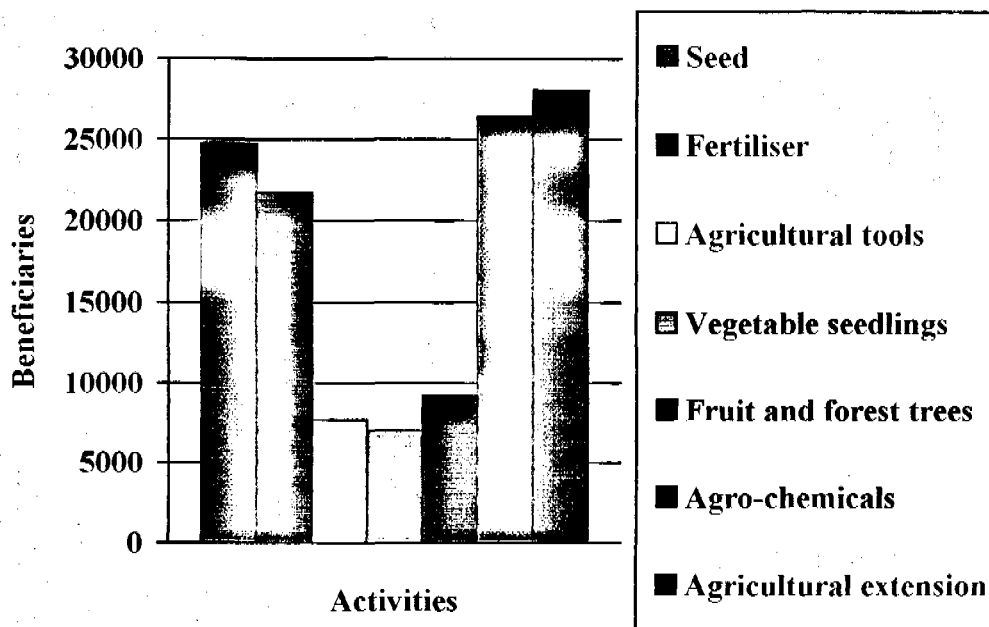
Since 1989 DACAAR's agricultural programs have assisted farmers through the provision of extension services, improved seeds for cereals and vegetables, fruit and forest tree saplings, fertilisers and agro-chemicals, as well as artisan tools and some farming implements. DACAAR Agricultural Research Stations in five provinces are rehabilitating parts of former State Farms or Research Stations, conducting, in conjunction with FAO, vital research on improved wheat and rice varieties to enhance yield performances, providing advice to farmers, producing cereal and vegetable seeds for distribution as well as establishing tree nurseries for fruit and forest sapling distribution.

In the seven years to end 1996, Rs. 3.7 million were expended by DACAAR on agricultural activities. This represents an expenditure of Rs. 460 per beneficiary. With these agricultural activities, DACAAR has contributed towards increased agricultural production, which is one factor encouraging refugees to return to their villages. We estimate that this investment in agricultural activities has generated income to farmers of three times the original input.



DACAAR agronomists inspecting wheat variety trial at the Khost Research Station

Distribution of Agricultural Activities by Number of Beneficiaries, 1989 - 96



As this graphic representation indicates, extension work and seed multiplication combined with fertiliser and agro-chemical distribution have been our principal activities, measured in terms of project beneficiaries, over these seven years.

Sustainability and Agriculture Programs

Initially DACAAR distributed agricultural inputs free of charge, but now they are only provided on a subsidised basis, according to ACBAR policies, with farmers' having to make a financial contribution themselves. This year we are implementing an innovative, farmers' based and managed wheat seed multiplication program. This program seeks to increase the sustainability of vital wheat seed multiplication by devolving responsibility to communities themselves for producing improved seed. Over a five year period DACAAR material support to this program will gradually decrease, so that at the end of the project period communities will be entirely self-sufficient in improved wheat seed production.

Planned Activities for 1997

In 1997 DACAAR plans to:

- continue the research program including crop variety and locality testing, agro-chemical testing and crop diversification;
- extend the farmers' based and managed wheat seed multiplication project;
- provide extension services and training to farmers;
- establish private fruit tree, forest tree and vegetable nurseries; and,
- rehabilitate two state farms.

Irrigation

Irrigation is the essential requirement for sustainable agricultural production and development in Afghanistan. Traditionally a complex system of canals and karezes was established in most villages as the basis of their agricultural economy. As with other public and private infrastructure, the past 18 years of war severely damaged the irrigation systems in many parts of Afghanistan. In addition environmental changes due to rampant deforestation aggravates the problem of water shortage. DACAAR's rehabilitation program assists communities to re-establish effective irrigation systems, an important factor in enabling them to return to their villages and resume their normal lives.

Community Participation and Sustainability

In the early years of rehabilitation work, DACAAR supported basic canal and kareze renovation projects. Now we consider that kind of work to be entirely the communities' responsibility and concentrate on larger infrastructure projects which are beyond community capacity. In current irrigation projects we are requiring and obtaining a significant contribution from the beneficiaries, both in provision of local materials and unskilled labour for the project implementation.

Planned Activities for 1997

In 1997 DACAAR plans to:

- construct 14 diversion dams;
- implement 2 box culvert projects;
- construct 4 siphons;
- construct 8 protection walls;
- construct 2 super passages.

Construction

Shelter and educational facilities are consistently among the highest priorities mentioned by Afghan refugees as essential local requirements before they will consider returning to their villages. War damage and abandonment together resulted in enormous loss of infrastructure, homes as well as schools, clinics and other public buildings. Since 1979 perhaps 90 % of the schools existing in Afghanistan were destroyed by the fighting.

DACAAR's construction program has two essential elements: rebuilding of schools and pre-cast beams for reconstruction of private homes. Since 1989 when our rehabilitation program began, we have rebuilt 114 schools in East and West Afghanistan, as well as 6 public bathhouses and 35 other community buildings.



Perched on a stony hillside, overlooking a green valley, the students of Tarang school regularly attended classes, thankful for the good weather. They and their teachers patiently looked forward to the repair of their school building by DACAAR in June 1996. The building had been destroyed during the war and had a nominal enrolment of 358 children with 16 teachers, teaching classes 1 - 8.

DACAAR's beam construction program aims to provide cheap building elements to families rebuilding their own homes. Besides assisting families through this subsidised production, the program serves conservation objectives as well through providing an alternative to timber beams. Since 1991, some 9,000 families have received pre-cast concrete beams to enable them to rebuild their homes. The average cost per 4 metre pre-cast concrete beam is US\$12 while the average number of beams per family is fourteen.

Pre-cast Concrete Beam Program: 1989 - 1996

Activity	Achievement	Cost in US\$	Number of Beneficiaries	Cost per Beneficiary US\$
Pre-Cast Beams	98,410	1,307,533	72,144	18
Pre-Cast Lintels	27,710			



Children attending classes in a Kama district school, rebuilt by DACAAR.

Planned Activities for 1997

In 1997 DACAAR plans to:

- build 15 schools;
- produce 20,160 pre-cast beams for home construction from 2 centres.
- build 12 public bath houses, 2 public buildings.

Roads

Rehabilitation of roads is essential both to facilitate refugee return and locally sustainable economic recovery. DACAAR has undertaken a number of large projects, including rehabilitating the Torkham to Jalalabad road which was vital to enable logistic support to the large refugee camps established there after January 1994. Many of the principal road arterials are now open to traffic, so we are looking more towards rehabilitation of minor rural roads, particularly in our rehabilitation program in western Afghanistan.

Planned Activities for 1997

In 1997 DACAAR plans to:

- rehabilitate 9 rural roads.

Monitoring and Evaluation

An effective system of quality assurance for all projects is essential to good management and donor confidence. DACAAR implements a comprehensive system of monitoring and evaluation of programs inside Afghanistan, comprising of several components. In addition to regular project monitoring by project management staff, all DACAAR programs are independently monitored by the Engineering Technical Advisory and Monitoring Unit and the Impact Monitoring Unit.

The Engineering Advisory and Technical Monitoring Unit, established in 1992, aims to ensure all DACAAR projects are of a high quality and appropriately designed. In addition it monitors the implementation process, including assignment of manpower, materials and cost-tracking so that projects remain within their allocated budgets. Moreover, this Unit supports the professional development of engineering staff within the agency through a process of design review, establishment of engineering standards and training programs.

The Impact Monitoring Unit, established in late 1996, provides a mechanism for the systematic assessment of our programs against their intended objectives. With the best of intentions projects may not achieve their desired impacts for a variety of reasons, some of which may be beyond the capacity of the project to address. By regular monitoring of project impacts management is provided with the information required to ensure timely adjustments of implementation strategies, policies or objectives to improve the effectiveness of our programs.