

Afghan Links

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Afghan Links is a free e-newsletter for readers who have a keen interest in Afghanistan and its history, people and culture. It invites news and articles from anyone who wishes to create and maintain constructive links between Afghanistan and other countries by sharing their expertise, information and ideas in any field.

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SECURITY

Speech by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer at the 42nd Munich Conference on Security Policy 4 February 2006

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I always participate in the Munich Security Conference because this is one of the best places to take the pulse of the transatlantic relationship.

Today, I want to focus on a few key areas:

- ❖ the broader and more intense political consultations at NATO on issues ranging from the Balkans and Afghanistan to Africa and the Middle East, and now also energy security;
- ❖ our growing operational commitments, in particular expansion in Afghanistan but also new categories of missions, such as support for the AU in Darfur and a major humanitarian mission in Pakistan.
- ❖ progress on transformation, to meet both old and new demands on the Alliance, including achieving full operational capability for the NRF, strengthening our access to strategic lift, and better funding mechanisms;
- ❖ the need to work more effectively with current partners and reach out to new ones, and in particular the importance of building in a pragmatic, strategic partnership with the European Union. This is essential for both organizations; and
- ❖ bringing these various themes together at the NATO summit in Riga next November.

All of the above issues are of keen transatlantic interest. Of course, as NATO Secretary General, it's my job to have one foot in Europe and one in North America. This is not always a comfortable position, and, as you can imagine, I am very sensitive to continental drift! This year, I'm happy to say that the state of the transatlantic union is good.

In fact, more than ever, NATO is in demand and NATO is delivering.

In the past few days, some of you might have had some doubts about NATO would continue to deliver in Afghanistan. I had no such doubts. This Alliance has made a long-term commitment to the Afghan people, and to the UN. We will meet those commitments, for as long as necessary. Because Afghanistan is making progress. It is a success. And we will reinforce that success.

Afghanistan is not just a success story. It also illustrates how far NATO's transformation has come – even if a lot remains to be done, and I will come to that in a moment.

NATO's operation in Afghanistan shows that the Alliance has already made huge changes to meet the security challenges of the 21st century. We have broadened our strategic horizon far beyond Europe. We have begun tackling terrorism as a main mission – indeed, in Afghanistan, we are engaging terrorism at the source. We are projecting and sustaining forces well beyond our traditional area of operations. We are working at the core of a team that includes the UN, the EU, the G-8 and non-NATO countries as well. And we are taking on tasks across the military spectrum, from soft to hard power.

That is the new, transforming NATO. But I say “transforming”, rather than “transformed”, because there is still unfinished business. We need to make more changes to the way NATO works, if this Alliance is to maximise its potential as the place where Europe and North America come together to project stability. **See Reference 5_D for the full speech.** [home](#)

By jingo, our brave boys are off to tame the Afghan. And they'll fail by Simon Jenkins

Britain cannot kick the Afghanistan habit. Those snow-capped passes, exotic valleys and turbulent tribes have always posed a challenge to London's can-do crusaders.

For a century and a half valiant knights have stepped forward to pull the sword from the stone. They have tried to tame the Afghan. They all fail.

The latest is John Reid, the defence secretary. On Thursday he stood with the ghosts of his forebears in the Commons to announce the dispatch of the latest thin red line of heroes to defend Britain from the opium-soaked mujaheddin screaming at the gates of empire. The jingoism of the debate was typified by Liam Fox, of the opposition, who declared with the bravura of a drawing-room general that it was unacceptable either “to fail to act or to act and fail”. Unacceptable in SW1 may seem less so in the sandstorms of Helmand.

Britain is being set up by the Americans in Afghanistan. Donald Rumsfeld, the US defence secretary, regards that country as past history, a forward base for terrorist-hunting and “interrogation”. Some 10,000 American troops are still combing the mountains, seeking Osama Bin Laden with bounties and a disregard for law or international boundaries. Anyone can be killed anywhere, anyone bombed. As for “nation-building”, Washington is not interested. It has installed Hamid Karzai in Kabul and protects him. That is enough. He must drag himself elegantly round the conference circuit, pleading for aid that never comes.

As for helping Karzai control Afghanistan beyond Kabul, the Americans are leaving that to mercenaries. This means the old warlords in the north, and in the south a less reliable ally for which Rumsfeld has only contempt, Nato. Since Nato moved into the Afghan theatre it has fully justified Rumsfeld's scepticism.

It can agree on nothing, bickering over force levels, areas of operation and rules of engagement.

The Dutch promised troops but cannot commit. Reid announced last week's deployment because British soldiers on stand-by are fed up with waiting. A total of 5,700 are to be committed to Afghanistan for three years at a cost of £1 billion. This is approaching two-thirds the numbers committed to Iraq. These wars were supposedly won years ago.

Reid's policy is based on two assertions. The first is that Britain's defence interests require sending an army to Afghanistan to prevent a Taliban revival. The second is that achieving this objective is “absolutely interlinked to countering narcotics”. Neither objective is achievable, least of all with a total Nato force just 9,000 strong. I doubt if 90,000 could do the trick. The expedition has built-in failure. It is quite wrong to send an army on such a mission.

Britain's lead contingent is 3,300 troops in Helmand province in the south. Their objective, says Reid, is “counter-insurgency” and “securing a framework” but not “counter-terrorism”. This means reacting “robustly” if attacked but not going in pursuit, which is the task of America's Operation Enduring Freedom, operating at large under American command. The implication is that British troops will act only in self-defence. How that turns back the Taliban tide is a mystery. It is just offering target practice for mujaheddin.

None of the senior soldiers to whom I have talked, let alone intelligence sources or United Nations drug officials, can make sense of Reid's mission. Last December its thrust was described as poppy eradication. On Thursday Reid dropped the term but spoke euphemistically of “economic development” and “extending political power under democratic control”.

The political economy of Helmand means one thing: opium. The poppy crop is what oil is to Kuwait. With Taliban activity increasing, American tactics have been to tolerate the drug barons and their allies the warlords as a buffer against infiltration. Officials in Kabul have distanced themselves from Britain's obsession with destroying poppies, apparently rooted in Reid's belief that narcotic demand at home can be stifled by restricting supply abroad. It is a policy of market regulation that the Americans have grimly failed to validate in South

America.

The West's invasion of Afghanistan liberated the opium trade from a temporary suspension under the Taliban. The proposal of the Senlis research council to imitate Turkey and India and buy the Afghan crop for medicinal use was rejected by the British and Americans. This is despite there being a world shortage of opium-based morphine.

In response to Europe's uncontrolled heroin demand, Afghan poppy production has expanded from six to 28 of its 32 provinces. In 2004 output broke all records (50% more than in the Taliban's best year). UN monitors predict an increase again this year. UN reports describe a sophisticated industry supplying 87% of the world market and able to adjust acreage to world prices.

Opium is virtually Afghanistan's only export industry, underpinning half the economy and almost all its disposable wealth. Any attempt to substitute other crops would be hopeless. Substitution was described to a recent US congressional committee as an "utter, abject, total failure". Reid is blowing a further £20m on it, does nobody audit foreign aid?

Helmand is the centre of the opium industry. It has recently moved into processing as well as growing, with hundreds of jobs created in "factories". For British troops to go burning crops and smashing factories in the name of "economic development" would merely impoverish the poorest end of the opium production chain and be counter-productive. It would infuriate the locals and drive them under the protection of the Taliban, which has reportedly forged close links with the traders.

Intelligence reports suggest that Taliban activity in southern Afghanistan will increase drastically in the summer. Money is pouring into its coffers and those of its Pakistani allies, mostly from opium but also from Saudis and Gulf states. People are "insuring" themselves against future trouble. To imagine that a mere 3,300 British soldiers can have any impact on such swirling forces is spitting in the wind. Britain is covering what in truth is an American withdrawal in the face of an emerging Karzai-Taliban-warlord coalition.

The Helmand expedition was explained to me by one of Reid's aides in pure Victorian terms. It was all about "what we want to achieve in Afghanistan . . ." and "what we cannot let happen . . ." It is as if the great white queen were still on the throne and Britain's will was beyond challenge. Yet even the Victorians did not always win.

This must be the most ill-conceived venture since Gordon set out for Khartoum in 1884, having declared any victory by the Mahdists a catastrophe. Gordon proceeded on a cloud of jingoism and self-delusion to just such a catastrophe. As for Afghanistan it has been a veritable theme park of undermanned and overambitious British military expeditions.

If ever somewhere needed clear thinking rather than histrionics it is the region stretching from the Levant to the Indus valley.

A vague belligerence about "defeating terrorism" is not a policy. Tony Blair cannot stop the Taliban returning to Afghanistan, any more than he can stop Iran enriching plutonium. Why pretend? Britain must soon face a messy withdrawal from Iraq. Its troops in Basra are virtually in "garrison mode", avoiding any confrontation with Iran-backed militias. These militias in turn may soon be responding to events unfolding in Tehran.

In Iran Britain has followed a sensibly cautious path in collaboration with the rest of Europe. But having stupidly failed to support the moderates the West must now tread warily with the extremists. It must contain the laptop bombardiers emerging from the swamps of the Potomac and crying for yet another war. Extending the Bush/Blair doctrine of military pre-emption by bombing Iran would be Allah's gift to the crazies around Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Such a confrontation would mean engaging Iran in a real rather than a rhetorical conflict, a slaughter beyond anything justified by facts on the ground. It would mobilise pro-Iranian militias inside Iraq and activate suicide cadres across the region. Hamas's hardliners would cheer and Israel's security be ever more threatened. And for what? Is all this the best diplomacy can offer the 21st century?

Source: Simon Jenkins - The Sunday Times – 29th January 2006.

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GOVERNANCE, RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan – Ministry of Counter Narcotics National Drug Control Strategy

'An Updated Five Year Strategy for Tackling the Illicit Drug Problem – Kabul, January 2006'

Please see <http://www.mcn.gov.af/english/index.htm> or ask for Reference 5_A.

Licensing Afghanistan's opium: Solution or fallacy? By Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy

In June 1906, Charles Henry Brent, the first Protestant Episcopal Church bishop of the Philippines and a staunch opponent of the opium trade, wrote to President Theodore Roosevelt to ask for the United States to call an international conference to enforce anti-opium measures in China.

The conference was held in Shanghai in 1909. One hundred years after Bishop Brent's letter, the global prohibition of opium and certain other drugs has largely failed, in spite of, or maybe because of, more than 30 years of the "war on drugs" launched in 1971 by the administration of US president Richard Nixon.

This is what was stressed at a conference on "Drug Production and State Stability" recently held in Paris, when Alfred McCoy, professor of history at the University of Wisconsin and author of *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*, explained that, "after fighting five drug wars in 30 years at a cost of US\$150 billion, Washington has presided over a [fivefold] increase" in the world illicit-opium supply, from 1,000 tonnes in 1970 to between 5,000 and 6,000 tonnes in the mid-2000s.

This was exemplified in late 2005 when the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) confirmed that Afghanistan was still and by far the world's first producing country of illicit opium, despite alternative development efforts, eradication measures, and widely lauded achievements in democracy and state-building in the country.

Clearly, as has now been stated by many observers and analysts, the danger for Afghanistan is that a hastened suppression or eradication program will, in the absence of alternative livelihoods being widely promoted, damage the fragile rural economy, prove counterproductive in the mid-term, and impede sustainable solutions to the Afghan crisis.

Indeed, in a 2004 interview, Doris Buddenberg, the head of UNODC in Afghanistan, said, "Eradication usually does not bring about a sustainable reduction of poppy crop - it is a one-time, short-term effort. Also eradication usually pushes the prices up. As we have seen from the Taliban period, the one-year ban on opium-poppy cultivation increased prices enormously the following year and it became extremely attractive for farmers to cultivate poppy."

However, in December 2005, only a few weeks after having lauded "the largest decrease [of opium-poppy cultivation] ever recorded in a single year in any country", Buddenberg said there were "signs cultivation may increase next year in many areas, in part because of pressure on farmers to grow opium poppies and their own concerns about making a living", thus without clearly acknowledging that the so-called "success" in reducing opium-poppy cultivation in Afghanistan in 2004-05 had already been and was still to be largely counterproductive.

In such a context, where both interdiction and development have failed to solve the "opium problem" in Afghanistan, because interdiction without development amounts to further deteriorating the livelihoods of opium farmers, and alternative development is far from having been implemented with adequate economic means and political determination, a rather new, but unrealistic, proposal has emerged: the licensing of Afghan opium for production of pharmaceutical morphine.

Described as "a truly winning solution" by many, the proposal of the Senlis Council, an "international drug-policy think-tank" based in Paris, consists of licensing Afghan opium for the production of legal medicines such as morphine and codeine as a way to respond to the urgent need to significantly reduce Afghanistan's illegal opium production and trade, but also as a way to overcome the "significant global shortage of opium-based medicines such as morphine and codeine", a problem "felt most acutely in the developing world".

This proposal, however, is based on false or inexact premises, on at least two levels: regarding the world market on the one hand, and national and local opium-farming communities on the other hand. **See the full article on http://www.pa-chouvy.org/Chouvy-Asia_Times-1FEB2006-Licensing_Afghanistans_Opium_Solution_or_Fallacy.html or ask for Reference 5_C.**

Afghan farmers go to the House of Commons to meet British MPs



Media Advisory

**Open Meeting hosted by Mr Chris Mullin MP - 2:30PM, Monday 6 February 2006
House of Commons – Committee Room 12**

Following International Donor's conference Afghan Farmers come to London with an urgent plea to save their livelihoods.

Farmers will ask UK Government to veto plans to eradicate their crops and to include opium licensing for medicine in the drug strategy for Afghanistan

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Feasibility Study on Opium Licensing in Afghanistan for Morphine and Other Essential Medicines

Drug policy is a key issue in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Recognizing the immediate need to dramatically reduce the nation's illegal opium trade, The Senlis Council launched a study on the feasibility of licensing opium production for medical purposes. Leading experts from around the world have contributed to the project. The initial findings were released on 26 September 2005, at The Kabul International Symposium.

The full report is available online at http://www.senliscouncil.net/feasibility_study

About the Senlis Council

The Senlis Council, established in 2002, is a leading international drug policy think tank which gathers expertise and facilitates new initiatives on global drug policy. The Council convenes politicians, high profile academics, independent experts and Non Governmental Organisations. It aims to work as the dialogue partner with senior policy-makers at both the national and international level in order to foster high-level exchanges and new ideas on integrated drug policies.

For more information, visit <http://www.senliscouncil.net>

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INFRASTRUCTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Forest rehabilitation in Laghman and Paktia Provinces

DACAAR PRESS RELEASE Kabul, 30 January 2006

A forestry survey funded by FAO has been launched by DACAAR with special focus on forestry in two eastern provinces of Afghanistan. The research project aims at exploring potential of recovery of forest in Salab valley in Laghman, and Jaji valley in Paktia Province, given the severity of forest degradation in the areas.

Today, natural vegetation in Afghanistan is sparse, occupying only 2 to 3 per cent of land surface. Forests have been cut illegally, and timber smuggled to Pakistan in the mid 90s, and many forest areas were burned during the war. Throughout Afghanistan loss of forests and degradation of rangelands and watershed, due to overuse and drought, and dry-land cultivation has caused severe soil erosion, and depletion of soil fertility. Due to decades of poor management of land resources degradation of soil fertility, flooding and desertification is accelerating day by day.

'In April, DACAAR along with other stakeholders in this project will present findings on a national conference arranged by the Afghan government. We sincerely hope that this leads to a future viable national strategy for forest rehabilitation. The need for sustainable natural resource management in Afghanistan is a basic means for creating better livelihoods for people in rural areas', says Erik Toft, chief of programmes in DACAAR.

DACAAR, already working close with communities in villages in Salab and Jaji, has a platform for strengthening efforts to improve natural resource management in the areas. In Salab valley, DACAAR has established 24 village organisations, and 24 women organisations, and in Jaji, 94 village organisations, and 12 women's organisation are implementing development activities, and also function as village decision-making institutions.

So far, some of these institutions have formed associations to manage forests on sustainable basis, and have been recognised by local authorities. However, more support is needed to raise awareness, develop technical skills related to forestry, and create alternative income sources for the forest dependent communities.

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EDUCATION

UN Supports Project Aimed At Providing Cheap Laptops to Students In Poor Countries

A pioneering \$100 laptop programme, designed to give children in poor countries access to knowledge and educational tools, came a step closer to realization today with the signing of a partnership agreement in Davos, Switzerland, between the main United Nations development agency and the organization responsible for the initiative.

Under the Memorandum of Understanding signed at the World Economic Forum by UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Kemal Dervis and One Laptop per Child (OLPC) Chairman Nicholas Negroponte, the two organizations will work together to deliver new technology and learning resources to schools in the world's least developed countries (LDCs).

"We are delighted to be part of this venture, which has the potential to break through the digital divide between rich countries and poor countries," said Mr. Dervis.

"Though the price of access to knowledge has dramatically decreased in recent years, new technologies remain out of reach for most people in developing countries, especially children, who rarely have access to the educational resources that could enhance their opportunities and lift them out of poverty," he said.

Mr. Negroponte said the project would address the problem. "One laptop per child is key, making learning more seamless with living, play and family life, versus being limited to school," he said.

The \$100 laptop is a sturdy computer which requires very little power and can even be powered by hand cranking. The computers form a 'mesh network,' which means that they can talk to each other and several hundred machines can share a single point of access.

It is expected that the cost of each laptop will come down over time. Manufacturing will begin when at least 5 million machines have been ordered and paid for in advance, and the preliminary target is to have units ready for shipment by early 2007.

"World demand and goodwill for the \$100 laptop has been bought because any head of State realizes that a nation's most precious natural resource is its children," Mr. Negroponte said.

New York, Jan 28 2006. – UN News 29th January 2006.

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HEALTH

WHO welcomes United Kingdom, Gates Foundation funding for global action to stop tuberculosis

The World Health Organization (WHO) today welcomes the announcement by the United Kingdom government that it will give £41.7 million (US\$ 74 million) to help fight tuberculosis (TB) in India and by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that it will triple funding for tuberculosis to more than US\$ 900 million by 2015.

Announcement of the two funding commitments follows publication of the Global Plan to Stop Tuberculosis which sets out the steps that are needed to tackle the global tuberculosis epidemic. Two million people die of TB every year and eight million become infected. The plan, prepared by the Stop Tuberculosis Partnership, calls for global spending on tuberculosis to triple over the next ten years to increase access to tuberculosis control programmes and accelerate research on new tools to fight the disease.

"This funding from the UK government and from the Gates Foundation shows real, long-term commitment to the global effort to stop tuberculosis," said Dr LEE Jong-wook, WHO Director-General. "The global TB action plan shows clearly what must be done to tackle the burden of TB. We must now act urgently to raise all the funds needed to put the plan into action."

Key objectives of the plan include improving access to treatment in order to prevent 14 million deaths and provide treatment to 50 million people; developing and distributing new drugs and a new, safe and affordable vaccine; and developing new efficient, effective and affordable diagnostic tests.

WHO is a partner in the Stop TB Partnership, which was established in 2000. The partnership secretariat is hosted by WHO in Geneva.

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Source: World Health Organization (WHO) 27th January 2006.

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SCA in Nuristan

PRESS RELEASE – 4th February 2006

The Swedish Committee (SCA) for Afghanistan is the first NGO to start implementing the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) in Nuristan Province. This project aims at achieving the national goal of equitable health services by providing quality health care to the population of Nuristan province.

Nuristan province is an isolated mountainous province in Afghanistan with estimated population figure at about 300,000 inhabitants. This remote province has a complicated river system that divides the province into three valleys; Eastern and Central that are accessible through Kunar province and the Western that is accessible through Laghman Province. Most of Nuristan Province becomes isolated during the wintertime for 3-6 months and completely inaccessible from the outside world.

Nuristan represents an enormous challenge. In addition to the remoteness of the province, its difficult terrain and scatteredness of the population and security represents a concern to the implementing NGO's. The health status of the Nuristan population is very poor in addition to the health problems elsewhere in Afghanistan. Due to poor socio-economic conditions, lack of adequate health care, insufficient health awareness, many authorities expect higher mortality rates in particular amongst women and children.

Dr Ahmad Rahman, Senior Health Advisor, SCA comments: - Nuristan's unique sets of difficulties discourage many NGO's of working there. SCA is committed to work with the poor and marginalized sectors of the Afghan population. Capitalizing on our long experiences and capacity, SCA will endeavour to extend the BPHS coverage in every district in Nuristan, through innovative approaches and well-designed interventions in which communities are fully involved.

SCA's objectives for providing health services to the population of Nuristan province:

- ❖ To provide adequate coverage for the Nuristan population with the BPHS
- ❖ To provide high quality preventive, curative and rehabilitative health care services in Nuristan province that focuses on women and children
- ❖ To ensure accessible health services to the people in remote and isolated areas
- ❖ To develop mechanisms to control tuberculosis as a major health problem in Nuristan
- ❖ To establish an efficient project management structure
- ❖ To build the capacity of provincial and the cluster health management structures
- ❖ To enhance the accessibility and the sustainability of the maternal health care services
- ❖ To establish community involvement structures
- ❖ To promote community initiatives and multi-sectoral development

Kabul, 4 February 2006

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The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan recognises the challenges in this project and will strive to identify opportunities that can help in improving the quality of the services and providing sustainable solutions to the problems in Nuristan. **This project is funded by the European Commission for 20 months (1st phase).**

For more information about SCA activities in Nuristan, please contact: Dr Ahmad El Rahman, Senior Health Advisor, Phone: +93 (0)7933002, email: ahmed.rahman@sca.org.af
Kabul, 4 February 2006

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Tree plantation campaign in Nangarhar from tomorrow

As many as 72,000 saplings would be planted in the eastern Nangarhar province during a forestation campaign due to get under way from tomorrow, officials said on Saturday.

Agriculture and Livestock Department's official Hamidullah Nazir revealed the government would cultivate 30,000 fruit-bearing, 38,000 seed-yielding and 3,000 decoration plants as part of the province-wide plantation drive.

In an exclusive chat with Pajhwok Afghan News, Nazir said the saplings - grown in seed-beds on the department's farms - would be planted in government compounds and lands. The remaining seedlings would be sold to farmers at subsidised rates, he added.

A grower from the Behsud district, Mohammad Hashim, complained most of saplings they planted every year withered while few took root. He asked the authorities concerned to give farmers the necessary guidelines as to how they should plant and tend the seedlings.

Source: Pajhwok – Jalalabad – 5th February 2006.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

New World Bank report warns that unless pervasive gender gaps in Afghanistan are addressed, it will have a severe impact on the country's reconstruction and future development

The new World Bank report, ***National Reconstruction and Poverty Reduction: The Role of Women in Afghanistan's Future***, says opportunities available to Afghan women in the areas of health, education, employment, legal, and political rights are extremely low by world standards. It also identifies critical areas in which actions that tackle gender disparities are likely to enhance growth and poverty reduction in the country.

"With around 36 percent of women participating in the labor force, Afghan women contribute in large measure to the economic development of Afghanistan," said **Jean Mazurelle, Country Manager for Afghanistan**. *"But a lot needs to be done to reduce maternal mortality, to increase literacy, to provide livelihood and employment possibilities, to protect rights, and to ensure women have influence over their own lives."*

The report says two decades of conflict have not only led to a breakdown of infrastructure and delivery of services in Afghanistan, but have also contributed to the downward trend of women's rights. According to the United Nations' National Human Development Report (2004), only Niger and Burkina Faso are placed lower on the Gender Development Index.

Health indicators for women are among the worst in the world, particularly in the areas of child health and women's reproductive health. Almost half of all deaths among women of reproductive age are a result of pregnancy and childbirth. More than 75 percent of these deaths are preventable, the report says. On education, the country has achieved a significant leap in school enrollment in the last couple of years. Half of all school-age children in the country now go to school and one-third of them are girls. However, these figures hide dramatic disparities, with girls representing less than 15 percent of the total enrollment in nine provinces in the east and south, according to the report.

The traditional role of women in Afghanistan is a constraint to more equitable participation in economic activities, the report suggests. The wage rates of the women who do work are normally half those of men. Women's involvement in the formal sector is mainly in the health and education sectors. Currently, close to only one-third of all teachers are female. An estimated 40 percent of all basic health facilities lack female staff. Although women play an important role in many aspects of handicraft, agricultural, livestock, and dairy production, most of their labor is non-monetized.

However, some progress has been achieved. Gender equality and gender mainstreaming are now a declared government policy. The recent parliamentary election saw a very significant participation of women voters, and resulted in the election of women parliamentarians and provincial council members above the designated quotas for these assemblies.

The report suggests that under the prevailing conditions, the main areas of intervention to support gender equity and gender mainstreaming could be:

- ❖ Strengthening of women's employment in the health and education sectors
- ❖ Strengthening women's involvement in agricultural and livestock production in the form of extension and training, credit facilities, and expansion of market opportunities
- ❖ Development of socially acceptable skilled and unskilled employment opportunities for women in the urban sector in response to the high level of poor female-headed households
- ❖ Legal reforms to remove gender inequities within Family Law, in terms of marriage, marriage age, divorce, and inheritance
- ❖ Collection of adequate sex-disaggregated data across all sectors to document women's and men's involvement and to enable monitoring of future developments and effects of investments

The report says these interventions call for a series of actions, including creation of an appropriate institutional framework to support women's training; market linkages; access to credit and child care facilities; schooling infrastructure, including incentives designed to reduce the drop out rate for girls, and maternal health care facilities to be spread out into remote rural areas.

“Given the magnitude of gender disparities, the direct and indirect benefits of policy actions to address these priority areas are much greater than the costs,” said Asta Olesen, Senior Social Development Specialist and Lead Author of the report. “The challenge now is to formulate policies, develop and implement reforms, in partnership between the Government of Afghanistan and donors, to provide practical and effective programs that will enable women to participate fully in the rebuilding of Afghanistan.”

The report concludes that there are factors unique to Afghanistan to be taken into account when designing the policies. There are also large similarities between Afghanistan and other countries in the region. While policy interventions and technical solutions are quite generic for the provision of health, education, training, skills, and employment, they have to be specific to the Afghan context.

The report does not challenge Afghan culture and religion, but it points out ways how the great potential of Afghan women could be unleashed to support the rebuilding their society.

To read more on the World Bank’s work in Afghanistan, please visit: <http://www.worldbank.org/af>

Read the [report](#) (576 kb pdf) or ask for Reference 5_H.

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ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE AND PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Financial Outcomes from London Conference 31st January to 1st February 2006

LONDON CONFERENCE

Jan 31st - Feb 1st 2006

Financial Outcomes

Donor	Commitments	International Assistance available for Afghanistan National Development Strategy
	1384 (Current Year)	From 1385
	March 2005- March 2006	From March 2006
ADB	244	1,000
Aga Khan	23	0
Australia	16	113
Belgium	17	6
Canada	83	125
China	8	85
Denmark	29	120
EC	132	268
Finland	11	60
France	24	55
Germany	74	480
Greece	0	5
India	126	181
Iran	50	100
Islamic Dev Bank	20	70
Italy	51	56
Japan/JICA	31	450
Korea (Rep of)	2	20
Netherlands	53	179
New Zealand	0	11

Norway	41	144
Pakistan	105	150
Saudi Arabia	22	153
Spain	12	182
Sweden	41	120
Switzerland	17	90
Turkey	0	100
UAE	6	0
UK	284	885
UN Agencies	58	94
US	3,053	4,000
WB	263	1,200
Total	4,921	10,501

1- All figures in US Dollar million

2- In addition to International assistance, the Government of Afghanistan is also strengthening its domestic revenue base and expects to support its recurrent budget

3- The figures are preliminary and will be confirmed shortly

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Afghan-made Coke hits the streets

KABUL: Afghan-made Coca-Cola hit the streets of Kabul on Sunday as distribution started from a 25-million-dollar plant that represents one of the most significant investments in the war-torn country since the ousting of the Taliban.

Brand new red and white trucks fanned out across the city to distribute the Afghanistan-made Coca-Cola, Fanta and Sprite which the franchisee is hoping will squeeze the Iranian- and Pakistani-made versions off the shelves.

The first distribution precedes an official launch expected in the Islamic New Year which starts in March.

"I believe in the future of Afghanistan – that is why I put my money in Afghanistan," said Habib Gulzar, partner in the franchisee, Habib Gulzar International. "The economy is getting better... we believe this is a good investment and Afghanistan has the potential for more investment," he told AFP.

Shopkeepers expected good sales from the drinks, which should be marginally cheaper than the average 35 afghani (less than a dollar) for one litre of the imported product. "People have already been coming here and asking for Afghan coke," shopkeeper Sher Haadi said. "It is the product of our own country and Afghans are working there. I am so proud."

The high-tech factory is expected to employ more than 300 people, with each job projected to create another 20, Gulzar said.

With the war-pocked capital still unable to provide its residents with basic facilities, including more than a few hours of electricity every two days, the new plant includes its own well, generators and waste water treatment system.

Dependent on international aid, the country is trying to rebuild after decades of war. With the help of around 30,000 foreign troops, it is fighting an insurgency led by remnants of the Taliban regime ousted in 2001.

The new Coca Cola plant is the biggest investment in the industrial sector since the removal of the Taliban, the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency said.

It is indicative of "relative stability in the country" which has experienced double digit growth since 2002, it said in a statement. "It says that Afghanistan is open and ready for investing, particularly, productive investment... Our hope is that other multinationals will follow suit."

Source: AFP – circulated on MobyCapital Update – 27th January 2006.

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AFGHANISTAN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
The Afghanistan National Development Strategy website

Please visit <http://www.ands.gov.af/>.

AFGHANISTAN RESEARCH AND EVALUATION UNIT (AREU)
New Reports from (AREU)

The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit announces the publication of three new reports from its long-term research project looking at Afghans' transnational networks in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan: the briefing paper "*Afghans in Pakistan: Broadening the Focus*" and case studies "*Afghans in Quetta: Settlements, Livelihoods, Support Networks and Cross-Border Linkages*" and "*Afghans in Peshawar: Migration, Settlements and Social Networks*".

AREU's recent study of Afghans living in Pakistan, conducted by the Collective for Social Science Research, focussed on selected communities of Afghans living in different parts of Pakistan, and sought to understand their livelihood strategies, support networks, cross-border movements and future planning in relation to returning to Afghanistan or remaining in Pakistan.

A 2005 census of Afghans living in Pakistan revealed that although over 2.5 million Afghans have repatriated from Pakistan in the past three years, there are 3 million who remain there. Eighty-two percent have no immediate plans to return to Afghanistan. The briefing paper "*Afghans in Pakistan*" draws on the findings from case studies in Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta to demonstrate that the refugee framework can no longer address the complex realities of a transnational community such as the Afghan population in Pakistan. These three new reports are available now in hard copy from AREU's Kabul office, on the AREU website at www.areu.org.af and as PDFs by emailing publications@areu.org.af

Another recent report is 'Poor, Poorer, Poorest: Urban Livelihoods and Vulnerability in Mazar-i-Sharif' also available as above.

HISTORY OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN KABUL
PDF History of the British Embassy in Kabul Printed in 1976

<http://www.afrikamedia.com/kbl-embassy.pdf> or ask for Reference 5_F. Also take a look at some colour photographs of the old Embassy on <http://www.kabulguide.net/kbl-scoularpics.htm>
Source: Dominic Medley – Afghan Foreign Press Association.

LONDON CONFERENCE
Building on Success – The London Conference on Afghanistan – The Afghanistan Compact – London 31st January to 1st February 2006

Please ask for Reference 5_E for a copy plus the joint statement made by the co-chairmen at the end of the Conference with conclusions and the table with pledges announced (as also shown above).

These are published on the conference website (www.afghanistanconference.gov.uk).

ON-LINE INFORMATION SOURCE
Online Community Enables Development Practitioners to Connect and Collaborate with Peers

The [Afghanistan Reconstruction](#) page on the Development Gateway portal is an online community that promotes knowledge-sharing and collaboration among development practitioners. Currently at the [Afghanistan Reconstruction](#) page, you can:

- ❖ find more than 3,000 reports, news articles, and other resources;
- ❖ post your own information;
- ❖ join in discussions;
- ❖ connect with nearly 6,000 practitioners;
- ❖ find job announcements and tender notices; and
- ❖ access 1,700 records on Afghanistan-related development projects;

The [Afghanistan Reconstruction](#) community is operated in collaboration with organizations including the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit and Center on International Cooperation

and a team of expert advisors. Sign up for membership to receive regular updates (it's free!):
<http://topics.developmentgateway.org/afghanistan> Nadia Afrin - Editor, Afghanistan
Reconstruction - Development Gateway Email: nafrin@dgfoundation.org

If you want further information on any of the above subjects please email Jeanne Bryer at Afghanlinks@aol.com NB. All information contained here identifies the source and is shared with readers in good faith. If you find any incorrect details please let me know and they will be rectified immediately. Afghan Links is produced by Jeanne Bryer who formerly worked for the British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group and who currently works for Khorasan Orphanage in Kabul and the Kathy Evans Afghan Education Trust. If you no longer wish to receive the Afghan Links Newsletter please send an email to Jeanne Afghanlinks@aol.com and your address will be removed.

