Spotlight on 2005

Afghanistan: village children get their first school

Clean water and better hygiene save children’s lives in Tajikistan
Mission East is a Danish international aid organisation.

We exist to deliver relief and development assistance to vulnerable communities with a primary focus on Eastern Europe and Asia. Based on Christian values, Mission East aims to support the most vulnerable, making no racial, political or religious distinction between those in need.

Mission East currently operates in Afghanistan, Armenia, Iraq and Tajikistan, and we co-operate with local partners in Bulgaria, Romania and Nepal. The assistance offered by Mission East is supported by a range of private and public donors such as the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, EU and the United Nations.

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Front page photo:
The children of Samandab will now have a real school. Up until now they have been taught in cold tents. Many girls did not attend school at all. With the new buildings most girls and boys will receive primary education and thus break the cycle of illiteracy. 71 percent of Afghanistan’s population cannot read.

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Poverty is still desperate in Afghanistan – one of the six poorest countries in the world. 2005, however, was a milestone for Mission East’s work in Afghanistan. The high child mortality rate dropped in a large number of villages, where Mission East provided clean water, better sanitation and improved hygiene awareness. Also, thousands of children now have their first ever schools and a road was built, which connects thousands of people to the surrounding world.

Armenia – disabled children get equal rights
In 2005, Mission East contributed to the introduction of a new law which ensures that all children with disabilities have the right to equality of educational opportunities and which promotes inclusive education. Read about seven-year-old Zara who discovered the joy of attending school and about her mother, who has regained pride in her daughter.
In 2005 Mission East helped 250,000 needy people. This was only possible thanks to your support.

You are now holding the first edition of this year’s Mission East magazine. Like last year, we have chosen to look back at what we achieved with your support in 2005. Many faces have made an unforgettable impression: the girl in Afghanistan, who will now attend school for the first time, the boy in Indonesia who is the only survivor of a family, but who thanks to assistance from our international partners after all has a chance to build a future.

Last year, one disaster overshadowed all the others. As you can read in this magazine, Mission East was able to respond immediately when the tsunami hit. Thanks to our international alliance Integral, Mission East was able to respond alongside other relief organisations. In 2005, we have strengthened our cooperation with 10 organizations around the world. This enables us to react fast when catastrophes hit.

It is still the long-term work of helping people out of poverty that dominates Mission East’s work. We operate in some of the most vulnerable and forgotten countries of the world like Nepal, Afghanistan, Armenia and Tajikistan. Who ever hears about Tajikistan in the media? Who knows that 80 percent of the population lives under the country’s poverty line? Mission East is currently helping 41 villages in Tajikistan to break the cycle of poverty.

2005 was a milestone for our work in Afghanistan. In the magazine you can read about the impact of Mission East’s work on infant sickness and mortality in villages, and about Samandab village, which now has its first school.

In this magazine we look back. However, a lot of new things will happen in 2006. We will strengthen our work in Armenia to give the often stigmatised disabled children a better start in life. We will improve living conditions in even more villages in Afghanistan and help villages in Tajikistan fight the natural disasters that keep them in poverty. None of this is possible without your support. In 2005, Mission East saw an increase of 20 percent in its number of supporters for which we are grateful. We hope we can count on your continued support – and that together we can assist even more needy people in 2006.

Counting on your support

By Dr. Kim Hartzner,
Managing Director
Mission East

Thank you.

Kim Hartzner,
Managing Director
Afghanistan – still in desperate need of help

It has been five years since the war in Afghanistan ended. But the need for help is still desperate. In 2005 Mission East’s efforts have improved the living conditions for thousands of people in north-eastern Afghanistan.

It is now five years since decades of war in Afghanistan finally ended. During these five years many Afghans have experienced substantial progress. 2005 saw the establishment of the country’s first democratically elected parliament. Women were eligible for election and, in the province of Herat, a woman received the highest number of personal votes. A remarkable event in a country where only five years ago women were not allowed to work or go to school.

Unfortunately, the country’s desperate poverty still dominates society. Afghanistan continues to be the 6th poorest country in the world. Security is fragile, child mortality high and income low. In the remote villages where Mission East is operating many struggle to make ends meet.

In 2005 Mission East has worked towards improving the rural population’s wellbeing by creating access to clean drinking water, promoting hygiene, building sanitary facilities, and improving the livelihoods of villagers through income generating activities and food production.

Fewer children die
One of the problems being addressed is the high child mortality rate. According to WHO one out of four children in Afghanistan dies before the age of 5 because of unsanitary conditions, lack of access to clean water and because the population has never received information about hygiene. In the villages, where Mission East is operating, only very few children now die from preventable waterborne diseases.

In 2005, six new schools were built in Takhar province. Previously the children were taught in tents, which were useless in winter. Many girls were kept at home. The new schools mean education for thousands of children, including girls.

Roads provide a better future
Mission East’s assistance to villages in Chaal district was possible

“According to WHO one out of four children in Afghanistan dies before the age of 5 because of unsanitary conditions, lack of access to clean water and because the population has never received information about hygiene. In the villages, where Mission East is operating, only very few children now die from preventable waterborne diseases.”
through the completion of a 43 kilometre road through this poor and previously isolated district. As a result, more than 45,000 people are now connected to the surrounding world. They can sell their goods in the nearby town, they can reach the hospital, the children can access schools and aid organisations can reach them. Two years ago we started constructing the first 20 kilometres, financed by the Belgian Government via Tearfund Belgium. This year we finished the last 23 kilometres, financed by the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission (ECHO).

Security fragile
The security situation for Mission East’s employees remains sometimes fragile. Our office in Baharak was attacked in May by a mob of people protesting against the alleged desecration of the Quran at the Guantanamo base. Luckily, our employees escaped, frightened but unharmed.

Caution is a part of our daily routine. We are in close dialogue with authorities and the population to ensure support for our projects. All projects are carried out in collaboration with the local community in order to focus on the most pressing issues at hand and to involve the Afghans in the creation of their own future.

There is still need for help. In the coming issues of the magazine we will tell about the new projects ahead in 2006, which will contribute to lifting the Afghans out of poverty for good.

Achievements in 2005
• 1,300 latrines, 500 in Badakshan
• More than 6,500 people trained in hygiene
• 6 schools built
• 16 water systems built
• 20 wells dug
• 4,000 women assisted in establishing kitchen gardens
• Irrigation canals repaired
• 23 kilometres of road built
• Cash-for-work program created work for more than 3,000 people.

By Mark Grewcoe,
former Country Director
Afghanistan

Photos: Mission East’s employees in Afghanistan

The north-eastern part of Afghanistan is mountainous and hard to access. Mission East’s new road has connected 45,000 people to the surrounding world.
The village of Samandab is set in a magnificent location on a plateau beneath the Hindu Kush mountains in Northern Afghanistan. Two schools are the most prominent buildings in the village. The head teacher Wazir Shah Rahimi is standing by the entrance, his eyes smiling. The village has just got new and much-needed school buildings for both boys and girls.

Girls in school

Even though girls were allowed to attend school after the fall of the Taliban in 2001, it often did not happen. Female teachers refused to teach in open tents. This is why the schools, which Mission East has build with funding from the Danish Government, are crucial. In a culture where women are shielded from curious eyes, the schools enable female teachers to teach. 350 girls can now attend school in this village.

Cold winter in tents

For the boys the schools are also an improvement.

“The in winter it is cold and in the spring it rains. The students got distracted,” explains the head teacher. The school can accommodate more than 1,000 students.

Outside two boys from the 5th grade have completed their exams for this year. Abdul Karim, who is 14 years old, explains that it is hard to follow classes in tents. “Now it is easier because we are not cold.” His friend Gulam Faruk, who is 13, adds: “My favourite subjects are geography and maths. I want to be an engineer.”

The boys walk off in the winter sun, holding their notebooks, they will return in the spring as 6th graders.

Read at the back of the magazine how you can support the schools.
In a few minutes, the tsunami destroyed everything. Through its international partnerships, Mission East was able to respond immediately.

Tsunami – disasters demand immediate response

Mission East responded straight away when the tsunami hit. Through our international partners in Integral we can respond quickly and efficiently to disasters.

In few minutes, the tsunami transformed the coastlines in Thailand, India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka into a disaster area. Through our international partners in Integral, Mission East was able to react immediately. Some of our 10 partner organisations have many years of experience in the area and they led a relief effort that provided tents, medicines and clean water to the needy. Mission East coordinated a large fundraising campaign which provided support to some of the organisations carrying out this operation.

Integral is still working in the area to restore people’s lives. In Banda Aceh schools and houses are being built. Fishermen have been helped to build boats. Agriculture has been supported. As an alliance which covers 75 countries and has a total annual income of more than 120 million euro, Integral showed it could react quickly.

Wardi did not lose his family. And thanks to a new boat project he will be able to provide for his family again. Mission East’s partner organisation, World Relief, has built boats for fishermen whose boats were destroyed. That has given back livelihoods to 75 families.

“I have bought cooking stoves and clothes for my children. These are the first things I have bought this year.”

35-year old Wardi, A fisherman in Indonesia

By Dr. Kim Hartzner, Managing Director Mission East

“A fisherman returns to the sea
Fishing had been 35-year old Wardi’s life-long job. Until the tsunami hit.

“My boat and everything I owned was destroyed”.

“I have bought cooking stoves and clothes for my children. These are the first things I have bought this year,” says Wardi, who says he has been to sea nine times since he received his boat one and a half months ago.

“By
Dr. Kim Hartzner,
Managing Director
Mission East

Photos: World Relief

In a few minutes, the tsunami destroyed everything. Through its international partnerships, Mission East was able to respond immediately.
Tajikistan – moving forward

In 2005 Mission East continued to focus on long-term development in Tajikistan. Mission East has been working closely together with the communities to help people take responsibility for their own development – a challenge in a country that was governed for a long period by a strong Soviet state.

When Mission East started working in Tajikistan in 1997, the need for emergency aid was acute. A civil war had left the country with a high unemployment rate, thousands of displaced people and a desperate lack of food. Today, the situation is relatively stable.

This has made it possible to focus on long-term development, helping people to help themselves – and to be able to continue helping themselves after organisations such as Mission East have left.

Putting development into their own hands
This is a challenge in a country that historically was controlled by a strong state. But today, the Tajik government cannot provide for all the needs of the local communities. They have to help support themselves.

Mission East is thus assisting the communities to be able to move forwards: the communities decide what their needs are – from training in farming techniques to building latrines and securing access to clean water. Mission East supports them in that process and throughout the projects. We are currently working in 41 villages with 48,000 inhabitants.

Development takes time
Mission East aims to help these families have better possibilities for earning income and producing crops. Our programmes are also designed to address the causes of illnesses and malnutrition which are prevalent, particularly amongst children and pregnant women. We also ensure that the farmers receive good quality seed and improve knowledge of farming techniques to grow more and better crops.

It has taken quite a while to promote the idea among communities that they can and should participate actively in their own development and that free emergency aid is not a long-term solution. But the results are encouraging.

By Heather Robinson, Country Director Tajikistan

Photos: Mission East
Clean water saves children’s lives

In the village of Kool, the local community organisation decided to install clean water. This changed life dramatically.

“Before we got access to clean water the children in the village often had stomach problems and were sick. Some even died. Now the children are healthy.”

For Bibrgul Yorova, a mother of seven children, access to clean water which was installed recently changed life dramatically.

Before, the women used to walk 200 metres to get water and get it from a dirty irrigation stream.

“We had to let the mud filter down before we could even drink it or use it for washing.”

Mission East supports the local community organisation in Kool and helps them decide which changes are important for the community and then to carry them out. In Kool village it was decided that water is vital. The tap that Bibrgul uses is shared between twelve families. There are fixed times when the water is running.

Village needs clean water

The community of Rohi Ohan which is not far away testifies to the importance of clean water. Here only three streets have taps and only have water once or twice a week.

“The rest of us don’t have water. In summer we have to go up to one month without water and have to walk 2-3 kilometres to fetch from the irrigation pipes where the water is quite dirty,” says Shamolova Ratetat and adds:

“It gets very hot and we have to bring the children as somebody has to look after them. The children are getting sick when there is no water in the summer.”

The situation will soon improve for the people of Rohi Ohan. Funded by private foundations, Mission East will now begin to install drinking water systems.

Poor health is poverty

Tajikistan is one of the poorest ex-Soviet countries. For every 100 children, 11-12 die before they turn five.

Kool Village is participating in a project supported by EU’s Co-Operation Office, EuropeAid and carried out by Mission East. Local Community Organisations are involved in deciding on projects. The villages co-operate with Mission East in improving the access to clean water and learning how hygiene prevents diseases. The local health clinics report a dramatic decrease in illnesses.

Mission East is now installing drinking water systems in Rohi Ohan. This is supported by Konsul George Jorck and Hustru Emma Jorck’s Fond and the Ysmenettes.

After Kool village got access to clean drinking water Bibrgul’s children are sick less often.
2005 was a challenging year for Iraq – and Mission East’s employees. Yet there was also a sensation of progress. By the end of 2005, new houses were completed for 160 families.

Iraq in 2005 continued to be a challenging country. Beyond the images on the news, focussing on flashpoints and violence, most of the population are just getting on with trying to live a ‘normal’ life. But the problems of the past are not easy to overcome, and families who were forced to flee from their homes and lands in decades past under the previous regime continue to need a lot of help in order to get back on their feet and have a stable future.

Still, there is a feeling of change in the air. On a national level, this year Iraq has seen the development of constitution, a corresponding referendum, and most recently elections to the national assembly. There is a chance to build a ‘new’ country, but this involves difficult decisions and sharing of power and resources.

**New houses for returnees**

In the Dohuk Governorate, Mission East has continued work on resettlement programmes. These aim to provide houses for families who have been homeless for many years and who have been living in collective housing, or sharing cramped accommodation with relatives since fleeing their original homes.

By the end of the year, houses which were started last year were completed in 10 villages in the Shekhan district. Households returning to live in them will be given livestock to help get themselves established. Such ‘live’ resources gives the family a small source of income to assist in their re-establishment in the village.

Mission East’s team in Iraq has had some challenges this year, not least involving keeping a close eye on the security situation and responding appropriately.

The environment is a challenging one, and the world’s attention is often on the politics and instability. Many donors and organisations work only at a distance, and the transition nature of authorities and society complicates coordination and assistance efforts.

The close of the 2005 programme will represent the end of Mission East activities in Iraq. We have seen the potential of the people of Iraq, and hope that they will be able to shape their country into a peaceful and prosperous land.
After decades in forced exile, local people such as Kurds are now able to return freely to their home villages. Often, however, there is no home to return to. In Ekmala, Mission East provided 32 families with a new home. Wahjin and Rojin smile shyly as they bring a tray of cool drinks to their guests. Last year, the two girls moved with their family into their new home, which was built by Mission East. After years in exile, the family could finally return.

Wahjin and Rojin smile shyly as they bring a tray of cool drinks to their guests. Last year, the two girls moved with their family into their new home, which was built by Mission East. After years in exile, the family could finally return.

While sipping the cool drink, their mother Qodrat tells us their story. Qodrat’s family was chased away in the late 1980s under the notorious ‘Anfal’ campaigns, a systematic attempt to depopulate the Kurdish areas of Iraq. Like many others, Qodrat fled abroad, to Iran.

She returned to her homeland in 1992 only to find that her home in the village had been destroyed. Like thousands of others, she and her family spent long years in cramped conditions, living with the cousin of her husband. Until, that is, Mission East came to assess the situation in Ekmala, tracing the families that wanted to re-establish themselves there, and pledged to help build 32 new family homes.

Getting by
The people who returned to Ekmala are proud of their homes. The village is alive to the sound of children’s voices and the sight of women taking care of their homes, gardens and families.

Life is much better, but not easy. Although her husband works hard, sometimes the tomatoes he helps grow do not sell well. Mission East has now provided the family with sheep, which will create a small income.

Secure in new home
Qodrat’s life so far has been difficult. As well as the trauma of being exiled from her homeland, she lost five children before her youngest, a boy was born. She called him Diar which means ‘God has remembered’. She hopes that he will have a secure childhood in Ekmala.

As we talk, young Diar, sleeps peacefully. He obviously feels at home in the new house. And Wahjin and Rojin - what do the girls think? They giggle and try to look away from us. But their smiles say it all.

Most Iraqis dream of a peaceful life. Qodrat and her family in Ekmala, who now have a house, are a step closer to that dream.

A new beginning

By Mags Bird,
Operations Director,
Mission East

Photos: Mags Bird
Armenia – Disabled Children Get Their Rights

Parents have learned to speak out for the rights of their disabled children – and in 2005 the right of children to education on their own terms was fixed in law.

For many years in Armenia it was considered shameful to have a physically or mentally disabled child. The popularly-held notion was that disabled children were not able to learn. However, since 1998, Mission East has been supporting provision of education to children with handicaps on their own terms and, alongside this, has also supported their parents.

Expanding focus to disability and health

In 2005 we have continued our work through a project seeking to create a more inclusive education system. We are also expanding our activities to address health-related problems for children that in many instances would otherwise not receive the treatment they needed. Working in close cooperation with government and a range of local organisations, our combined efforts together make a greater impact on a complex

Armenia 2005

With support from Mission East the parliament has adopted legislation enshrining rights of disabled children

12 teachers trained to train other teachers

Training of 50 teachers in a goal-oriented curriculum

Training in inclusive education of teachers at pilot schools

150 families have received social support

100 parents attended meetings at nine schools on a monthly basis.

40 parents have been trained. One parent from each pilot school was educated in management

Extensive media coverage of disability issues organised by Mission East and our partner organisation Bridge of Hope.
Interview with Karine Martirosyan, mother of seven-year old Zara. Zara is disabled and attends an inclusive school where she is educated in a targeted curriculum developed by Mission East. This has helped Karine gain self-confidence – and her daughter has found the joy in going to school.

**How has the new curriculum helped your child?**

It has strengthened her self-confidence. When Zara started in school she just sat and cried. Often I was close to giving up taking her to school. Her primary school teacher persuaded me not to give up, be patient. And my Zara did it. The first months were hard. Now she likes to play with other children and she learns by watching them. She learns a lot from seeing. When she started she did not.

**How do you feel that Zara is benefiting?**

She is learning. She is accomplishing the goals that the teachers and I have placed before her. She is achieving success in her individual program. She loves her school.

**What advice would you give to other parents in placing their children in schools?**

The child belongs to the world of children. Part of that world is school. Never cut her off from her world, just help find the best place for her. I am a parent like you; I share your thoughts, fears and feelings. From the time our child with a disability is born we begin the battle to have society value our children. We are given diagnosis of our children’s disabilities along with a prescription for a devalued life: your child will never learn, run, play and talk. This perception follows us from service systems, to school and into adulthood. As parents we want recognition that our children are valued human beings.

**How did the Parent’s Support Group program benefit you?**

I have learned things that were truly useful from other parents in the group. We realized our strengths and have learned to work with them. This program has changed the life of my child and my whole family. Now we believe that our daughter is the biggest gift from God.

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**Parents’ Support Groups - something to be proud of**

One of the greatest successes in 2005 has been the Parent Support Groups. In these groups parents share experience of having a disabled child and some of the parents have been educated in management, communication and networking. They now feel that they are better able to speak out for the rights of their children. These parents are regaining their self-confidence and pride in their children. They see that their children are able to learn.

The education system has also seen real progress. A milestone was the adoption of a law that secures the right to education for all. Mission East has been an active player in the preliminary work towards preparation of the legislation. A large number of pilot schools are now using the curriculum Mission East has helped develop. This has improved the educational approach used, with a greater focus on the child as an individual.

In 2005 we have seen that it is possible to influence an entire education system as well as ideas and prejudices. In 2006 we will continue this work with even greater intensity. In doing so, we will strengthen our efforts to ensure that disabled get the right treatment in the healthcare system as well as in the area of education.
Activities in Mission East partner countries

**Bulgaria 2005**
Building a social centre which will provide:
• Soup kitchen and warm shelter
• Health clinic and dental care
• Free recycled clothes and shelter for homeless children and elderly

In 2006 Mission East will continue to support our local partner Bulgarian Church of God.

**Nepal 2005**
• Access to school for poor children
• Helping orphans at the Eternity Orphanage
• Creating smaller income generating projects for people without livelihoods, especially low-caste

In 2006 Mission East will continue to support our local partner NASSO (Nepali Avinash Social Services Organisation).

**Romania 2005**
• Giving free medical care and medicine to poor families, elderly, single-headed households, orphans
• Helping to solving social problems, including supporting access to legal and psychological advice
• Material assistance such as food, toys, school books and clothes

In 2006 Mission East will continue to support our local partner Solia Sperantei.
A better start in life for disabled children

Mission East is initiating a comprehensive programme, which will improve conditions for disabled children in the Armenian region Armavir. Because of widespread poverty and discrimination, many disabled children live in dreary and dire conditions. In many instances, the children are kept at home. Many do not receive the medical assistance which could give them a life with potential for development, education and activities with other children.

The programme, which is supported by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will contribute to the identification and proper diagnosis of the disabled children that are now kept outside the health system in the region. At the same time, health personnel lacking qualifications for proper screening and treatment will be trained to develop an efficient practice for screening and referrals, so disabled children will receive the proper treatment. The project intends to develop a model of health care for disabled which can be replicated on a wider scale.

Mission East strengthens effort in Afghanistan

Mission East has been granted 2.7 million euros by the Danish Foreign Ministry to strengthen its efforts in Afghanistan’s poorest and most inaccessible areas. The comprehensive programme will improve living conditions for 30,000 people in the north-eastern part of Afghanistan.

Since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, the extent of the health and food problem for hundreds of thousands of people in the north-eastern part of Afghanistan has become apparent. It is an area which is difficult to access because of mountains, and where international help has been scarce. Since the war, Mission East has provided livelihood support, clean water and other assistance as one of the few international relief and development organisations in this area.

Mission East now increases its efforts in this area significantly. The comprehensive programme will improve food and health conditions. Also, the programme will create possibilities for the population to create sustainable incomes through household food production.

The programme will secure access to clean water and sanitary facilities in a large number of villages. 10,000 people will be trained in health and hygiene issues. Also, Mission East will seek to improve local nutrition by setting up kitchen gardens in a large number of households. Some will receive animals and others will receive assistance for beekeeping. This will give the households access to food and also enabling them to make an income by selling the products.

As a part of the project, Mission East will build a road, which connects the remote district of Mandara with the nearest villages. This will provide temporary work for many local people.
Give a chair to the school children of Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, education is a luxury. Only half of the children attend school and girls in particular are often excluded from the school system. Mission East has built 6 schools in Afghanistan for both boys and girls, where thousands of children learn to read and write. Now we would like to provide proper school furniture - chairs and tables - to make the schools complete.

**Give a table or a chair to the school children of Afghanistan!**

50 Euros will buy a desk and chairs for two students. Just mark your donation "Afghan school".

Thank you!

You can help

Last year Mission East extended urgent relief and long-term development aid to more than 250,000 people in Eastern Europe and Asia. Our work is only possible due to the donations that we receive from private individuals and other donors.

Help us to help the most needy by making a donation.

Please use the enclosed donation slip or make a donation via Mission East’s website www.miseast.org. You can donate an amount of your choice online, using Visa or MasterCard.

If you live within Europe, you can also make a donation to us by bank transfer for free, as long as the donation is in euros and you have some form of electronic banking.

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If you would like to make a donation to Mission East but prefer not to do it online, we would be more than happy to receive a cheque from you.

With your support, Mission East can continue to transform lives.

**Thank you!**