Mission East
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Afghanistan – Changing lives through poultry farming
Nepal – What has changed?

FOCUS

Women give back to help children with disabilities
Tajikistan
– Positive change in women’s lives overflows to the benefit of children with disabilities
26-year-old Bibisoro and 5-year-old Saymuhammadi live in separate villages in impoverished rural Tajikistan. They don’t know each other, but their lives have recently been connected in a unique way.

Nepal
– What has changed in Nepal?
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– Changing lives through poultry farming
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Nepal
– Abandoned by her family, Dina was given a new home
Dina was as helpless as a child could possibly be when she arrived at the “Eternity Orphan Home”. Today you would hardly believe that it is the same girl.

Mission East receives letter of appreciation in Afghanistan
2010 started off very well for Mission East in Afghanistan. In January the office received a letter of appreciation from the Governor of Takhar Province.
Only 10 days before the earthquake in Haiti shook the world, thousands of people in Tajikistan experienced a violent tremble in their country, which destroyed houses and displaced them onto the streets.

Families who lost their homes during this earthquake at the beginning of January, have since found temporary shelter in tents that have been raised on the cold, bare ground. Tents that are to protect them against temperatures that reach below freezing even during the day.

Their cries for help did not resonate as loudly as they desperately would have wished and are still hoping for. Although Tajikistan is the poorest of the former Soviet republics and the poorest country in the whole of Central Asia, the world’s eyes are rarely targeted at this place.

In a country where poverty and destitution are so prevalent and natural disasters far too familiar, it’s all the more incredible to hear about the impact of one of our projects in Tajikistan. Women who received support through this project in generating a vital income for themselves have chosen to create a fund which passes on the benefit of the assistance they have received to other countrymen in need.

This is the kind of compassion that we build our work upon. Life in Tajikistan is so fragile, even at the best of times, and these women understand the importance of being there for each other in times of need.

With encouraging examples like this in mind, we realize that our help could reach even further. I cannot stress enough how essential a role we play in the lives of the individuals participating in our projects and we want to see the results multiply.

Right now, the authorities in Tajikistan are asking for help to build and rebuild stable houses that can withstand the numerous natural disasters that have been taking place each year. Building and teaching the construction of disaster-resilient buildings is just one of the many disaster preparedness activities which are a central focus of Mission East’s work in Tajikistan. We have years of experience in this field – and want to extend the benefits of our experience and continuing efforts even further.

We have the opportunity now to make a difference that can be measured far into the future. Thank you for your kind support in achieving this.
Positive change in women’s lives overflows to the benefit of children with disabilities

26-year-old Bibisoro and 5-year-old Saymuhammadi live in separate villages in impoverished rural Tajikistan. They don’t know each other, but their lives have recently been connected in a unique way.

The wheelchair doesn’t look like much. The wheels look like the kind that always want to go a little more to the right than just straight ahead. But Saymuhammadi is happy – because now the chair is his.

“Before, I spent most of my time at home, but now I can go out and play with my friend Najibullo. He takes me around the village. I’m very happy,” says the tiny boy. Saymuhammadi has paraplegia. He had a spinal cord injury that causes paralysis of his lower body. He can’t walk by himself, and everything that a boy ought to be doing at the age of five: playing ball and running around with his peers, he has only participated in as a spectator from his window ... Until he received a wheelchair on 3 October 2009!

But the story of the chair actually starts further back.

Women say thank you

Approximately two years ago, 50 women from poor villages received help from Mission East to start their own small businesses that would provide them with an income and improve their living conditions. Some chose to bake bread, others to sew dresses, grow vegetables or keep chickens. They all received training in making a sensible business plan, keeping records of income and expenditure and how to treat customers.
Before long, the women's hard work had created a surplus, and ‘The Social Compensation Fund’ was established as their opportunity to say ‘thank you’ by passing on some of the kindness they have received to others in need.

**Aid for children with disabilities**

To date, the women have donated 48,311 Tajik Somoni (about 7,600 Euro) to the fund, and the money has been spent on wheelchairs, hearing aids and other assistive devices for children with disabilities who could otherwise not afford these aids. Happy young Saymuhammadi is one of them.

Saymuhammadi’s parents had long wanted to give their son a wheelchair. But they simply didn’t have the money.

“I worried about my son,” says his mother, who longed to see him play with other children.

“But thanks to the chair he can now go out and be with his friends.”

One of the women who have made this possible is 26-year-old Bibisoro.

**Success with jewellery**

Bibisoro appears to be a little bit shy at first. That is, until you ask her about her business, when she eagerly shares her story. Two years ago she had to struggle with very little money and was therefore one of the 50 women who received help from Mission East to start a small business. Bibisoro chose to open a jewellery shop.

When she had completed the necessary training, she acquired moulds, tools and a small gas burner for melting jewellery. Then she started

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Saymuhammadi likes to recite poems and even tries to compose his own verses. But now he thinks it’s even more fun to go outside and play with his friend Najibullo, who is seen here pushing Saymuhammadi in his wheelchair.
Munira was introduced in our Danish magazine in May last year. She has received help to start a business where she rents out wedding dresses, shoes and veils. Munira is one of the women who contributed to the ‘Social Compensation Fund’ and has thereby played a part in helping to equip 29 children with wheelchairs, 12 children with hearing aids and 24 other children with disabilities with other supportive devices.

Munira was faced with the challenge of keeping her inventory of wedding dresses current with the times as well as having a large enough selection so that potential brides didn’t see each other ‘coming and going’ in the same dress during wedding season. At the same time she had to consider the costs involved in expanding her inventory. Munira found a good solution to this problem by partnering with another woman in an even more remote village. She sends out five complete wedding ensembles to her shop on ‘rotation’.

When asked about her own wedding plans, she simply smiles. But she states that she has now strict criteria for her future husband – one of which is that he must allow her to continue her entrepreneurial activities!

Bibisoro doesn’t know Saymuhammadi. But due to the positive transformation that has taken place in her life, a little boy with a disability in a nearby village is now able to play with his friends and enjoy a new-found freedom.

Bibisoro (to the right) proudly displays a selection of jewellery she has created in her workshop. Here she is with Mopari Boboova, Business Advisor with Mission East.

creating earrings, necklaces and bracelets. In her first year she earned the equivalent of approximately 540 Euro – twice as much as a job with minimum wage provides in Tajikistan. Today, two years after it all began, she has already hired two women as employees, and is now planning to rent a work space closer to the city, making it easier for her current and prospective clients to come to her shop and increase her sales.
Recently, Mission East has introduced poultry-raising as a new activity for women in impoverished villages in Afghanistan. Currently, the women and their families barely have enough food to survive, but they are hopeful that change will come with the production of eggs. During 2010 we will keep our readers updated on the progress and the women's effort to create better lives for themselves. How will they manage when the empty cages are filled with hens? Will they be able to sell their eggs at the market? How will the lives of these women change? Will they be able to afford to send their children to school? In this issue the women discuss about their preparations and their hopes for the future which this new opportunity to raise poultry will help make true.

Can poultry help children attend school?

45-year-old Bibi Gul has previously raised chickens, but the output wasn’t good. Now she understands why.

Bibi Gul recently finished building a hen house with the help of her family. She has painted the clay walls on the outside and placed wheat straw from the field on the floor inside, just like Mission East advised her. Now she is waiting to receive the poultry, which she hopes will improve her family's income and reduce their vulnerability.

Until now, her husband and son have been the bread winners in the family doing field work. But severe droughts have taken their toll on the harvest throughout the past decade, she says. There is not much food and there is no money to buy school materials for the children.

It is not the first time that Bibi Gul has tried to raise poultry. But until now, no one has explained to her how to take good care of the animals. The old hen house was too small, too dirty and without ventilation, and the hens were not properly fed. She failed to successfully raise chickens that time. But after participating in Mission East’s training and learning how to take better care for the poultry, she dares to hope for better results this time.

“Now I understand why I couldn’t raise chickens before. It was because of poor and improper treatment and feeding. Now I know that they need a clean and safe place,” she says, adding: “I hope it means that I’ll soon be able to provide for my children’s schooling.”
From bad experience to success

The questions are lining up inside 26-year-old Gulzar’s head: ‘Will I be able to take care of the chickens? Will I be able to vaccinate them properly? Can I market my products?’

Gulzar has already tried her luck with poultry. The chickens walked around freely in an open area like the rest of the village chickens and were fed only small pieces of bread and cooked food. And like the other women in the village, she lost her animals due to poor care.

The family has difficulties coping without the extra income. The little wheat and rice that her husband harvests in the field which isn’t even his own, is far from enough to feed their eight children. None of their three daughters and only one of their five sons goes to school.

Gulzar is worried because of her previous unsuccessful experience in handling chickens. But nevertheless, she is in good spirits and is very keen on learning more about poultry and marketing from Mission East.

“I hope I’ll earn a little money by selling eggs. I need to buy food and pay for school for the children,” she says.

Gulzar’s husband helped her build the hen house according to the advice passed on from Mission East. Today she is ready to receive the first poultry ‘residents’ to the house.
A market for eggs

40-year-old Gul Andam’s husband is a sharecropper. He harvests rice and wheat – but this is only sufficient to sustain the family for six out of twelve months of the year.

Gul Andam’s eldest son has gone to Iran to find work, and her daughters are all married. ‘Fortunately’, you could say, because with more mouths to feed the family would starve.

“We borrow money when we can. A meal in our family consists of tea, bread and some vegetables. However, we only have fresh vegetables in the summer time. We can only afford to buy a single kilogram of meat per month. There is no money for proper clothing and school materials for my small son who is in second grade,” says Gul Andam.

“I wish to help my husband and my family improve our livelihood,” she says. “And perhaps I will succeed through poultry.”

“Chicken meat and eggs are popular and delicious foods in rural areas of Afghanistan. It is also the food served to guests,” says Gul Andam. This fact, and the need for eggs in cooking, creates a reasonable demand and a good opportunity for Gul Andam and the other women to sell their eggs on the market later on.

“Each year, many chickens hatch but people lose them because of improper care.” Like other women in the project Gul Andam has been taking part in Mission East’s training, so she knows what she must do to keep the poultry alive and healthy. “I will do my best, work hard and earn a living,” she said in excitement as she waits for the poultry to arrive.

Training ensures that women like Gul Andam (left of Mission East staff member Bilqis in brown scarf) can keep the poultry alive and well.
Late in the evening during the autumn a woman stopped at a Hindu temple in a village in Nepal’s lowland, placed the little girl she was carrying on the ground and left.

A villager was coming back from the fields at the time and heard a clapping sound. He went near the temple and there found this little girl, who clearly had physical and mental disabilities, sitting alone on some hay and clapping her hands. He was surprised to see the child, who appeared to be about 3-4 years old, sitting on her own, and immediately called together some of the other

Dina has found a new mother in Beena who lovingly manages the daily operation of the orphanage. Photo: Filip Buff Pedersen
villagers and also informed the local police.

After an hour, the local police came and started its investigation. Unable to find her parents, the police kept the child in their custody for the night. The next morning, the police called the press, took photographs and inquired among the villagers, but no information was found regarding the whereabouts of the child’s parents and her home.

Abandoned, homeless, and now also an orphan, the local authorities decided to hand over the child to the Eternity Orphan Home, which is operated by NASSO, the local partner organization that Mission East supports in Nepal. Beena, the “orphanage mother”, welcomed the child, who has since been given the name Dina. Dina seemed afraid of other people and was not able to speak. She could barely carry the weight of her own head. She was dirty and she drooled. Dina was helpless and completely vulnerable.

**A new sister**

A few months after Dina arrived at the orphanage, Filip Buff Pedersen visited the home from Mission East’s head office in Denmark. Filip recalls his first encounter with Dina, describing how she “put the palms of her hands together and greeted me with a “Namaste”, one of the few words she had learned. She smiled and looked happy. When she had something to lean on she was even able to stand up by herself. This was not the same girl as the one who had been described to me when the orphanage first took her in.

She smiled and looked happy (…) This was not the same girl as the one who had been described to me when the orphanage first took her in.
been described to me when the orphanage first took her in,” he says.

Dina needs more care than the other children. Simple tasks such as washing or feeding require close supervision and assistance. But the staff do their best to give her the necessary care.

“The other children already consider her as their baby sister,” Filip explains. “They help her to the best of their ability and are very loving towards her. She might not have the same opportunity to get an education because of her mental and physical disability. But there is no doubt in my mind that she can have a bright future being surrounded by so much love.”

The “Eternity Orphan Home” was established in 2001 and today is home for 38 boys and girls in southwest Nepal.
What has changed in Nepal?

Last year we shared a story about men living in the mountains of Nepal who were forced to leave their families for an extended period of time in order to seek work in India and other countries. Today we ask whether our help changed their lives since then.

Padam and Khadka had predicted that if more water was available for their rice paddies, they would greatly increase their yields. Their expectations were met! The new irrigation channels have now been completed for some time, and the two men have brought in harvests that are one and half times as large as before.

There is still not quite enough food to feed their families all year round in this rugged mountain area, so most men still leave to find work elsewhere so their families can survive. Therefore, Mission East, together with our local partner organization Kirdarc, has now introduced new crops to them: vegetable and wheat varieties that are particularly suited for cultivation in the mountains. The men in Padam’s and Khadka’s village...
hope that this will make a big difference already from the upcoming season onwards.

**The best way out of poverty**
A better crop yield is the mountain families’ best insurance in a time when food prices are on the rise. Now that a kilo of rice costs more than it used to, the men are not able to bring as much home with them as usual for the wages they earn abroad.

But their own production of food is not affected by inflation since it is not dependent on the outside world. They are able to produce and save seeds themselves and now that they have better yielding crop varieties, they don’t have to worry about getting more expensive machinery or technology.

The best help we can give them is that which enables them to cultivate enough food to survive.

Khadka, mountain farmer
2010 started off very well for Mission East in Afghanistan. In January the office received a letter of appreciation from the Governor of Takhar Province.

The letter, thanking Mission East for its “effective contributions towards rehabilitation and development in Afghanistan”, is linked to Mission East’s involvement in the construction of 5 km of road and 1,300 km of restraining wall in the district of Bangi. Impressed with the quality of the construction in spite of limited funds, the participants at the meeting of the Natural Resource and Infrastructure Committee, which was held at the project site, decided to issue the letter as a token of their appreciation.

In the past years, Mission East has constructed approximately 60 km of road in the mountain area of Chaal District. Because of the road, 94 villages and more than 60,000 people are now connected with each other and the outside world for the first time, providing easier and much safer access to markets, schools, and hospitals. The additional 5 kilometres extend the road into the district of Bangi, benefiting even more people.

The road has been built using cash-for-work arrangements to give the local economy a boost.

The letter reads: “On behalf of provincial government and Provincial Development Committee (PDC) of Takhar, I am pleased to take this opportunity to thank and appreciate your effective contributions towards rehabilitation and development of Afghanistan, serving our eligible people and communities in Takhar province.”

Signed: Abdul Latif Ibrahimi, Governor and PDC Chairman of Takhar province.
Last year Mission East extended urgent relief and long-term development aid to more than 350,000 people in Eastern Europe and Asia. Our work is only possible due to the donations that we receive from private individuals and other donors. You can help us help those in need by making 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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Thank you!