

Mission East

NUMBER 2 / AUTUMN 2010

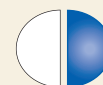
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FOCUS

Discovering Armenia
all over again



Mission East
- values in action

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”Women have the right to work – and the responsibility to contribute”

Not all men in the villages where Mission East works in Afghanistan are willing to let their wives participate in projects and activities introduced by ‘outsiders’. But Nayeeb Khan, Ming Mohammad, and Amir Hamza applaud their wives’ contributions to the family income via poultry keeping. These three men shared with us their families’ stories.

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Humanitarian aid – Mission East, ECHO and You

Responding to humanitarian crises is an important part of Mission East's mandate. We are running humanitarian projects in three of our project countries.

Front page photo:
At the beginning of the year, Tatevik Revazian from Denmark revisited the country she was born in. As an intern with Mission East in Armenia she met Lucine and several others of the children with a disability who need help.

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 directly or through local partners in Afghanistan, Armenia, Nepal, Tajikistan, Romania and Bulgaria. The assistance offered by Mission East is supported by a range of private and public donors such as the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and the United Nations. Mission East has been verified compliant with the People in Aid Code of Good Practice in the management and support of aid personnel.

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Rosendahls, Esbjerg

ISSN 0908-2042

www.miseast.org



CO2-NEUTRALISERET TRYKSAG FRA ROSENDAHLS
Klimapåvirkningen ved fremstilling af denne tryksag
er neutraliseret ved at støtte klimaprojekter i udviklings-
landene, der resulterer i en tilsvarende CO2-reduktion



Break at a school in Tajikistan.
Photo: Mission East.

2015 – Doing what we can

The Millennium Development Goals for eradicating poverty are being reviewed in New York in September – and according to the MDG Report 2010 the goals can be achieved if we work hard and work together.

However, with two thirds of the world's poor in the East and in Asia, there is no time for Mission East to rest on our laurels. Many countries in Asia today are better able to solve their poverty related problems than previously, but some countries face extreme difficulties in keeping up.

We see them shaken by the worst of all life's evils: war, disease, extreme weather conditions and a growing number of disasters – all in acute shortage of knowledge

about what they can do about it. But we are trusted to see opportunities and solutions in even the most difficult countries like Afghanistan and Tajikistan. We see solutions for the marginalized and for the people with disabilities who live in Armenia and Tajikistan. Yes, even in Nepal's most remote hunger disasters, it is possible to reach out with our assistance.

Again we therefore meet people in this magazine with a new light in their eyes, with courage in life despite heavy defeats and struggles. Women who cry together and work together. Children who are doing their mother's hard work honour by doing their best at school. Strong and courageous men, who are not afraid to commend their wives.

From Mission East's very beginning 19 years ago – using the family's dining table at home as my office – up until today, opportunities for us have never been as many as they are now. We are doing what we can – and we do it because you make it possible. Welcome to a new magazine from Mission East showing you how your support to an organisation for people in the East and Asia is helping to move us towards the main goal.

From Mission East's very beginning 19 years ago – using the family's dining table at home as my office – up until today, opportunities for us have never been as many as they are now.

Dr. Kim Hartzner,
Managing Director of Mission East



The countdown to 2015 continues at full speed

On 20-22 September, world leaders meet in New York to ensure that the eight goals for a better world are achieved.

The Millennium Development Goals were adopted by 189 heads of state in the year 2000. By acting together we want to among other

things halve the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day, achieve universal primary education and reduce the risks that each year claims the lives of millions of children and pregnant women. The goals are to be achieved within the next five years and we are well on track according

to the UN MDG Report from 2010. Here we give you an overview of Mission East's contribution in reaching the goals. The work is far more extensive than we are able to describe on these pages, so please go to www.miseast.org for more information.

Icons: © UNDP Brazil



Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Parents able to feed their children **Afghanistan, Armenia, Nepal, Romania, Tajikistan**

Nothing is worse than not being able to feed your children. Mission East helps families in the East to help themselves long-term through improved agriculture, irrigation systems to dry fields, and training in food processing of fruit and vegetables. Recently, extremely poor villages in Nepal's remote mountain area have experienced progress in the middle of a hunger crisis. Disaster risk management projects protect these good results from the destructive nature of earthquakes and floods which often occur in the East.



Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Children with disabilities learn to read **Afghanistan, Armenia, Nepal**

Disability is associated with much shame in Armenia and parents often feel compelled to hide their children away at home. In cooperation with our local partner organisation Mission East has identified hundreds of these children with disabilities and ensured that a new national law now gives them the same right to schooling as children without disabilities. In Afghanistan, Mission East has built schools in areas struck by poverty. And by helping parents in the East to create a sufficient income for the whole family, children get the opportunity to attend school instead of having to go to work.



Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Women as the key to development **Afghanistan, Nepal, Tajikistan**

In Afghanistan and Nepal, women live an isolated life within the marital home while the husband struggles to support the family. In small self help groups women meet regularly to start common savings from which they are all able to take out loans. These loans help them start small businesses, thereby helping them create an income for themselves and their households.



Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Clean water for the world's most endangered children

Afghanistan, Armenia, Nepal, Tajikistan

In Afghanistan, every fourth child dies before the age of five, which is one of the world's highest rates of child mortality. Nepal and Tajikistan also rank perilously high on the list. Here, clean water and basic hygiene education dramatically decrease the number of deaths. In Armenia, Mission East and our partners ensure medical care for children who have a life-threatening disability, such as heart failure.



Target 5: Improve maternal health

Giving life should not end another

Afghanistan, Tajikistan

Badakhshan, one of the two Afghan provinces where Mission East works, is at the top of the list of places in the world of maternal death during pregnancy. 86% of all births in Afghanistan take place without the help of trained doctors and midwives. Improved infrastructure in the Afghan mountains makes it easier to get to hospital in a hurry. And in Tajikistan, Mission East has been working with young people – men and women – on issues of reproductive health.



Objective 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Leading the fight against an AIDS epidemic

Armenia

Right now, the AIDS epidemic is at risk of spreading from Russia and Ukraine to the rest of Eastern Europe: One of two regions in the world where HIV prevalence remains on the rise. In 2009, Mission East was selected as primary recipient in Global Fund's fight against AIDS in Armenia for a programme which runs until the end of 2015. There is much shame attached to HIV/AIDS in Armenia and talking openly of the disease is considered much worse than the risk of infecting spouses and children.



Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

No more infected drinking water

Afghanistan, Nepal, Tajikistan

Nowhere else in the world will you find as many people living without proper sanitation as in Afghanistan. Only 22% percent of the population has access to clean drinking water. Goal 7 seeks to halve the number of people living without these facilities. In the year 2010 alone several thousand people in Afghanistan, Nepal and Tajikistan have received wells and tap stands, providing them with life supporting water. In the remote mountain area of Nepal, villagers are educated in the importance of sensible logging, protecting their environment and helping prevent natural disasters.



Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Putting focus on problems and solutions

Goal 8 is about strengthening the global partnership and cooperating on better conditions for poor countries concerning trade, economy, technology and other areas. As an NGO Mission East tries to influence the decision makers by putting focus on problems and solutions through our active participation and lobbying in Danish, European and global NGO networks and alliances.



Danish-Armenian context far back in history

Just as the Armenians do not forget their painful past, neither do they forget those who helped when they needed it the most. Karen Jeppe from Denmark, whose name is rarely recognized in her home country, is still known as Armenia's Mother among the population. During the genocide in 1915 she provided bread and took care of the sick when the deportation trains stopped in her town, and by hiding people from the Turkish soldiers she rescued several Armenians from death.

Mission East entered Armenia in 1992 when the economy collapsed and people were desperate for supplies of food from the outside community. Today we advocate for the rights of people with disabilities at local level all the way up to government level.

Tatevik went back to Armenia to discover a country she did not know

“If my family had not felt compelled to move to Denmark when I was five years old, the Armenian fear would have been my fear today too,” says Tatevik Revazian after a four-month internship with Mission East in Armenia.

Tatevik, 22, knows the country she was born in mostly from short summer visits. In the past, she told friends about her trips to Armenia using words such as “beautiful nature” and “nice weather”. But today, she describes the country differently. Earlier this year she spent four months as a trainee at Mission East's office in the former Soviet republic. Her everyday life as a student at Copenhagen Business School in Denmark was replaced with several heartbreaking visits among two of Armenia's most excluded groups: the HIV-positive and children with disabilities.

“The fear of history repeating itself and returning back to old times is so rooted in people that they do not have the capacity to take care of the most vulnerable in society. I was only a little girl when we left Armenia, so I



Tatevik with her brother Alexander and her father in one of Yerevan's parks before the family fled to Denmark.

do not remember anything but fragments from the “dark years”, as they were called. But Armenians are still so influenced by what once was. Famine, war, an era when it was colder inside than outside and where people in desperation cut down trees everywhere to get firewood. I have learned that after 19 years as an independent country “the Soviet state of mind” is still so deeply rooted in the majority of the population. Even among young people,” Tatevik says.

No payment?

In Armenia there is not the social safety net known in other parts of Europe. If you fall sick and do not have money to pay the medical

By Tania Maria Lüders
Rusbjerg, Mission East's
journalist

Tatevik with her father on the square in the centre of the capital Yerevan.



bills, there is not much you can do other than observe as a broken leg turns into a lifelong disability. People, especially in the poorer regions, are not used to having access to these services. And even if they did they would not be able to afford them.

“I visited several of the medical centres, Mission East and local partner organisations have built for children with disabilities in the recent years, and in my spare time

I worked in some of the children’s clubs,” says Tatevik. “I remember clearly how parents marvelled at the free help: “You don’t want any payment?” they asked, surprised. For so long they have lived in a world where it is necessary to fight to be heard and where everything has a price.”

Tatevik adds: “I myself have a cousin with a physical disability in Armenia. When she was a child, about 30

years ago, her family sent her to Russia to get help from specialists who weren’t available in Armenia. But when their savings were spent, her parents had to stop the treatment. Today it is too late to do anything about her disability. Her life would have

“I was five years old when I last celebrated my birthday in Armenia. This year I had the opportunity to celebrate number 22 with my grandparents,” says Tatevik, photographed with her grandpa in Armenia.





Tatevik visited among others Rasvik who is attending third grade: "He cannot use his legs, and yet he is determined to become a professional soccer player when he grows up! If only the rest of Armenia could see the same potential in him, as he does..."



been a lot different if these clinics had existed then."

Stopping AIDS

Besides the work to ensure people with disabilities access to schools and medical

care, Tatevik has been a part of Mission East's role as primary recipient to funds from The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. To the year 2015 Mission East is in charge

of distributing the funds to organisations in Armenia to stop the AIDS epidemic, which is at the risk of spreading rapidly from Russia and Ukraine.

"The work for people with disabilities really impressed me. And equally remarkable is it that Mission East has been selected as the first ever Danish organisation to spearhead The Global Fund's effort to contain the AIDS epidemic so threatening to Armenia now and in the coming years," Tatevik says. Her internship has given her a lot of thoughts regarding her own life.

"The limitations the Armenians have could have been my limitations if my family had chosen to stay," she concludes.

"Instead I have been given a life full of opportunities. And I'm pleased that for me a part of this can mean extending opportunities to people who otherwise wouldn't have them. Right now I'm considering how I can use my education when I graduate to engage more in development for Armenia and its people."

2015 MILENE

Did you know that Millennium Development Goal Number 2 is to achieve universal primary education?

“People here are not ready for a child like Lucine”

Tatevik talks about one of her meetings with the children and parents, Mission East and our partners are helping:

Lucine's mother, Lena, had tears in her eyes when she told me about the neighbours in the village. She said she tries to teach her little daughter, that one should not mind what other people think. But I saw clearly in her response, how much it still affects her when people laugh at Lucine and talk badly about the family behind her back.

“They say it's my fault that Lucine was born with a disability because I was too old when I gave birth to her. I was 36 years old,” Lena told me.

10-year-old Lucine is an energetic bundle of joy. She is not yet old enough to fully

understand how her surroundings view her, and how people especially notice the things she is unable to do. Although she can neither read nor write she was so eager to show me that she can at least pretend and dream about it.

Found hope in new centre

“People here are not ready for a child like Lucine,” Lena explained to me.

“That's why I would rather keep her indoors. They do not see her as a human being. They see her as an outcast.”

Until about two years ago Lucine lived most of her life in isolation at home. But then, in a joint project, one of Mission East's local partner organisations opened a medical centre where she is now receiving help with her development. Lena showed

me her papers, where the doctors had written that Lucine initially could not speak and constantly was restless. But the Lucine I met now had a good vocabulary and had learned to listen attentively when her mother talked to her. And she also cleans and tidies up after herself at home,

Lena proudly told me and added: “I had lost hope. But in the centre I found it again.”

When I was about to leave, Lucine came running towards me and gave me a kiss. How great would it be if the neighbours too one day could meet the Lucine I met that day.

By Tatevik Revazian,
former intern with
Mission East in Armenia

They say it's my fault that Lucine was born with a disability because I was too old when I gave birth to her. I was 36 years old.



One day in the support group gives me strength to face another week



Text and photo: Tania Maria Lüders Rusbjerg, Mission East Journalist

43-year-old Shoghakat has lived an isolated life in her home since she found out she was HIV positive. Her three children and her weekly visits to a support group (the only time she leaves the house) keep her alive.

“It all began in 2004 when I had just given birth to my daughter. My husband returned from Russia after working there for a while, and said that he had something serious to tell me: He didn’t want me to breastfeed. I didn’t understand why. But that’s all he wanted to say. All kinds of thoughts went through my mind: Maybe he wanted a divorce, or maybe he had a second family in Russia?”

Shoghakat explains that the family faced a very difficult time after that. She was angry

I didn’t know where to be tested, and I didn’t dare to ask anyone. I was ashamed.

with her husband, who would not give her clear answers about what was wrong. After a

month’s time, answers came in the form of a letter.

Letter from Russia

“It was a letter to my husband from Russia. I opened it and saw the stamp from a clinic and the letters H I V in Russian. It was a test result.



“My life will never be the same again. I can’t escape the thought of being sick. I think about it every day... especially in the evening when the children are in bed and everything is quiet,” says Shoghakat, who finds solace in her time each week with the support group she attends for people living with HIV/AIDS. Shoghakat is pictured here with her daughter but requested that we didn’t photograph her face.

My husband was infected. I lost my temper and didn’t know what to do with myself. I wanted to run out of the house, but I felt my legs suddenly weaken and I had to sit down instead. My first thought was of our newborn daughter. Was she infected? My face was pale when my 11-year-old son asked me: “Mom, what’s wrong?” I told him to call his father and ask him to come.”

When Shoghakat’s husband showed up an hour later she threw the letter on the table in

front of him and asked why he had kept it secret.

“He said he had not been sure that he had HIV. He thought he might have gotten the virus during a blood transfusion in Russia.”

Lost 18 kg

In 2005, Shoghakat’s husband died. At that time she had still not been tested herself.

“I didn’t know where to be tested, and I didn’t dare to ask anyone. I was ashamed and afraid of being discriminated against and that people would

ask questions or stop having contact with me.”

Shoghakat began to isolate herself at home. She would not even talk to her two sons, and the only thing she could think about was whether she was HIV positive or not. She stopped going outside and did not meet with anyone – not even the neighbours.

But in the spring of 2007, when she became so ill that she couldn't eat anything for an entire week and lost 18 kg in an unusually short period of time, she decided to contact her sister-in-law. Shoghakat's sister-in-law knew about her own brother's HIV infection. Shoghakat became aware of this long ago when during a visit to the sister-in-law's house her sister-in-law had thrown away all the cups and plates which Shoghakat's husband had used.

2015 **MALENE**

Did you know that Goal Number 6 of the Millennium Development Goals is to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases?

“She told me where my husband had gone when he was sick. And I decided to visit the AIDS Centre with my daughter to be tested.”

Solace in the support group

“When they told me that I was infected, everything turned into darkness. I was happy for my daughter, who fortunately was not infected, but at the same time I thought to myself: This is the end of my life. Who is going to take care of my children?”

Doctors and counselors at the AIDS Centre convinced Shoghakat that there was hope, and before long she began treatment on anti-retroviral drugs to keep the HIV infection at bay. She was invited to participate in support groups, but had absolutely no desire to share her shameful illness with others.

“I feared being mistreated. I was ashamed and did not trust them. They said there were other people living with HIV, but I did not believe them. Then my doctor told me that he wouldn't give me the medicine unless I participated in the group. So I did. There, for the first time, I realized that there were others just like me.

It was such a relief. A great weight had been lifted off my shoulders.”

Today Shoghakat attends weekly meetings facilitated by one of the organisations receiving financial support from “The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria”, as part of the grant administered by Mission East.

“I don't know if I'll ever fully come out of my isolation... or whether I will ever be able to talk to my neighbours again,” Shoghakat says, “but just one visit with the group gives me the strength to face another week.”

During a visit to her sister-in-law's house, her sister-in-law had thrown away all the cups and plates which Shoghakat's husband had used.

When Shoghakat discovered that her husband was HIV infected, she feared that her daughter, who is now five years old, was also infected.





"My mother also raised chickens when I was a little boy. But the chickens died quickly because of diseases and because she did not know how to take care of them. I remember that she was so disappointed when she did not get any eggs in return for her effort," Nayeeb Khan says. He is happy that his wife, Bibi Gul, has learned to care for their poultry in the right way.

"Women have the right to work – and the responsibility to contribute"

Not all men in the villages where Mission East works in Afghanistan are willing to let their wives participate in projects and activities introduced by 'outsiders'. But Nayeeb Khan, Ming Mohammad, and Amir Hamza applaud their wives' contributions to the family income via poultry keeping. These three men shared with us their views.

• Tell us about your family's struggle to make an income.

Ming Mohammad: I confess that the farming job I do can't cover my family's needs for even three months of the year. In our society – particularly in rural areas – men are responsible to provide food and clothes as well as sending children to school. But I work in the heat for just a small amount of money. There are no job opportunities in the village. The poultry has improved our circumstances and I am not ashamed that my wife is working. She contributes with an extra income.

Children who work in the field serve only their family. If they become educated they become valuable to the whole village and will serve more people.

Amir Hamza: I was the one who encouraged my wife to participate in the poultry activities. At the local market there are so many cheap crops imported from abroad that my farming is unprofitable.

• Do you help your wives with the poultry?

Nayeeb Khan: Previously, it was shameful for men to help women with household chores. Poultry is considered a household chore and men should not do

it. But now I think things have changed. People agree that it is better and benefits the whole family to help each other. I have helped my wife build the coop and to feed the animals.



When Ming Mohammad looks at his wife, Gul Andam, he looks at her with respect and love. But he started that long before she began selling eggs and contributing financially to the household, he assures lovingly.

Amir Hamza: I help my wife clean the coop and to sell the eggs at the market.

• What do you think about women working?

Ming Mohammad: For some men it is a shame to ask their wife, sisters, or daughters to work outside the home. However, this is now changing to some extent.

Nayeeb Khan: Some village men are not happy that women are working and earning money. But gradually there is an acceptance of the fact that men's income alone does not cover the family's expenses and that women should also contribute. The farming yields remain the same but living costs are going up and we need to earn more to meet our basic needs.

For some men it is a shame to ask their wife, sisters, and daughters to work outside the home. However, this is now changing to some extent.

Amir Hamza: Women have the right to work as well as the responsibility to help contribute to the household. In our society women are not free to go outside and many have to stay at home. But in recent years, living costs have become much higher and now everyone has to contribute.

Ming Mohammad: I am happy that my wife has her poultry. I consider myself an open-minded person and I am not against women working outside the home.



"In our society women are not free to go outside and many have to stay at home. But in recent years, living costs have become much higher and now everyone has to contribute," says Amir Hamza who encouraged his wife, Gulzar, to become a part of Mission East's poultry project.

2015 MILLENNIUM

Did you know that Millennium Development Goal Number 3 is to promote gender equality and empower women?

Ming Mohammad does not at all mind helping his wife collect the eggs and clean the chicken coop.



A country of children

Nearly half of Afghanistan's population is under 15 years of age. Of the rest, less than one third is able to read and write. The future of the country largely depends on the next generation and the opportunities available regarding education and work. This means that more children – and more girls – need to attend school. You can help by supporting projects such as the poultry project in Afghanistan, which makes it financially possible for parents to provide their children with an education.

How do you feel about your daughters going to school?

Nayeeb Khan: Some men in the local community feel ashamed to see their girls going to school. But I think this is a social constraint and not a reflection of their own hopes for their daughters.

Amir Hamza: I encourage my children – girls and boys – to go to school. If they work in the field they will only serve their family. If they become educated they become valuable to the whole village and will serve more people.

"In my family we respect our wives and daughters," says Ming Mohammad, Gul Andam's happy husband.



Nayeeb Khan: I never went to school myself. When I receive a letter I ask my children to read it for me. I am happy that my children go to school and learn things so they can become adults with good prospects for the future.

Amir Hamza: I also encourage the other men in the village to allow their daughters to go to school. People who do not let their children get an education are making a mistake and creating problems for their family and our society.

Nayeeb Khan: Men and women have an equal right to learn. The people who are against girls' education do not know about women's rights.

Read more about the Afghan women and their poultry at www.miseast.org under 'Publications'.

Mission East, ECHO and You

Responding to humanitarian crises is an important part of Mission East's mandate. We are running humanitarian projects in three of our project countries.

Afghanistan is placed at the top of the list of “the worst places in the world for sanitation”. Most of the households in Afghanistan do not have access to safe drinking water, toilets and adequate sanitation facilities. Some 92 percent of Afghanistan's estimated 26.6 million people do not have access to proper sanitation, and every fourth child dies before the age of five mostly due to preventable diseases, many caused by unclean water and bad sanitation. In Tajikistan and Nepal, there is a need to increase resilience and reduce the vulnerability of local communities through support to strategies that enable them to better prepare for, mitigate and respond to natural disasters.

Mission East is responding to these situations with funds provided by you, our supporters, foundations and public donors such as the Danish

and German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by ECHO, the European Commission's Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection. ECHO's mandate is to provide emergency assistance and relief to the victims of natural disasters or armed conflict outside the European Union. The aid is intended to go directly to those in distress, irrespective of race, religion or political convictions. It provides this assistance by funding so-called partner NGOs, recognised and well-established humanitarian agencies based in the EU.

Our supporters play a vital role in helping us to bring humanitarian assistance to the many of thousands of people that we support each year. Through your support we are able to generate more funds through our public donors and ECHO. ECHO usually provides an important part, but not all of the funding needed to run these projects. So without your giving we would not be able to reach those in need. Thank you for your continued commitment.



Clean water saves lives in the remote mountain areas of Nepal. Photo: Hartzner, Mission East

We need you to help others



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 through 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.

The details of our bank account are:

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If you would like to make a donation to Mission East but prefer not to do so online, we would be more than happy to receive a cheque from you at the address mentioned before. With your support, Mission East can continue to transform lives.

Thank you!


Mission East
- values in action