



NEWSLETTER

Focus on Water and Habitat

ICRC ©

ICRC - November 2009

In memory of Engineer Abdul Wadood

Editorial	1
Engineer Abdul Wadood	2
ICRC's water and habitat programme	3
Reto Stocker - IN BRIEF	4
Global Hand-Washing Day...	5
Photo Gallery	6
Clean water for Gumbad	7

EDITORIAL By William James Corkill,
Water and Habitat Coordinator

Without safe water, food and adequate shelter and access to health care life is impossible. To enable people to maintain health and well being during a conflict they must have access to these basic requirements.

The challenges in Afghanistan in terms of water supply, sanitation and hygiene are indeed enormous.

The statistics vary but they all show that most people in Afghanistan do not have access to safe water and that Afghanistan is in the bottom five countries in the world in terms of lack of access to it.

At the ICRC there are over fifty Afghan engineers, technicians and community workers engaged on tackling these issues country-wide. Many of these people have been with ICRC for more than a decade. They form the solid backbone of the team and are supported by several staff from other countries.

Many work in dangerous and harsh security conditions but no one anticipated the loss of our much loved colleague Abdul Wadood in Kandahar in August 2009. A massive explosion in his neighborhood killed Engineer Wadood. In what resembles sad irony, many of

the survivors were rushed to Mirwais hospital where they benefited from structural improvement engineer Wadood had worked on.

Despite this tragic loss, the ICRC is committed to continue to maintain and improve the health and well-being of Afghans whether it is through improving water, sanitation, hygiene or shelter issues or through the myriad of other activities the ICRC engages in, all aimed at upholding human dignity and reducing suffering in times of armed conflict.



ICRC

Engineer Abdul Wadood 1961 - 2009

Tragically, on 25 August 2009, our colleague Engineer Abdul Wadood was killed when a bomb flattened several buildings in Engineer Wadood's Kandahari neighbourhood, including his own. Many of the injured were brought to Mirwais hospital, a place familiar to Engineer Wadood as he was intimately involved in repair works there, ensuring that those affected by the conflict would find appropriate conditions. For him however, any help came too late.

We all are deeply shocked and overcome with grief and sorrow. Engineer Wadood continues to be deeply missed by all of us, and our thoughts remain not only with him but particularly with his family in Wardak.

Engineer Wadood was supporting an extended family in addition to his wife and 10 children. He took every opportunity to visit them and often spoke of them during his time here in Kandahar.

Abdul Wadood is a loss not only to those who loved him but to entire communities: Those he served, and those he still meant to serve in future. During his long and varied career, he contributed too many humanitarian projects, including construction of schools, building roads to refugee camps, and water and sanitation projects. These projects were located in all parts of Afghanistan, including in Wardak, Kabul, Ghazni, Farah, Logar and Kandahar.

Originally from Wardak province, Engineer Wadood moved to Kandahar in 1999. He joined the ICRC in July 2003, and was the senior engineer for projects at Mirwais Hospital, Sarpoza Prison, and for water and sanitation projects in the Kandahar neighborhoods of Mirwais Mina, Mirwais Bazaar and Old City. His work provided direct and indirect benefits to all of Kandahar's population. On a professional level, Engineer Wadood's personal commitment and



The ICRC rebuilt the water tank in Mirwais regional hospital which provides water to the entire hospital facility, Kandahar

contribution to ICRC projects in Kandahar have been outstanding and will be sorely missed as will be his lively sense of humor, which never failed to cheer up colleagues amongst often hard working conditions.

We miss you, engineer Wadood and all of us are grateful for the time we had, before you left. Your legacy will continue to serve the many in need of care, and the ICRC family will continue to be there

for those you dedicated your last years too: the far too many victims of this conflict. We believe that this would have been your wish, and we vow to honor it.

This Newsletter is dedicated to you, engineer Abdul Wadood.

ICRC's Water and Habitat Programme

Clean water, the appropriate hygiene practices as well as adequate shelter are basic conditions which must contribute towards the maintenance of health and well-being. Maintaining such standards is easier said than done in times of armed conflict, when many are on the move and others cut off from economic, social and medical lifelines. Through the construction and rehabilitation of infrastructure in health centres such as at Mirwais Hospital in Kandahar, urban centres

such as in Herat and rural communities throughout Afghanistan, the ICRC hands out this lifeline in conjunction with its medical, relief and orthopaedic assistance activities to those most affected by the armed conflict in Afghanistan.

ICRC's Water and Habitat Programme in the World

In 2008 ICRC implemented programmes in over 40 countries assisting over 15 million people affected by conflict. Apart from Afghanistan, these include Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan, Israel and the occupied territories, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda.

Activities in Detention

ICRC assists the prison department to provide reasonable living conditions for detainees in Afghanistan. Most of the ICRC's work is at the provincial and central prisons level where prisoners can be detained for significant periods of time. These projects include the provision of a water supply to Badghis prison, the building of a clinic at Taloqan prison, and the installation of sanitary facilities at Farah prison. The ICRC also advises other organizations on the rehabilitation projects and on adequate constructions of detention facilities. ICRC publishes a study of the state of the provincial prisons and recommendations for the design of prisons in Afghanistan on a biyearly basis.

Activities in Hospitals and Orthopedic Centers

Alongside the rehabilitation of a small health centers operated by Afghanistan Red Crescent Society, the complete rehabilitation of Wazir Akbar Khan Hospital completed in 2005, the ICRC is now assisting the Mirwais regional hospital in Kandahar. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the ICRC is rehabilitating buildings, water, sewage and electrical services to ensure that patients find adequate health facilities when arriving at Mirwais. Close collaborations with the nurses and waste management staff aim at the proper disposal of medical waste and lead to a more hygienic environment at the hospital.

These ICRC experts also use their skills to regularly improve or rehabilitate the ICRC's own orthopaedic centre in Kabul, which treats over 30,000 people per year.



Opening the valve of the dam built by ICRC in Shaidan village, Bamyan province

Activities in Urban and Rural areas

The ICRC has assisted hundreds of thousands of people with improved water supply, sanitation and hygiene in both villages and in urban areas. Projects have varied from major works on the electrical supply to provide energy for the water pumps in Kabul to the extension of pipelines to serve urban centres in Herat, Kandahar, and Jalalabad provinces.

In Kabul the ICRC has assisted over 40,000 households to construct hygienic latrines. In 2008, the ICRC has started to assist rural communities by constructing boreholes fitted with

Continue to Page 4...

ICRC's Water and Habitat Programme

hand-pumps or pipelines to bring safe water to the villages. In the South, the ICRC enables villagers to maintain the wells and pumps by providing the appropriate training as well as necessary spare parts.

Hygiene Promotion Activities

The aim of the hygiene promotion programme is to ensure that communities understand a variety of high risk behaviors including unsafe water used for drinking, poor personal hygiene, environmental contamination and unsafe food. The ICRC hygiene promotion team also works with detainees to assist them to maintain a healthy environment through hygiene education and the provision of hygiene materials.



The ICRC WatHab engineer provide trainings to local communities in hand pump operation and maintenance, Bala Baluk, Farah province.

Reto Stocker - IN BRIEF

Head of delegation



Q. people say that ICRC is a Neutral Independent Humanitarian organization; what does it exactly mean?

A. It means that ICRC continue to enjoy the confidence of all, it always remains neutral: it does not take sides in hostilities and always stays entirely autonomous and independent

from any government, authority or armed group. Free from military, political, religious or ideological affiliations, the ICRC cares for those who suffer as a result of armed conflict.

Q. What is the ICRC aim in Afghanistan?

A. The ICRC aims to reduce human suffering in war by

providing health care and relief to injured, fleeing or otherwise affected populations and of course water and shelter which this newsletter focus on. The ICRC also works to ensure that the fighting parties respect human dignity and humanitarian principles by monitoring the way the conflict is being fought and the way, for example, detained persons are being treated. The ICRC also tries to prevent future suffering by promoting the respect of International Humanitarian Law, the law of armed conflict, because it considers that even wars have limits.

Q. How does the ICRC choose who to help?

A. The ICRC delivers its services purely on the basis of humanitarian needs and does not consider religious, political, ethnic or ideological affiliations of persons or populations as a criteria for helping victims of war.

Global Hand-Washing Day Celebrated at ICRC Kabul Delegation

On Global Hand-washing Day, playgrounds, classrooms, community centers, and the public spaces of towns and cities were awash with activity to drive hand-washing behavior change on a scale never seen before and bringing the critical issue to center stage. The main purpose of Global Hand-washing day is raising awareness about the 3.5million children worldwide dying from diarrhoeah before they reach the age of 5. In 2002, 25% of children under the age of 5 years in Afghanistan died from diarrhoeah but it had dropped to 20% in 2006 according to UNICEF. Many of these deaths including the ones in Afghanistan could have been prevented ...how? simply by regularly washing hands with soap. Many people know that they should wash their hands with water before and after eating, after visiting the toilet, or cleaning a child which are the most critical times for washing hands, but very few wash their hands with soap. Soap helps to remove and lift off not just dirt but hidden microbes that cause diarrhoeah and viruses. It is actually the single most effective intervention against diarrhoeah. This simple message of washing your hands with soap is what ICRC hygiene teams are promoting in projects across Afghanistan and all over the world throughout the year, in-conjunction with other key messages that also impact on health such as drinking safe water and sanitation

promotion. In 2008 Global Hand-Washing Day was celebrated for the first time worldwide and here in Afghanistan the ICRC hygiene promoters distributed bars of soap to families in the working areas as well as to ICRC staff.

This year the same practice continued in the community but also activities were extended to a poetry and writing competition within the delegation staff in Kabul. A role play was also performed by the children of the ICRC kindergarten, illustrating the consequences, if someone doesn't wash hands with soap!



ICRC's kindergarten children performing role play on Global Hand-Washing day, Kabul Delegation.

Karen Marshall - INTERVIEW

Hygiene promotion advisor



Q. Tell us about yourself and what do you do?

A. My name is Karen Marshall and I am from UK. I

trained as a registered nurse and qualified 21 years ago. My areas of experience are operating theatre nursing, practice nursing. I have been working in the humanitarian field since 1996 and have worked with MERLIN, MSF Holland, SCF UK in Africa, the Balkans & Sri Lanka. I have worked with ICRC since 2002 in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and South Sudan. Since August 2009 I am serving as Hygiene Promotion Advisor in Kabul.

Q. What motivated you to take up your current job as Hygiene Promotion Advisor at the ICRC in Afghanistan?

A. I came to Afghanistan for this post as I believe strongly that water or sanitation program that ICRC is involved with, alongside people must be taught how to use and behave with these new facilities.

Q. What in your view is the main added value of the Hygiene Promotion Program for Afghan community?

A. The ultimate aim of any hygiene promotion program is to reduce the amount of people, especially children, dying from diarrhoeal disease. This is always a combined effort with the provision of safe water or sanitation with that of usage and promotion of healthy hygiene behaviours.

Q. What is the best part of your job and describe the toughest challenges?

A. The challenges in hygiene promotion in any country are complex as trying to change the way a person thinks and behaves can take many years, but in certain countries there are specific challenges. Here in Afghanistan the cultural gender issues are very strong and getting access to women and children is an immense challenge. The unpredictable security situation can prevent ICRC from having access to areas where vulnerable populations are living, we need to be very imaginative in our approaches. The most rewarding part of my role here is being part of a highly motivated team who share a common commitment to improving the hygiene knowledge, attitudes and practice of the people of Afghanistan.

Photo Gallery



Teaching hygiene awareness and healthier living in the poorest neighborhoods by ICRC health promoters, Mazar-i-Sharif



Hand pump installed by ICRC, Kabul city 1994.



ICRC's WatHab engineers providing technical supports to local authorities, Chemtal district, Balkh province



ICRC staff members overseeing the water supply system, Kabul city 2003



Hand pump installed and maintained by the ICRC, Kabul 2001



Dam built with the support of the ICRC in Shaidan village, it provides water for irrigation fields, Bamyan province



Inauguration of water reservoir by ICRC staff members, Sarayak village, Bamyan province

Clean Water for Gumbad

Life is tough for people living in rural Afghanistan, including those in the beautiful but remote province of Bamyan. Gumbad village nestles in a narrow valley 25 kilometres north-west of Bamyan town. Here, 145 families eke out a living in extreme weather conditions, with temperatures plummeting to minus 25-30 degrees Celsius in winter. Collecting fodder for their livestock and firewood to ward off the cold is a big challenge for villagers. Summers are cool, but the terrain is harsh, the livestock sickly and the land infertile. Family members share tasks equally amongst themselves, with the men taking care of the animals while the women look after the household.

Struggling to survive

Like communities in other parts of Bamyan, the residents of Gumbad village have been hit hard by Afghanistan's decades of conflict. After the events of 11 September 2001 in the United States of America and the creation of the transitional government in Kabul a year later, many people moved to neighboring provinces or to Iran or

Pakistan in the hope of finding security and work. Some of them have since returned to the village but find it hard to piece their lives back together because everything they left behind was destroyed while they were away.

Life in Gumbad village today is hard in many ways. One major source of hardship is the lack of safe water. Thus humans and livestock have no choice but to rely on the contaminated water from streams and traditional irrigation canals. It is generally the women and children - both girls and boys - who collect and transport the water from the streams, even when the land is covered in snow and the water lies under a sheet of ice. It is therefore hardly surprising that children fall ill, in winter with pneumonia and in summer with diarrhoea. The village has no clinic, and people have little choice but to walk several kilometres to reach the nearest doctor. Khadim ain, one of the elders in Gumbad, recalls a doctor blaming contaminated water for many of the villagers' health woes.

Making a difference

Elders and community members convened a meeting to discuss the water problem and how to resolve it. They remembered receiving food from the ICRC back in 2002, and decided to ask the organization for help again. ICRC water engineers visited the village and consulted the elders. Many administrative procedures followed. The engineers submitted to the ICRC office in Bamiyan a list of the needs that the villagers considered important, and the proposal was approved by the ICRC delegation in Kabul.

The Gumbad village project started in June 2009. Between 25 and 30 daily labourers are engaged in digging a trench for the 3,500-metre pipe which will run from a spring - a safe water source up in the mountains - to the village. No matter how exhausted the laborers become, they know what a difference their efforts will make for the women and children - and indeed for the whole village - once the pipe is laid. As for the water carriers, they are counting the minutes until the work is finished.



Workers engaged in digging a trench for a pipe which will provide water to the village, Bamyan.



Afghanistan is one of the ICRC's biggest operations worldwide, with around 1500 national and expatriate staff currently based in its main delegation in Kabul, as well as in five sub-delegations and nine offices countrywide

MISSION

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.

ICRC main Delegation - KABUL
Charahi Haji Yaqoub, Shar-i-Naw, Kabul
Tel: +93 (0)700 297 777
E-mail: kabul.kab@icrc.org

ICRC Mazar
Karta-E-Bukhdi, First Street, Mazar-i-Sharif
Tel. +93 (0)700 279 082/799 874 409
E-mail: mazar.maz@icrc.org



ICRC

ICRC Jalalabad
University Road, Area 3, House 2, Jalalabad
Tel. +93 (0)700 604 788
E-mail: jalalabad.jal@icrc.org

ICRC Kandahar
Shar-i-Naw, District 6, Kandahar
Tel. +93 (0)700 285 191
E-mail: kandahar.kad@icrc.org

ICRC Herat
Jad-i-Bank Khoon, Herat
Tel. +93 (0)700 285 949 / 222 236
E-mail: herat.her@icrc.org