



Projects in Afghanistan:

1. Supporting the set-up of an Afghan Women's Rights Organisation
2. Setting up an interdisciplinary project centre regarding violence against women and girls
3. Sustainable support of traumatised women and girls in Afghanistan through training of female experts and initiation of an expert network

Executive Summary

Project costs:

Project 1 (2008) = 138,743.60 €
Project 2 (2007) = 52,000.72 €
Project 3 (2006) = 93,074.18 €

Funded by:

ifa – Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (zivik)
medica mondiale e.V.

Type of evaluation:

Final evaluation
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Consultant:

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Executive Summary

This is the evaluation of the *medica mondiale* Afghanistan's projects funded by zivik (Zivile Konfliktbearbeitung) in the field of Advocacy of Women's Rights, nationalisation, institution building and capacity building from 2006 to 2008.

Evaluation methodologies

The basic principles of the evaluation were a participatory, process-orientated, transparent and goal-orientated approach with several steps: a planning meeting in Cologne, an information meeting in Kabul, desk study, a field visit in Kabul with many interviews with *medica mondiale* Afghanistan staff and several interviews with relevant stakeholders in national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), ministries and media. The preliminary findings were presented in a final meeting to the Management Team in Kabul and *medica mondiale* head office. Key words for the evaluation like key actors, stakeholders, target groups, beneficiaries and advocacy were also defined.

Country background and present day situation

Afghanistan is a country with a lot of risk factors, due to a state building process in progress with high security risks, weak economy, strong drug economy and a still ongoing internal war in some parts of the country. The discrepancy between the national level represented by Kabul and the provincial and local level is growing. The role of women is still controlled by tradition, culture, religion and patriarchal family structures.

The general security situation is getting worse for businessmen and Afghans working for international and national NGOs, especially when working in remote areas. Many indicators show an increasing risk in working on women's issues in comparison to the past years. The expectations are not very optimistic for the future, due to the presidential and provincial elections in 2009 and the parliament and district elections in 2010.

medica mondiale Afghanistan as implementing organisation and background of project

medica mondiale is an international German-based Women's Rights Organisation working in Afghanistan since 2002. The general programme of *medica mondiale* Afghanistan is very comprehensive and ambitious. A small

NGO covering the whole variety of tasks from advocacy work to legal aid, offering research and training up to direct services for vulnerable women is very seldom.

From the beginning the goal of *medica mondiale* head office was to transfer their projects as soon as possible into Afghan ownership. In 2006 and 2007 it became clear that there was no local NGO available that could/would take over the projects of *medica mondiale* head office as an Afghan organisation. Therefore an Afghan organisation needed to be established. This process was mainly funded by zivik. For this reason the evaluation will focus on two aspects:

- a) The set-up of an Afghan Women's Rights Organisation through institution building and
- b) The capacity of Afghan women to take over the responsibility for an Afghan owned women organisation through capacity building from project to management level.

Present day conditions for women

Despite many positive changes, such as a women-friendly Constitution (2004), women's access to public work, to education and to political office, violence against women still persists. The current situation is that women and girls are seriously affected by years of pervasive violence, human right abuses and lack of access to legal remedy and justice. Many incidences of beating, forced marriage and kidnapping continue to go unreported. In a climate of continuing silence, secrecy and impunity, domestic and structural violence as well as rape remain a serious problem.

Non governmental organisations

The general assumption of international governmental organisations, NGOs and international donors is that external actors can contribute to a transformation process in Afghanistan. According to the perception of internationals the natural actors of civil society are NGOs. The evaluation used external interviews to capture the perception of NGOs and to find out whether there is a difference between national and international NGOs.

Project implementation

Desk study

The evaluator received a huge amount of documents mostly related to the level of activities. Their degree of information varied significantly. The quality of documents is increasing from 2006 to 2008. It is a visible result of the capacity building efforts.

Project assessment

The zivik funded project of *medica mondiale* Afghanistan started with too ambitious goals in 2006, e.g. to establish a training centre and to hand it over in Afghan ownership from 2008 on. *medica mondiale* Afghanistan achieved a lot in relation to the context. Nonetheless the implementation of all their planned activities and results has not been possible. The evaluator could monitor how the project came down to earth of the Afghan reality. A result of this adaptation process is that expectations and reality are matching much better now. The involvement of Afghan staff is much higher and much more professional on all levels of *medica mondiale* Afghanistan than before.

Project effects

It is possible to assume, that without the funding of the nationalisation, institution and capacity building process by zivik the general effects of *medica mondiale* Afghanistan's work would have been less successful. As the zivik funding has been used as a complementary funding to others, zivik indirectly contributed to all *medica mondiale* Afghanistan projects in Afghanistan. Therefore:

- there was enough capacity available for a good project preparation,
- there was enough personnel available for implementation,
- there was enough project management expertise available and
- the Afghan female project managers and project staff were qualified experts in their fields, and they knew how to adapt an issue to the Afghan context.

The main topics of *medica mondiale* Afghanistan were highly accepted by most of the interview partners:

- Working for vulnerable women and
- Working for elimination of violence against women.

Some mentioned that *medica mondiale* Afghanistan was the first organisation in Afghanistan

- offering female defence lawyers for women in need,
- offering psychosocial services by counselling vulnerable women and
- offering trainings in capacity building for multipliers in both aforementioned topics.

Advocacy

The Advocacy project is well positioned within and outside of *medica mondiale* Afghanistan: international and

Afghan NGOs, within the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) and the Supreme Court.

Several interview partners emphasised excellent *medica mondiale* Afghanistan campaigns, especially the projects around

- Self-immolation (Advocacy) and the
- Registration of marriage by Legal Aid Fund (LAF) and Advocacy.

The *medica mondiale* Afghanistan Advocacy project is on the right track with the right concept with the right staff. The capacity building process was obviously very fruitful, because the Advocacy project is in the hands of an Afghan Project Manager and Project Assistant since the beginning of 2008.

Nationalisation

The nationalisation and the institution building process are closely linked with each other.

The evaluation monitored the situation of NGOs and tried to find out, if there is a difference between the perception of a national and an international NGO. The internal and external interviews of this evaluation discovered a big discrepancy between the written criteria of an NGO by the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) and the reality. Many interview partners didn't know the definition of an NGO. Nearly all interview partners with an idea of NGOs see a difference between international and national NGOs. Four different categories could be identified:

1. International NGOs with own concepts and project ideas
2. International NGOs in close cooperation with Afghan staff
3. National NGOs with own concepts and project ideas
4. National NGOs as service provider for others.

The ideal vision of Afghans working for NGOs is that an international organisation brings in the money for projects and does the capacity building. The Afghan staff should be responsible for the management and project implementation. The ideal vision of some representatives of Ministries is that NGOs should serve as a service provider for the government. According to them the role of the ministries is to coordinate the programmes of the NGOs, to develop standards and to do the monitoring and evaluation.

Institution building

medica mondiale Afghanistan is highly connected with ministries and organisations working in the same fields as service providers of direct legal and psychosocial services for women in need, with qualified training programmes for internal and external multipliers in institutions and as partner or advisor for decision-makers in other organisations.

A very positive indirect effect of *medica mondiale* Afghanistan in working groups and cooperation is that they are seen as a positive model for other NGOs, because *medica mondiale* Afghanistan staff members are always on time, they contribute actively in the facilitation, preparation, decision-making and implementation of a project, they have good ideas and they are good advisers.

The main process around the topic “nationalisation and institution building” was channelled by the instrument of Project Planning Meetings beginning in January 2006 and ending in May 2008 with an Action Plan and the implementation of a Management Team in 2007. The Project Planning Meetings went through some difficulties, but they contributed a lot to a deeper understanding of each other. The institution building of *medica mondiale* Afghanistan is very advanced but still in a building-up process in the field of administration and management.

The process of nationalisation went through some difficult phases. It should be designed as a handing over process of many years. Many of the Afghan staff prefer to be part of an international NGO supported in core functions by *medica mondiale* head office. There is a lack of an Afghan based vision and mission, a need of clarification of responsibilities between *medica mondiale* head office and *medica mondiale* Afghanistan, the risk of losing qualified staff and a lack of knowledge management and public relation work.

Capacity building

The capacity building for Afghan staff especially in finance and administration and for the Project Manager increased. They received several trainings in finance and administration, project proposal writing and project management. From the perspective of management everything seems easier. The Afghan colleagues are much more involved in general planning and decision-making processes and work more independently in their projects.

The different programmes of internal capacity building have visible effect for the stakeholders. The Project Managers are seen as very professional, hard working and endowed with a lot of energy.

Efficiency

It is very difficult to evaluate the efficiency of *medica mondiale* Afghanistan’s work in Afghanistan, because there are no comparable organisations working in the same field with the same broad access to women’s issues. The high respect for the work of *medica mondiale* Afghanistan and their staff the evaluator heard in the interviews from the stakeholders is an indicator for *medica mondiale* Afghanistan’s reputation of being one of the biggest and successful players in the field of psychosocial services, legal aid and advocacy. They are specialists as well as partners of Ministries, other international organisations and UN-based organisations. For a small German-based NGO this could be considered as a very efficient work.

Main conclusion

The general programme of *medica mondiale* Afghanistan is very comprehensive and ambitious. It is very rare that a small NGO covers the whole range of an issue from the advocacy work, offering research and training all the way to direct services for vulnerable women.

medica mondiale head office and *medica mondiale* Afghanistan want to contribute to a transformation process giving women more rights and vulnerable women more appropriate help when needed. *medica mondiale* Afghanistan is working on women’s issues on multiple levels from psychosocial, health, legal and lobby level. The demand of services from *medica mondiale* Afghanistan is higher than it can be provided. *medica mondiale* Afghanistan is in a pole position to expand into all levels as long as there are enough resources (qualified personnel, funding) available.

There is an urgent need for an organisation with the profile of *medica mondiale* Afghanistan in Afghanistan, although it is seen as being extreme. There is a need to find out the right dispense of provocation in small doses that creates a productive dialogue in Afghanistan. The Afghan staff was obviously successful because the work of *medica mondiale* Afghanistan is very respected by the stakeholders.

The institutions infrastructure is settled down from a pioneer phase up to a differentiated organisation, but on a very fragile level. Fragile because it might collapse when important persons leave the organisation, when internal difficulties can’t be solved internally, when important stakeholders try to misuse the organisation and/or when the political context is getting worse.

The lack of available local capacity is an obstacle for every organisation. For that reason complex tasks need to be given enough development time for systematic capacity building.

In general the *medica mondiale* Afghanistan staff works as professional as possible but often is completely overburdened with multiple functions which causes weaknesses in the visibility of results, implies the high risk of burnout for the staff and results in lack of time for reflection and for improvement. It is a great challenge to build up an independent non-governmental women's organisation in Afghanistan until today. Everything has to be build up from scratch, often against open or subtle resistance, with partners searching for their appropriate role for the government, administration and civil society, in a fragile security situation and with limited and unstable funding. *medica mondiale* Afghanistan achieved a lot in this context.

Recommendations

The Advocacy work of *medica mondiale* Afghanistan is on the right track, therefore the recommendations are focussing on the aspects of nationalisation, institution building and capacity building.

The self-understanding of an NGO in the Afghan context needs to be reflected in more detail. What does it mean to work as a “non-profit” organisation? Sustainability can only be achieved by organisations who can sell their services which offers independence from external donors on longer terms.

The institution building and capacity building process was very pushy until now. Nonetheless there is still a lot to do. *medica mondiale* Afghanistan achieved a lot and should make it more visible by establishing an own website and by publishing an annual report. *medica mondiale* head office should design a phasing-over process together with the Management Team with a mid- and long-term timeframe (2 to 4 years). They can build up and use all information, capacities, structures and processes developed until now to start with a process with stronger Afghan ownership and responsibility for the next period. But the Afghan partners will still need support, advice, coaching and training by internationals and a strong coordination and monitoring of the *medica mondiale* head office especially in the field of management and capacity building.