SDC Director-General: Afghanistan is one of the most important bilateral programmes for SDC

The Director-General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Ambassador Martin Dahinden, recently visited Afghanistan. We have interviewed him for this issue of our newsletter. Ambassador Dahinden explains the significance of Afghanistan in SDC’s overall portfolio and talks about his impressions of the country:

What is the significance of the Afghanistan programme in SDC’s overall portfolio?

Afghanistan is a significant programme for SDC. It is one of the most important bilateral programmes, but it is also a very difficult programme because of the situation in Afghanistan.

How closely are the Swiss following developments in Afghanistan?

Afghanistan very often makes the headlines in the media throughout the world. This also holds true for Switzerland, so the average Swiss knows more or less what happens in Afghanistan. Most people also know about SDC’s presence in Afghanistan. There is general public support for the programme. Perhaps people do not know very much about the details of what we are doing, but there is general support.

You have been here for a few days now and have had the chance to meet various stakeholders. What is your perception about the Swiss contribution to overall development in Afghanistan?

I think SDC’s overall approach in Afghanistan is good. I view our cooperation in Afghanistan as having an impact on two areas: one area is livelihood, that is, ensuring that people have their basic living needs met, and the second area is the work on human rights and governance issues. These elements are closely interlinked and they fit together in the context of Afghanistan. I don’t see any reason for major changes to this orientation at this stage.

Everyone knows Afghanistan is a challenging context and at present the situation is not promising. What does this mean for Swiss commitment to Afghanistan?

You don’t avoid a situation simply because it is difficult. When working in this type of situation it is perhaps even more important to focus your efforts.

Despite difficulties we are committed to working in Afghanistan. Of course, there are limitations. For example, if our staff were to be exposed to very high risks while carrying out the programme or encountered a situation where meaningful results were not being achieved, it is possible that we might have to reconsider our activities in Afghanistan.

Are there specific areas where Switzerland could bring added value with their aid?

I think it is important to highlight that Switzerland is not here with any type of military force. Switzerland’s foreign policy is based on values rather than on military force or political power, and this is very much what is at the bottom of the design of our programmes, so in my view I believe this approach, as well as our aim to work closely with the population, is of benefit to the cooperation programme.

I heard you had dreamt of visiting Afghanistan. Now that you have been here, did Afghanistan fulfill your expectations? What is your impression of this country and would you like to come back?

I very much enjoyed my visit. I enjoyed the discussions I had with many different stakeholders. I was also happy that I could go outside Kabul and visit some of the projects we are supporting. I would definitely like to come back and visit the country further. My grandfather was here many years ago and talked to us about Afghanistan when I was a child. At that time there were no obstacles to traveling. You could go anywhere you wanted. I hope to come back one day to Afghanistan when it is possible to see much more of the people and much more of the country’s beauty.
Influence of criminal groups, civilian casualties, unacceptable traditional and cultural practices, domestic violence, corruption, illegal detention, obstacles preventing access to justice and lack of coordination among state authorities are among the human rights challenges that people in the eastern parts of Afghanistan must now tackle.

Their challenges are similar to those in other regions. For the past three years, SDC has been monitoring in the field its human rights partners and human rights situation in nine provinces: Herat, Balkh, Kunduz, Badakhshan, Bamyan, Samangan, Takhar, Kabul, and recently Nangarhar.

To contribute to tackling some of these challenges and to promote respect for human rights, SDC is playing an active role and has established its own approach, supporting both those who are responsible for implementing and protecting human rights (duty-bearers) and those who should benefit from them (right-holders).

SDC was the first donor to support the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) since its establishment in 2002. Since then, the AIHRC has gone a long way in fulfilling its obligations and achieving its goals. In 9 years, it expanded its operations to reach villages and towns in most parts of the country. The AIHRC has undertaken numerous advocacy activities for the promotion of human rights and strengthened partnerships with government and civil society organizations. Over the past four years, the AIHRC has received and investigated thousands of cases of human rights violations and raised awareness about human rights among large segments of Afghan society. It carried out over 2,500 monitoring missions in prisons and detention centers (including the Bagram base). These visits have contributed to improvements in prisons and detention centers, as well as the release of about 1,800 illegally detained persons (including women and children).

SDC chaired and led the AIHRC donor group in 2009 and 2010. To make sure that human rights services are understood in a situation of conflict requiring cultural sensitivity and delivered by the main duty bearer—the State—, SDC is also contributing to the Human Rights Support Unit (HRSU).

The Unit was established last year in the framework of the Ministry of Justice. The inter-ministerial HRSU advises and supports the government to mainstream and implement human rights into its policies, programs and legislation, and to build a “human rights culture” within the executive branch of government. The HRSU shall also coordinate enforcement of the human rights-related benchmarks of the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), as well as the implementation of the recommendations of the 2009 UN Human Rights Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Afghanistan.

The new National Priority Programme (NPP) on “Human Rights and Civic Responsibilities for Afghanistan” that is currently being drawn up is spearheaded by the Ministry of Finance and the AIHRC. The NPP’s two main implementers are the SDC partners AIHRC and HRSU.

In addition to contributing to AIHRC and HRSU, SDC is also providing civil society organizations with both financial and technical support to promote democratic and participatory governance at national and sub-national levels. This led to the establishment of important civil society forums and networks. Among others, both the Civil Society Human Rights Network (CSHRN) and the Afghanistan Civil Society Forum (ACSF) have emerged as coordinating and networking bodies for civil society organizations in Afghanistan.

Besides providing financial support to its partners, SDC is mainly advising them on strategic and sustainability issues, as well as organizational development.

About us:
The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is Switzerland’s international cooperation agency within the Swiss Foreign Ministry. The Government of Switzerland established the Swiss Cooperation Office Afghanistan in 2002 with a view of supporting the processes of political stabilization and reconstruction of the war torn country. Today, the Swiss Cooperation Office Afghanistan is running and supervising a broad development and humanitarian program.

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من از سفر خود به افغانستان و از صحت فکری که به مردم، مراجع مختلف و همکاران خود در فکر قرار داده و به خاطر بازخوانی که به کمکمردم، بزرگدید نامیم.

همچنین برای این کشور به ساختار مختلف اثرات اکثر اقدام برگردی و روزی برای کاهش این اقدامات و تهدیدات به سلامتی و حیات مردمی استفاده می‌شود و وجود داشته باشید که مردم و از زیبایی های کشور به دیدار نمی‌باشد.

شما از قبل آرزو داشتید که از افغانستان دیدار نمایید. اکنون که به افغانستان امید داشتید، آیا آنچه آرزو داشتید بر اردو شد؟ احساس و خاطره شما در رابطه با این شکر پیچ و آیا می‌خواهید بر هم از افغانستان دیدار نمایید؟

مردم سویس تا اینجا به دنبال شما در افغانستان را تغییر می‌نمایند.

آیا عرضه‌های خاصی است که این مردم و همکار سویس با کمک به مردم یکدیگر؟ به نظر من مهم است تا تاکید نمایم که کشور سویس با هنگ فکر نوظه‌ری در افغانستان حضور دارد. پلاسیس خارجی سویس بر بیان ارزش‌ها است به حالی، قوی و سیاسی و این موضوع در عنوان پیوند طرح‌های برجام‌های افغانستان و همچنین هدف ما از نزدیکی با مردم کار می‌کنیم و حمایت به‌طور اهداف برجام به‌طور این‌ها دارد. شاید مردمونه کدامیکی نمایند با هم‌عینی به‌طور این‌ها نمایند. اگر چه هم‌عینی به‌طور این‌ها نمایند. باهمیت که هم‌عینی به‌طور این‌ها نمایند.
نفوذ گروه‌های جنوبی، تلفات ملیکی، روش‌های ناپیمانند و فرهنگی، خشونت‌های ناشی از فساد، توقف نظارت دولتی از جمله جلسه‌های حقوق بشری است که مورد توجه شده‌اند. این اتفاقات با یک رپورت انتقادی شد.

این دانشمندان اکتشافی و همکاری سوسیس از حقوق بشر در افغانستان

با توجه به افزایش تجدد حقوق بشری در سایر نقاط افغانستان می‌دانند که اکتشاف و همکاری سوسیس از سال بنیانگذاری و بهبود حقوق بشر با 9 ولایت افغانستان و همکاران اجتماعی اش را اعمال سازمان مشارکت و همکاری سوسیس از واگذاری هرات، بلخ، کنگر، ننگرهار، بامانی، سنگلی، تخار، کابل و افغانستانی‌ها نگاره‌های نادر مورد است.  

جای مزایا با این اینکه این سویه و ترویج و توسعه احترام به حقوق بیش، اداره اکتشاف و همکاری سوسیس نه فقط را انجام می‌دهد و شباهتی کاری را درین رابطه این اجلاس است. این افغانستان همکار مهیا که سویه نه تنها این است که سویه نه تنها در طبقه و تبحث کامل، و ایجاد تحقیق به عهده دادند و آزادی و اشتیاقیکی از منع می‌شود.  

برندین می‌شود.

باراده‌های انتقادی و همکاری سوسیس در سال 2002 بود. تا جان کامپ‌ها از طرف این است. این زمان نمایی که کامپ سویه – کامپ سویه – سویه مستقل حقوق بشر افغانستان در زمره‌ای از جامعه، عضویت و ضیافت سازمانی است که یافته‌های این اجلاس است. این گروه این سویه نه تنها در طبقه و تبحث کامل، و ایجاد تحقیق به عهده دادند و آزادی و اشتیاقیکی از منع می‌شود.  

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