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# United Nations

## Afghanistan Quarterly

Volume 5, Issue 3 | Autumn 2015

## UN70 celebrates extraordinary Afghans

Haysom: Their work is a credit to them and to Afghanistan



More information about the Afghan professionals featured in the UN70 photographic exhibition is available on [www.unafghanistan.org](http://www.unafghanistan.org)

The 70th anniversary of the United Nations provided the UN family in Afghanistan the opportunity to celebrate its special relationship with the country and its people. The UN is marking UN70 by heralding the work of some of the outstanding Afghan professionals it has had the privilege to work with or assist over the years.

At the heart of the United Nations work in Afghanistan is the empowerment of Afghans. The nine professionals highlighted in this issue of the United Nations Afghanistan Quarterly are just a

small number of those empowered Afghans who are making a difference, contributing to the development of a strong Afghanistan.

Kicking off the series of events taking place across the country – which include photo exhibits, television interviews, radio broadcasts and billboard campaigns – Afghan political leaders and professionals joined with UN officials in Kabul to view a special photo exhibition.

Speaking at the event, Nicholas Haysom, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, said Afghanistan has

been an “active, full and vibrant member of the United Nations almost since the beginning of the United Nations.”

The envoy said the UN’s 70th anniversary in Afghanistan is marked by celebrating “the work of ordinary Afghans, although they are also extraordinary Afghans.”

He said the Afghan professional featured in the exhibit represent activities that stretch across the full diversity of UN engagement in Afghanistan. “Their work best expresses our ideals,” he said. “Their work is a credit to them and to Afghanistan.”

More importantly, he went on to say, their work recognizes that the UN can do nothing except through its capacity to work with and through Afghans.

Mr. Haysom said the UN intends to stay in Afghanistan for as long as it will take for Afghans to accomplish their aspirations – a stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

The Afghans featured in the photo exhibitions, and video and radio interviews, along with the profiles of these outstanding professionals, are available on [www.unafghanistan.org](http://www.unafghanistan.org).

Read more about the UN70 events and celebrations inside this issue.

## UN envoy Haysom hails talented group of Afghans

The UN's top envoy in Afghanistan introduced a Kabul photo exhibition for UN70 by highlighting the partnership with Afghanistan and calling attention to the work of extraordinary Afghans.

The United Nations is celebrating its 70th anniversary in 2015 with events around the globe marking the Organization's determination to do more to promote peace and security, sustainable development and human rights.

"I am delighted to be able to mark the occasion in Afghanistan with a photographic exhibition that highlights the work of a talented group of Afghan professionals," said Nicholas Haysom, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

"The United Nations enjoys a long and unique relationship with Afghanistan," he said. "We



UN envoy Nicholas Haysom talks with Magheferat Samimi in front of a photograph that highlights her work in human rights. Photo: UNAMA / Fardin Waezi

are proud of our enduring partnership, the unrivalled range and depth of our collaboration that remains squarely focused on contributing to a stable, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan."

What better way to mark this anniversary and recommit ourselves to the values of the United Nations than to celebrate the work and achievements of some remarkable Afghan men and

women portrayed in the special photography exhibition that will be seen in cities around the country and online, he went on to say.

"They are just a small number of the many Afghans it has been our privilege to support or work with over the years," said the UN envoy. "These professionals are, each in their own way, leading in the delivery of vital services, such as in health,

*"These professionals are leading in the delivery of vital services, such as in health, human rights, education, security, protecting Afghanistan's incredible cultural heritage and much more."*

—Nicholas Haysom

human rights, education, security, protecting Afghanistan's incredible cultural heritage and much more."

They are accomplishing great things both for their immediate communities and the nation, he said.

"That the United Nations helped empower them to drive the country forward is profoundly gratifying," stressed Mr. Haysom. "Allow me on behalf of the UN family in Afghanistan to use this occasion to underscore our commitment to strengthening our partnership to build a strong Afghanistan."

## Exhibits highlight work of talented Afghan professionals

The large-format photographs shown in the exhibit, measuring up to four metres in length, were shot in different locations across the country in the specific communities where the professionals work.

The United Nations is celebrating its 70th anniversary in 2015 with a series of global events with the theme "Strong UN. Better World," marking the Organization's enduring achievements and highlighting its resolve to do more to promote peace and security, sustainable development and human rights.

In Afghanistan the UN family is marking the anniversary under the headline "UN70 – Strong UN, Strong Afghanistan" with events and activities that began on UN Day, 24 October.

The UN has a long and important relationship with Afghanistan. In recognition of this valued partnership, the world body is celebrating the work of some of the outstanding Afghan professionals it has assisted or worked with in recent years.

These professionals, together with many other empowered Afghans, are leaders in fields of critical importance to the building of



The audience, including a large contingent of media, waits expectantly for nine panoramic photographs to be unveiled at an exhibition in Kabul. Photo: UNAMA / Fardin Waezi

a stable, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan.

The UN is gratified to see their professional development and the great things they are achieving for themselves, their families, communities and country in the different fields of food security, environmental protection, women's rights and the many other vital areas in which they work.

For the UN70 photographic exhibits, the centrepiece of the UN70 campaign in Afghanistan, the UN family created a series of panoramic photographs featuring a group of extraordinary Afghan men and women. Each of the Af-

ghan professionals featured in the photographs are making their own particular contribution to Afghanistan.

The panoramic photographs have a simple structure, with three main scenes contained in each panorama. Viewing the panoramas from left to right, each one tells a different story: The first image shows the first steps taken towards addressing challenges faced by the community; the central image captures the work undertaken to overcome the problems; while the last image on the right shows the positive outcome accomplished.

*For the UN70 photographic exhibits, the centrepiece of the UN70 celebrations in Afghanistan, the UN family created a series of panoramic photographs featuring a group of extraordinary Afghan men and women.*

Each of the Afghan professionals appears at least three times across the panorama.

These large-format photographs, measuring up to 4 meters in length, were shot in different locations across the country in the specific communities where the professionals work.

The panoramic photographs are on display to Afghan audiences in different exhibitions being held in Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad, Herat and Kandahar. All photographs were created by Ramin Francis Assadi and Fardin Waezi of the United Nations in Afghanistan.

The 12 Afghans featured in the photo exhibitions, and video and radio interviews, along with the profiles of these outstanding professionals, are available on [www.unafghanistan.org](http://www.unafghanistan.org). See also the panoramas on page five.



# Hundreds gather in Kabul for special UN70 exhibit

The extraordinary work of a group of Afghan professionals was celebrated at a two-day exhibition in Kabul, drawing hundreds of visitors, including Afghanistan's Chief Executive, Acting Foreign Minister and First Lady.

The extraordinary work of a group of Afghan professionals who have made a positive difference in their fields with the support of the United Nations and for the betterment of Afghanistan, was celebrated at a two-day photographic exhibition in Kabul.

In the first day of the exhibition, Afghan political leaders including Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and Acting Foreign Minister Hakmat Karzai, joined with dozens of professionals and UN officials to celebrate Afghans and the UN's enduring partnership with Afghanistan.

On the exhibition's second day, an estimated 150 people from Afghanistan's media outlets and civil society groups, along with UN representatives and the Afghan professionals featured in the exhibit gathered to commemorate the world body's birthday.

The exhibition brought together a series of specially commissioned panoramic photographs featuring a group of Afghan women and men who have been assisted by the UN

*"The UN has been a long-standing, reliable partner of Afghanistan. Even when others looked the other way, the UN was here standing ready to support and assist us."*

—Hakmat Karzai

and are making a difference in fields such as improved health care, support for returning refugees and environmental protection.

The photos, each of which measures four metres wide, contains three main scenes, highlighting key aspects of the professionals work in areas such as improved health care, de-mining, support for returning refugees and environmental protection.

Speaking at the first event, Dr. Abdullah thanked the UN for working with Afghans through difficult years in the past decades, including during the recent earthquake. He said the UN has played an important role in facilitating the political process and coordinating efforts supporting humanitarian assistance and development.

Mr. Karzai said Afghanistan is proud to be part of the UN and thanked those who have served in the world body, both Afghans and non-Afghans. "Their efforts and sacrifices have contributed greatly to peace, security, development and human rights," he said.

"The UN has been a long-standing, reliable partner of Afghanistan," he stressed. "Even when others looked the other way, the UN was here standing ready to support and assist us."

Nicholas Haysom, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, said Afghanistan has been a full and vibrant member of the UN community of nations and one of its earliest members.

"The UN has been in Afghanistan, partnering with its people, for 60 years, including the turbulent last 30 years," he said. "We intend to stay for the next 60 years or to the extent that the Afghan people wish to continue partnering with the UN."

Mr. Haysom affirmed that the UN "will walk the rest of the journey, hand-in-hand, with Afghans toward the realization of their aspirations for a stable, secure and



Afghanistan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and UN envoy Nicholas Haysom view one of the photos displayed at the exhibit. Photo: UNAMA / Fardin Waezi

prosperous Afghanistan."

The UN envoy accompanied Afghanistan First Lady Rula Ghani while she toured the exhibition. Mrs. Ghani took a keen interest in each of the photos and talked in person with the Afghan professionals about their achievements.

The professionals expressed enthusiasm about being able to meet the First Lady and tell her about their work. Each one briefed Mrs. Ghani about the positive difference their work has made to the country.

One of the featured professionals, Magheferat Samimi, briefed the First Lady about her work in women's rights, including working against forced marriage and sexual abuse as Head of the Afghan Human Rights Organization in three provinces.

"Our duty is to serve oppressed people, women included, who experience violence," said Ms. Samimi. "We always help the oppressed."

Mrs. Ghani also talked with Afghanistan's first women park rangers, who described to the First Lady how they have been guiding and informing tourists at Band-e-Amir National Park during the past two years, raising awareness among the local community about conservation and wildlife protection.

"This park is known worldwide," said one of the rangers. "The trees, the lakes and the animals all need protecting."

The First Lady is the country's first Presidential spouse who has taken such an active role in public events in recent decades. Her stated priorities in her current role include improving conditions for the country's internally displaced and addressing the high number of cases of violence against women in Afghanistan.

Two of the other professionals included in the exhibition addressed the audience on its second day: Maternal and Child Health Advocate Feroza Mushtari and National De-mining Director Mohammad Sediq Rashid.

Ms. Mushtari is one of Afghanistan's leading maternal health advo-

cates. She studied at Afghanistan's first formal midwifery programme, graduating at a time when the country was one of the most dangerous places to be an expectant mother and few women had access to specialized midwife services.

*"The UN has played an important role in facilitating the political process and coordinating efforts supporting humanitarian assistance and development."*

—Abdullah Abdullah

Ms. Mushtari has worked with several national and international organizations, including training midwives in a United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) obstetrics project between 2006 and 2012, and a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) training project for midwives in 2014. She is currently the Acting President of the Afghan Midwives Association.

Mohammad Sediq Rashid is Director of the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA). He has spent more than 25 years in different posts with UN-related organizations helping to rid the country of mines and other explosive remnants of war, protecting communities and opening land for productive use.

Mr. Rashid and his dedicated colleagues have performed a vital role in reducing mine-associated casualty rates in almost all regions of the country. Since he began de-mining work in 1989 with the Mine Clearance Planning Agency – an NGO that was primarily funded by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – more than 80 per cent of mine-contaminated areas have been cleared.

The photos and more information about all the Afghan professionals featured in the exhibit are available on [www.unafghanistan.org](http://www.unafghanistan.org).



Afghanistan First Lady Rula Ghani, accompanied by UN envoy Nicholas Haysom, greets one of the Afghan professionals at the exhibit. Photo: UNAMA / Fardin Waezi



## Mohammad Sediq Rashid

National De-mining Director



*“Millions of mines and unexploded ammunition have been destroyed – with cleared lands handed over to the people for effective use.”*

Mohammad Sediq Rashid is Director of the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan. He has spent more than 25 years in different posts with United Nations-related organizations helping to rid the country of mines and other explosive remnants

of war, protecting communities and opening land for productive use.



## Feroza Mushtari

Maternal & Child Health Advocate



*“I feel the smile on the mother’s face and the way she holds and kisses her baby... My biggest wish is to make every pregnancy and birth safe.”*

Feroza Mushtari is one of Afghanistan’s leading maternal health advocates. She studied at Afghanistan’s first formal midwifery programme, graduating at a time when the country was one of the most dangerous places to be an expectant mother and few

women had access to specialized midwife services. Before Feroza started work in 2004, there were around 1,600 deaths of women for every 100,000 births in Afghanistan.



## Nikbakht, Sediqa, Kobra & Fatima

National Park Rangers



*“This park is known worldwide. The trees, the lakes and the animals all need protecting.”*

Afghanistan’s first women park rangers are working to protect the environment and the country’s areas of outstanding natural beauty. Nikbakht, Sediqa, Kobra and Fatima have been working at Bamyan’s Banded-Amir National Park for the Wildlife Conservation

Society over the past two years. Their work is supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other organizations.



For more information, visit [www.unafghanistan.org](http://www.unafghanistan.org).





More information about the Afghans featured in these panoramic photos can be found online at [www.unafghanistan.org](http://www.unafghanistan.org).



## UN and Afghanistan continue enduring partnership

The UN has had a long partnership with Afghanistan, which became a member of the world body in 1946 and was among the countries to vote for the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights..

The United Nations has been working with Afghanistan since the early days of the UN-Afghanistan partnership, which began many years ago following the horrors of World War II.

In June 1945, the month after war had ended in Europe, representatives from 50 countries came together and drew up the United Nations Charter, which was signed on 26 June 1945. The world body officially came into existence on 24 October 1945.

Afghanistan applied for membership in the United Nations on 5 June 1946 and was formally admitted as a member by the General Assembly on 19 November.

In an historic move on 10 December 1948, Afghanistan was one of 48 countries to vote for the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



On 19 November 1946, Afghanistan signed the "instrument of adherence" to the Charter of the United Nations, during the ceremony of admission of Afghanistan, Iceland and Sweden to membership in the United Nations. Photo: UN

The world body's work in Afghanistan dates back to 1949 when the UN Children's Fund began operations here. The World Food Programme has been working in the country since 1963, and the UN Development Programme since 1966.

In the wake of the 1979 Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the General Assembly adopted the first of a series of resolutions calling for the withdrawal of foreign forces and asking states to contribute humanitarian assistance.

In 1988, Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar set up a mission to monitor the withdrawal of foreign forces and made plans to support the anticipated repatriation of refugees. UN agencies provided much-needed humanitarian assistance to Afghans throughout the 1990s.

After the fall of the Taliban and with the establishment of an interim government, the Security Council in 2002 established a political mission known as the United Nations Assistance Mission

*The world body's work in Afghanistan dates back to 1949 when UNICEF began operations in the country. WFP has been working in the country since 1963, and UNDP since 1966.*

in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which continues its annually mandated work to support the government and people of Afghanistan.

In addition to UNAMA, more than 20 United Nations organizations are active in Afghanistan in a range of activities, from technical assistance to state organizations to coordination and provision of humanitarian assistance and development services for the betterment of Afghanistan.

The UN has, time and again, reiterated its commitment to stand alongside the people of Afghanistan for the long-term until the fulfillment of their desire for a stable and peaceful Afghanistan.

## World turns blue on 70th anniversary of United Nations

The celebration kicked off in New Zealand and from there a wave of blue – the official colour of the UN – moved across countries and continents around the world as monuments were bathed in blue light to commemorate UN Day.

Iconic landmarks around the world were illuminated in blue light, around 24 October, to mark the 70th anniversary of the United Nations.

Ban Ki-moon, the UN Secretary-General described the Organization as a "beacon for all humanity," as UN Headquarters and the Empire State Building in New York were lit in UN blue along with hundreds of other buildings and sites across the globe.

The celebration kicked off in New Zealand and from there a wave of blue – the official colour of the UN – moved across countries and continents as monuments around the world took part in the event to commemorate UN Day.

Among the famous landmarks to turn blue were the Great Pyramids of Giza in Egypt, the Great Wall of China, Russia's Hermit-



To help mark the 70th anniversary of the UN, iconic monuments and other landmarks across the globe were lit blue, the official colour of the UN, on UN Day, 24 October 2015.

age Museum, the Sydney Opera House and the ancient city of Petra in Jordan.

UN Day marks the anniversary of the entry into force of the UN Charter. With the ratification of this founding document by the majority of its signatories, including the five permanent members of the Security Council, the Organization officially came into being.

Afghanistan became a member of the UN on 19 November 1946.

"Seven decades after its founding, the United Nations remains a beacon for all human-

ity," said the Secretary-General.

"Every day, the United Nations feeds the hungry and shelters those driven from their homes," said Mr. Ban. "The United Nations vaccinates children who would otherwise die from preventable diseases. The United Nations defends human rights for all, regardless of race, religion, nationality, gender or sexual orientation."

The world faces many crises, the Secretary-General went on to say, noting that the limits of collective international action are painfully clear. "No single coun-

*"Seven decades after its founding, the United Nations remains a beacon for all humanity. The timeless values of the United Nations Charter must remain our guide."*

—Ban Ki-moon



try or organization can address today's challenges alone," he said. "The timeless values of the United Nations Charter must remain our guide. Our shared duty is to unite our strength."

In addition to the events around UN Day, the world body's various branches have organized a range of other activities and events throughout the year under the theme of "Strong UN. Better World."

Key events have included a ceremony held in San Francisco in June to commemorate the anniversary of the signing of the UN Charter in that city in 1945.

## Radio shows highlight work of Afghan professionals

**Broadcast in Dari and Pashto during a four-week period, the programmes feature Afghan professionals who are making positive contributions in support of a stronger Afghanistan.**

A series of special 'Afghanistan Emrooz' radio programmes that celebrate the unique partnership between the United Nations and the Afghan people is being broadcast across the country as part of the UN's 70th anniversary.

Broadcast during a four-week period, the programmes feature Afghan professionals who are making positive contributions in support of a stronger Afghanistan.

Each of the participants featured in the new radio programmes has also been a part of the UN photographic exhibition being held in five cities around the country. The photos are available for viewing online at [www.unafghanistan.org](http://www.unafghanistan.org). The exhibition includes large panoramic photographs that illustrate the kind of work done by the professionals in support of their communities.

The first two weeks' of the radio shows profiled the work of four

individuals, initially featuring Sediq Rashid, Director of the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA) and Feroza Mushtari, a maternal and child health advocate. Women's rights activist Magheferat Samimi and polio vaccination coordinator Rahima Ahmadi have also been featured.

"In Afghanistan, conflict has taken place everywhere and left villages, cities, agricultural lands and roads contaminated with landmines and explosive remnants of war," said Mr. Rashid in one of the shows, noting that thousands of villages are affected and national infrastructure projects impeded.

According to the UN Mine Action Service, although 83 per cent of minefields have been cleared, the remaining hazardous areas are enough to classify Afghanistan as one of the most contaminated in the world. On average, 33 civilians were injured or killed monthly in 2015.

Maternal and child health is another major issue facing Afghanistan, and also featured in one of the new radio programmes. There has been an almost 80 per cent decrease in maternal mortality since 2002, from 1,600 deaths for every 100,000 live births to a mortality

rate of 327. Yet maternal mortality in Afghanistan remains among the highest in the world.

UN agencies and other partners have provided support to midwives through training and capacity-building.

"The first aim of a midwife is to be with mothers and assure them of a safe birth process," said Ms. Mushtari. "Whenever I help a mother and she takes her baby in her arms with a smile, it is the biggest prize for me and gives me energy and motivation to work even harder."

Mrs. Samimi, who is Head of the Afghan Human Rights Organization in three provinces, is a tireless activist, especially in the field of protecting women against violence and assisting survivors of violence. Her work on women's rights includes working against forced and underage marriage, and sexual abuse.

Polio is another significant challenge facing Afghanistan, which is one of only two countries in the world where polio is endemic. According to the latest figures, Afghanistan currently has 13 cases of wild polio virus. Mrs. Ahmadi, a polio vaccination coordinator in Mazar-e-Sharif, has dedicated much of her life to seeing Afghanistan polio-free.



*Feroza Mushtari, interviewed in Kabul. Photo: UNAMA / Fardin Waezi*

Mrs. Ahmadi and her team visit home-by-home to ensure all children are immunized. The United Nations Children's Fund works with the World Health Organization and the Afghan authorities in the polio vaccination drive.

Other Afghan professionals to be profiled include Mohammad Dad, a youth leader for returnees; Ghulam Nabi, Owner of the Nangarhar Agricultural Company; Habib Noori, a cultural heritage director; and several national park rangers.

The special Afghanistan Emrooz series is expected to reach millions of Afghans across the country.

## UN70 photographic exhibition tours five Afghan cities

**National and local figures have welcomed the exhibition as it travels across Afghanistan, including in Kabul by Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and in Mazar-e-Sharif by Balkh Governor Atta Mohammad Noor.**

Afghan political leaders, diplomats, civil society representatives, journalists, students and others have joined with United Nations officials in cities around the country to celebrate the enduring Afghan-UN partnership.

The photographic exhibition profiles the extraordinary work of a group of Afghan professionals who have been assisted by the United Nations. Starting in Kabul, hundreds of people have seen the exhibition which has also been shown in Mazar-e-Sharif. Other cities on the tour are Jalalabad, Kandahar and Herat.

Each of the nine photos contains three main scenes, highlighting key aspects of the professionals' work in areas such as improved health care, de-mining, support for returning refugees and environmental protection.

National and local figures have welcomed the exhibition, including in Kabul by Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, Acting Foreign Min-



*UN envoy Nicholas Haysom and Balkh Governor Atta Mohammad Noor talk at a UN70 photo exhibit in Mazar-e-Sharif on 4 November 2015. Photo: UNAMA / Fardin Waezi*

ister Hakmat Karzai and Afghanistan First Lady Rula Ghani; and in Mazar-e-Sharif by Balkh Governor Atta Mohammad Noor and the Dean of the Law College at Balkh University, Shakiba Bagramwal.

The Afghan professionals who appear in the photographs have addressed audiences, outlining their work to build a stronger Afghanistan and explaining the detailed panoramic photographs.

In Mazar-e-Sharif, Mr. Noor said that after the establishment of the United Nations, the world body has achieved much in terms of conflict resolution and in bringing peace and stability.

"For the last 60 years that Afghanistan has been a member of

the United Nations, it has been a very faithful member of the family," said Balkh's Governor. "I would like to particularly thank the United Nations for its efforts in the last 15 years in Afghanistan for coordinating international aid for peace-building efforts and countless other activities."

In a speech at the second day of the exhibition in Mazar-e-Sharif, Ms. Bagramwal said Afghanistan has faced many challenges that the UN has provided support in overcoming. "The UN's positive and fruitful interventions have prevented deterioration of the situation in the country," she said.

Nicholas Haysom, the UN Secretary-General's Special Represen-

tative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, has attended the exhibitions. "We are proud to celebrate 70 years of the UN's existence with our friends, our partners, our close collaborators," said the UN envoy in Mazar-e-Sharif.

"The question arose for us how best to celebrate the special relationship between the United Nations and Afghanistan, and how best to celebrate the ideals which drive the organization," said Mr. Haysom. "We have decided, instead of listing the achievements of the United Nations, to focus on the work of 12 Afghan citizens."

It is their work, said the UN envoy, that best represents the ideals of the United Nations. Mr. Haysom explained that the Afghan professionals were selected for the exhibit not only because they represent the diversity of Afghanistan, but also because they represent the full range of activities in which the United Nations has been engaged.

In conjunction with the exhibition, billboards celebrating the UN's 70th anniversary - including messages about key work done by the UN family in Afghanistan - have gone up in Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif and three other cities around Afghanistan.

Interviews with the Afghan professionals, including special Afghanistan Emrooz programmes, have been broadcast for TV and radio audiences around the country.



# United with Afghanistan in building a stronger future

The work of the UN in Afghanistan has unparalleled depth, covering a broad spectrum of development and humanitarian activities, with many standout projects currently being implemented in the country.

The United Nations family in Afghanistan has enjoyed a close relationship with the Afghan people for decades, with its work in support of Afghans currently conducted by more than 20 different UN entities present here.

The UN's work in Afghanistan has unparalleled depth, covering a broad spectrum of development and humanitarian activities. That work is represented, in part, by the support it has given to the Afghan professionals featured in the UN70 photographic exhibition that has been touring Afghanistan's major cities.

There are many standout programmes and projects currently being implemented by UN entities in Afghanistan. One is a programme supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to fight malnutrition, which is a major concern in Afghanistan, with more than half of children under the age of five affected by chronic nutritional deficiency.

According to UNICEF, currently 55 per cent of Afghan children under the age of five cannot develop physically or mentally as they should because of chronic



Afghan university students talk together in Kabul. Photo: UNAMA / Fardin Waezi

nutritional deficiency. Stunting – low height for age in children – has been reduced from 60.5 per cent in 2004 to 40.9 per cent in 2013, yet Afghanistan still remains among the 37 worst countries in the world in terms of the level of stunting.

In response to this dire situation, the Afghan Government launched the Kabul Declaration in May 2015 to implement cost-effective, high-impact interventions to save the lives of children under the age of five. The government is working with UN agencies, NGOs, frontline health workers in rural areas, communities, media and donors to make the Declaration a reality.

Nutrition services in the country are coordinated by the Afghanistan Nutrition Cluster, with the aim of strengthening humanitarian coordination. UNICEF chairs the Cluster and supplements government nutrition activities in 30 Afghan provinces. UNICEF also

manages nutrition programmes through NGOs in these 30 provinces, including the procurement of supplies for the therapeutic feeding units that provide special food to malnourished children.

Another example is the recent work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the protection of human health and the environment from pollution. Despite Afghanistan not being an industrial country, its environment and population face real risks from the effects of long-lasting Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

POPs are notorious for their negative impact on both the environment and human health, accumulating in the fatty tissue of living organisms. UNEP's POP project coordinator, Shahlla Matin, points to recent research that links exposure to POPs to chronic illnesses and even death.

Recognizing the issue, Afghan-

*The UN family in Afghanistan has enjoyed a close relationship with the Afghan people for several decades. Its work in support of Afghans is conducted by more than 20 different UN entities here, with unparalleled depth and covering a broad spectrum of development and humanitarian activities.*

istan's National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) has been working with UNEP to develop a two-year project designed to result in a National Implementation Plan that will include the promotion of best practice in environmental protection, as well as consider ways to replace existing POPs in the country.

A committee is being established to receive comments and suggestions from different sectors. Membership of the steering committee consists of representatives from various Afghan ministries and Kabul University's faculty of science.

These and many other UN projects are designed to assist the Afghan Government and people of Afghanistan in working toward the full implementation of the fundamental freedoms and human rights provisions of the Afghan Constitution and international treaties to which Afghanistan is a State party.