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*MSF EXPLORATORY MISSION
IN HELMAND
FEBRUARY 1989*



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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Justification

MSF has been working since three years for Afghan Refugees in Chaghi District, Baluchistan, Pakistan. Seventy percent of these refugees come from the Afghan province of Helmand, the others mostly coming from Kandahar. MSF has trained more than 200 of them as Community Health Workers and is running other public health programmes such as sanitation and MCHC (Mother and Child Health Care).

The situation in South Helmand was unknown and no report has been made since the beginning of the war. This area being one of the first where repatriation might be possible, there was a need for accurate information from that region.

2. Goals of the Exploratory Mission

- evaluation of the health situation in South Helmand
- evaluation of the necessity and acceptability of an MSF programme in that region.
- evaluation of the possibilities of coordination with other medical organisations
- evaluation of the general situation such as agriculture and education having in mind a coordination with other non medical organisations.

3. The Mission

3.1. The Team

The team was composed of:

- Michel Cote, MSF nurse, who has been working for 18 months in the refugee camps in Chaghi district.
- Rudy Seynaeve, MSF nurse, who has done a lot of missions in Afghanistan since five years.
- Abdul Rahim, an Afghan translator who is from Helmand province.

3.2. Preparation

MSF rented a four wheel drive pick-up, with driver for the price of 1 200 Rps a day plus fuel. The team took everything necessary to have an autonomy for fuel, spare parts, food and sleeping accessories. Additionally they took compass, detailed maps, Afghan money and introduction letters for commanders.

3.3. Itinerary and activities day by day (see map Nr 1)

Friday 3.02.89: departure from Chaghi and arrival at Bagat Ulia after 10 hours travelling.

Saturday 4.02.89: interview with Amanullah Khan (Baluch and Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin) and visit of Bagat Ulia, Bagat Sufla and Landay. In the afternoon travel to Benadir Sufla and interview with Haji Khan Jon (Baluch and Harakat Inquelab).

Sunday 5.02.89: visit of Benadir Sufla, Loy Wala and Benadir Ulia. In Benadir Ulia interview with 12 tribal chiefs and commanders. In the afternoon return to Loy Wala where we cross

the river by boat to walk to Dewalak where we interview Sayed Abdul Wajid Agha (Ishakzai Pashtun and NLF).

Monday 6.02.89: interview with Mohammed Mir Khan (Ishakzai Pashtun and independent). Visit of Khanneshin and interview with various commanders. Return to Dewalak to cross the river again and in Benadir Ulia an interview with Abdul Shukur (Nurzai Pashtun and NIFA).

Tuesday 7.02.89: travel to Safar, interview with Salim Mohammed (Nurzai Pashtun and Hezb-e-Islami Khales) and visit of the region. Travel to Leki and interview with Mohammed Mir (Alizai Pashtun and Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin).

Wednesday 8.02.89: interview with Mohammed Ghani (Alizai Pashtun and Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin) from Mean Pushta. Travel to Mean Pushta, visit of the region and interview with Abdul Ahmad (Barakzai Pashtun and Harakat Inqelab). Travel to Kuchnai Darweshan and interview with Abdul Baki Khan (Nurzai Pashtun and NIFA).

Thursday 9.02.89: Abdul Baki Khan takes us to Loy Darweshan where we interview Mohammed Agha and Yahya (both Nurzai Pashtun and Ittehad-Sayaf). Visit of the region (also Hazarjuft and the beginning of the Sarband irrigation canal).

Friday 10.02.89: travel to Khareko where we meet a local healthworker. In Dezekerya interview with Gulosar (Kharoti Pashtun and Harakat Inqelab) and many Nurzai tribal chiefs. Travel to Sorghduz and interview with Mohammed Zakum (Nurzai Pashtun and Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin). Travel to Hazarasp.

Saturday 11.02.89: in Hazarasp interview with Mohammed Hashem Khan (Populzai Pashtun and Ittehad-Sayaf). Travel to Marja and interview with Haji Obaidi (Daftani Pashtun and Ittehad-Sayaf).

Sunday 12.02.89: visit of a MCI dispensary in Marja. Travel to Had-i-Ali and interview with Rahmatiar (Ishakzai and Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin). Travel to Babaji and visit of the region.

Monday 13.02.89: in Babaji interview with Hamidullah Khan (Barakzai Pashtun and Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin) and visit of a MCI dispensary.

Tuesday 14.02.89: travel to Marja where the car has to be repaired. Interview with Maulawi Duz Mohammed (Ishakzai Pashtun and Jamiat). The day before a heavy conflict began in Marja between different groups of mujahidin.

Wednesday 15.02.89: travel to Hazarjuft and after some more car reparations continuation untill Darweshan.

Thursday 16.02.89: Travel to Pakistan with a stop in Benadir Ulia where we interview Ghulam Nabi (Ishakzai Pashtun and Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin) and some more tribal chiefs. Arrival in Chaghi after a 8 hours drive.

3.4. Difficulties

February is a rainy month and the river cannot be crossed by car unless passing over the bridge in Hazarjuft. The dirt roads are muddy and the car got frequently stuck. That's why we didn't visit Deh Shu since the road from Landay to there is known as very bad even in the dry season. The more it seems that there are mines and as nobody lives there neither, there was no help to expect in case of trouble.

The car had regularly technical problems and the only equipped mechanical shop was to find in Marja. The reparations done by the driver and his assistant took a lot of time often.

One month ago, an Afghan member of Interaid had visited some tribal chiefs and commanders in the region of Sorghduz, Hazarasp and Nawa-e-Barakzai to give them money (600 Pak. Rs for each jerib of cultivable land they possess). This action has increased the jealousy between all chiefs and was badly perceived by the ones who didn't receive anything, more over that apparently no supervision on the use of that money existed. Everybody knew about and a lot of people thought that we came to register the names of the chiefs and their possessions in order to distribute money next time. So everybody wanted to invite us to speak about their problems and needs and often it took us a lot of time to explain the aim of our mission.

Our discretion during the trip was not very efficient because everybody told his friends and allies about the two foreigners that came to give help. We were still inside Afghanistan when Radio Kabul spread the news that 5 strangers were travelling through Helmand and later they precised that it were a Frenchman and a Brittish distributing weapons to the mujahidin.

This was one of the reasons for us not to visit Nawa-e-Barakzai since there is still a governmentheld post nearby. More over we ignored if there was a similar conflict between mujahidin in Nawa as in Marja and if it could be dangerous for us. The car had more and more technical problems.

III. INFORMATION AND OBSERVATIONS

1. General remarks on the region (see map Nr 2)

1.1. The region

This report limits itself to the southern part of the Helmand province in Afghanistan. The districts of Garmser, Khanneshin, Nad-i-Ali and Nawa-e-Barakzai were visited and evaluated so far as possible. The districts of Deh Shu and Bust have not been visited but we have some information on these regions.

1.2. Physical characteristics

The whole region is a barren plain of an altitude between 500 and 1000 m. above sea level with in the south the Chaghai-mountains which are the border with Pakistan. Inside the province, the Koh-e-Khanneshin (1419 m.) forms a natural barrier between the districts of Deh Shu and Garmser.

The Helmand and its tributary the Arghandab are the only places with water the whole year through. Since agriculture is impossible without irrigation, all human activity is concentrated around these rivers. At each side of the Helmand stretches a

desert plain: Registan (Land of Sand) at the left side and the Dasht-e-Margo (Plain of Death) at its right shore. The soil near the river is fertile and holds the water as clay does. The deserts are stony and have moving dunes of fine sand. Temperature varies between -10°C in winter nights and 50°C which is an every day average in the summer months. From January to March-April there is some irregular rainfall and big surfaces turn into swamps. From June to September a hot and dusty wind appears, known as the wind of 120 days.

1.3. Pre-war administrative organisation

Deh Shu is an alaqadari (the kind of district which has less power than an uluswali which is the second kind of districts) and was independent from the uluswali of Khanneshin for certain matters. The administrative center of this district is also called Deh Shu. The district of Khanneshin has the same name of its administrative center. The district of Garmser is an uluswali and its center is Hazarjuft. Nawa-e-Barakzai is an uluswali too and its center is Khalach, locally often referred to as Nawa. The district of Nad-i-Ali is an uluswali and its center is situated at Nad-i-Ali, one of the two communes of this district. The district of Bust is not exactly a district, it's the region that falls directly under the authority of the province capital Lashkar Gah.

Each district (be it an uluswali or an alaqadari) is divided in manteké which corresponds more or less to big communes. The district of Khanneshin for example has 7 manteké, including the district center. A manteké is as a fusion of various kilies and villages. A kili is the propriety of a khan: chief of a whole group of families of the same tribe. In a village most families are themselves owner of their piece of land and that is the difference with a kili.

Sufia means down and Ulia is up; these words are often used to name some places more in detail and for some manteké it became part of the name of the place. The same is true for Loy which means big and Kuchnai which means small.

2. Population

2.1. General remarks

The province of Helmand had an estimated population of 518 000 persons in the years 70. About 155 000 of them are registered as refugees in Pakistan and Iran. It seems however that a lot of refugees have not been registered, often because they live with a Pakistani family which they know or they found a job or they neglected the registration. Some tribal chiefs told us that 20% of the refugees from their region, now living in Pakistan are not registered.

The nomads seem difficult to count. It is not known if the number of pre-war population of Helmand mentioned above, includes the nomads or not. Some khans told us that a number of sedentary families that own no lands, registered themselves before the war

to the Afghan authorities as nomads because nomads were free of military service.

2. Ethnic groups, tribal system, religion

The region is inhabited by Baluch and Pashtun tribes. The big majority of the Pashtun belong to the Durrani tribal confederacy to which the royal family also belongs. They speak the soft Pashtun dialect which is different from the hard Pashtun dialect spoken by the Ghilzai Pashtun tribes. The Baluch in the area are in majority Rakhshani who speak Rakhshani Baluch which is very similar to Persian. The Brahui language is very different from Persian and is spoken by the Brahui. The Brahui are from a different origin than the Rakhshani but everywhere in Helmand they are considered as being Baluch too.

All these groups are living in a tribal system that is very well preserved. The groups identify themselves by a common male ancestor. In our region the most important Pashtun tribes are Ishakzai, Nurzai, Alizai, Barakzai and Populzai (zai = son of). The khan (tribal chief) is very much respected and his power is based on the independence of his group, the sharing of the wealth with the families of his tribe and the showing of his power towards other khans. This power is not only economical, but also political and social. The families follow their khan in his decisions which are mostly taken in the interest of the whole group. All tribal relations are determined by their extent: each khan is a rival of another khan, but faced with a common threat they form strong alliances. Honor is an important component of the tribal value system and its expression ranges from a great hospitality to sometimes bloody revenges.

The majority of the population in South Helmand is Sunni Muslim except for some Hazara communities which are Shi'a. The mollah and maulawi are the religious authorities and are much respected. They received 10% of the harvest from the families of their area before the war in Helmand. The religious authorities sometimes find themselves a bit out of the tribal system and it happens that tribal values prevail over religious values.

2.3. Ways of life

2.3.1. The sedentary farmers organized in kili: the kili is inhabited by a group of families (from 5 up to 500 families) which live as a kind of clan presided by the khan. The khan is owner of the lands and the families that work on these lands get a part of the harvest or get a daily salary for some kinds of work (the cottonharvest for exemple). The power of the khan depends to a certain degree on his justice in sharing the benefits. It's the khan also that invites the guests of the kili and that negotiates with the representatives of an other power (government, resistance parties, international aid organisations).

2.3.2. The Nakil: they are sedentary farmers that received lands from the pre-war governments (king Zahir Shah and president Daud). They mostly received lands that became cultivable with the irrigation and drainage projects of that time. They are often from other regions in Afghanistan. There are Hazaras, Uzbek,

Pashtun tribes and Baluch mostly. They came in groups with at their head the wakil, the chief who had negotiated with the government in order to obtain the lands. But each family is owner of his own land (ranging from 8 to 30 jerib) and the harvest. Some families however work together as in the kilies.

2.3.3. The nomads: in Helmand referred to as maldaar. The word kuchi, mostly used in other regions of Afghanistan, is considered as pejorative here. They live of their flocks of sheep, goats and camels. These groups pass the winter along the Helmand river because winters are relatively soft there and as it was a rich agricultural region there was enough straw and other food for the flocks. In the spring most of them move slowly northwards and the animals can graze in the plains where the rains made some spots green for a while. During the summer they are in the mountains of the province of Ghor and they return to the Helmand when the winter is approaching. A smaller number of the Helmand nomads travel to the provinces of Kandahar and Uruzgan. Each group has its own routes and grazing fields according to tradition. But traditions change sometimes during big events and the actual war has apparently provoked some changes that might result in conflicts in the future.

The nomads live in harmony with the sedentary population of Helmand. They often have close ties because of common ancestors and marriages. Most of the nomads of Helmand are Baluch although a big number is Pashtun.

There are families that are partly nomad and partly sedentary: one son for example is responsible for the flocks and lives a nomad life while the other son lives sedentary and farms the lands of the family. The nomadic son passes the winter with his sedentary brother in the family compound.

2.3.4. Shopkeepers, artisans, mollahs, teachers and others were settled a bit everywhere but mostly concentrated in the district centers where medical personnel and other state employees worked.

2.4. District by district in detail

2.4.1. Introduction

* The only way to obtain numbers on the actual population in the region is to ask the number of families kili by kili. People were not capable of giving numbers on a bigger scale. Some khans may have tried to manipulate some numbers in order to give themselves more importance. But as we mostly interviewed various khans at once, there was a kind of control on each other and often they took their time to discuss and count and recount the numbers. So we think that most numbers we obtained are realistic estimations. In regions where a lot of nakil live it's more difficult to get accurate information, especially there where there is not very much contact between the groups.

* We include some agricultural information in this chapter because it explains why some regions stay uninhabited.

* The average of 7 members per family is according to the interviewed people a good average for South Helmand.

2.4.2. Deh Shu

This district is situated in the south west of the province and was only inhabited along the right bank of the river. The population there had an easy contact with the district of Khanneshin, they only had to cross the river while the Koh-e-Khanneshin forms a barrier for contacts with the Garmser district. The district of Deh Shu is mostly populated by Ishakzai.

We didn't visit this region but various persons told us that the whole district is empty now. All irrigation systems are destroyed and life is impossible. There are however some very small groups of mujahidin and some nomad families stayed there for the winter.

2.4.3. Khanneshin (see map Nr 3)

* This district is inhabited by Ishakzai and has 7 manteké on the left bank of the Helmand. Each manteké has it's own irrigation canal of which only the canals of Dewalak, Qala-e-Naw and Taghaz give some water to cultivate a minimum of wheat. This agricultural activity is very recent and started only after the retreat of government troops from Khanneshin center in august 88.

* Dewalak had 1 040 families before the war and all of them are actually in Girdi, Chaghi and Galucha refugee camps except for 63 families that took refuge in Benadir (manteké of Garmser district). Three months ago these families left Benadir and started cultivating a 250 jerib of wheat (Dewalak had 5 150 jerib before the war). There are no nomads at Dewalak.

* Khanneshin had 3 000 families before the war and only 50 families of nakil stayed in Afghanistan. They left Benadir 3 or 4 months ago and live temporaly in Qala-e-Naw now cultivating some wheat; the canal of Khanneshin is totally dry. This winter 200 nomad families camped at Khanneshin.

* Qala-e-Naw had 1 310 families before the war of which 10 went to Benadir and the rest to Galicha and Zurcha refugee camps. Since december 88 this 10 families started cleaning their irrigation canal with the help of mujahidin and the internal refugees from Khanneshin. So the actual population of Qala-e-Naw is 60 sedentary families and some 60 nomad families camped here this winter.

* Taghaz was the biggest manteké with 30 000 jerib of cultivable lands and more than 5 000 families. Now some 100 families live there, they have cleaned a bit the irrigation canal so it gives just enough water to survive.

* The canals of Khairabad, Malakhan and Paygel are dry and nobody lives there actually. We have no information on the nomads there.

* So to conclude there seems to be only 225 sedentary families in the whole district of Khanneshin and maybe some hundreds of nomad families.--

2.4.4. Garmser (see map Nr 4)

* This district is mostly populated on the left bank of the Helmand river between the Koh-e-Khanneshin and Hazarjuft, the district capital. There is no population settled on this bank

between Hazarjuft and the Arghandab river, except for a governmentheld post near the antique ruins of the city of Bost which doesn't belong to Garmser anyway. Some manteké on the right bank also belong to Garmser. The government troops left their post in Hazarjuft in august 88.

* Landay, Bagat Sufla and Bagat Ulia had each their irrigation canal of the same style as in the Khanneshin district. These three canals are destroyed now and apart from a small number of mujahidin, the population lives now in Chaghi and Pishuk refugee camps. Before the war Landay had almost 5 000 families, mostly Ishakzai, Bagat Sufla had 500 families, mostly Populzai and Bagat Ulia had 1 600 families, Baluch and Populzai. We have been told that during the winter there used to stay up to 10 000 nomad families here before the war.

* The manteké of Benadir is divided in three parts: Benadir Sufla, Loy Wala and Benadir Ulia. Each part had an irrigation canal coming from the big Sarband canal that was made by American engineers some 30 years ago and irrigates most of the Garmser district. Benadir Sufla had 600 families spread over 3 kilí and all of them went to Chaghi camp when the war started. Since the post of Khanneshin is free from government troops, some 50 families came back from Pakistan and started cleaning the canal. Loy Wala had approximately 850 families before the war, mainly nakil. As the irrigation canal is destroyed nobody lives there apart from 40 nomad families that pass the winter. We collected the information of 16 kilí in Benadir Ulia which should be the complete number. Some 2 200 families lived there before the war and 2 000 of them are actually in Chaghi, Liji and Girdi refugee camps. A lot of internal refugees settled here during the war, roughly estimated at 300 families but the last months there is a lot of moving of these families. Benadir is mainly inhabited by Nurzai.

* Safar is also a Hurzai manteké and had 1 050 families of which 50 were nakil. Only 50 families stayed in Safar during the war, the others settled in Liji refugee camp. Some 260 families came from the provinces of Uruzgan and Farah 4 to 6 years ago as internal refugees. This brings us to an actual population of 310 sedentary families.

* Leki is inhabited mainly by Alizai and had 827 families before the war of which 200 were nakil. Only 183 families stayed here of which 150 are nakil and the others stay now in Liji and Panjpay refugee camps. Between 6 and 2 years ago some 800 families came here as internal refugees mostly from Marja and Mussa Qala. The canal of Leki gives enough water to grow on 40% of the lands one harvest of wheat. Before the war 500 nomad families used to pass the winter here, now 100 of these stay here this winter.

* Mean Pushta had 711 families before the war; 206 of them were Alizai and lived in kilies and 505 families were nakil of various origins (Nurzai, Ishakzai, Barakzai, Baluch, Hazara and Uzbek). Now 629 families of them never went to Pakistan (of which 480 families are nakil). The refugees from Mean Pushta stay in Girdi and Liji refugee camps. Some 5 months ago 10 families came back from Pakistan, they were the only ones that returned here, up to now. Internal refugees came from North Helmand about 4 years ago. Their number is estimated at 400 families. Before the war, up to

300 nomad families used to stay here and now some 200 of these pass the winter in Mean Pushta.

* Kushti is a small manteké that had 170 sedentary families, mostly Alizai. They lived in 4 kili and there was a group of 10 nakil families among these 170. Only 31 families stayed here during the war and the others live in Girdi camp now.

* Kuchnai Darweshan is totally inhabited by Nurzai and has 4 kili. There were 245 families before the war of which 90 are now in the camps of Girdi and Chaghi. Some 100 families came here as internal refugees from the Helmand province. So this means that there are actually 255 sedentary families here.

* We counted 29 kili in Loy Darweshan all of them inhabited by Nurzai. There were 923 families before the war of which about 100 were nakil. Of these 923 families, 313 went to Girdi and Chaghi refugee camps. Some 200 families arrived here as internal refugees mostly from the other side of the river. Before the war 1 000 nomad families passed the winter in Kuchnai and Loy Darweshan together and this winter 800 of them were here.

* Khareko had 4 kili where 188 Nurzai families lived and a community of 75 nakil families; so a pre-war total of 263 families. About 183 families went to Pakistan and the others stayed or went to Darweshan during the war but returned now some 4 months ago. This means that Khareko has 80 families now. There were no nomads here passing the winter, not now and not before the war.

* Dezekerya had 11 kili with 495 Nurzai families of which 240 stayed in the region during the war; the others are still in Liji refugee camp. About 300 families of internal refugees stay here too, mostly from the Nawa district and Damak on the other side of the river. We were told that about 5 000 nomad families used to pass the winter here before the war. The number of them actually here is estimated on 3 000 families.

* In Hazarjuft there lived 3 180 farmer families before the war. No estimation could be given on the number of families that were no farmer in this district center. Of these farmer families 1 400 were nakil. In total 2 732 families are actually in Liji, Girdi, Pishuk and Lorelay refugee camps, the other 296 became internal refugee and most of them are now living again in the eastern part of Hazarjuft.

* On the right bank of the river 4 manteké belong also to the Garmser district: Kertaka Sufla, Kertaka Ulia, Damak and Nakil-e-Shamalaan. Remark that Kertaka is also named Bertaka by some people. This 4 manteké were inhabited by Barakzai, Alizai, Ishakzai, Baluch, Hazara, Uzbek and various Pashtun tribes from the provinces of Ghazni, Zabul and Logar. This whole region is empty now because all irrigation systems are dry. Kertaka Sufla had 400 sedentary families of which 100 were nakil; now 100 of these are in Pakistan and the other 300 are internal refugee in Garmser district. Kertaka Ulia had 300 families of which about 100 were nakil; now 50 are in Pakistan and the others elsewhere in Garmser (mostly in Mean Pushta). Damak had 600 families before the war of which half is in Pakistan and half lives elsewhere in the Garmser district. Nakil-e-Shamalaan was a community of 400 nakil families of which about 300 stay in Pakistan and the others live on the other side of the river now. About 800 to 1000 nomad

families passed the winter in this region before the war, actually there were some 300 families camping there.

* If we may believe the estimations of the people we interviewed, there were in total 20 314 sedentary farmer families in the Garmser district before the war ($\times 7 = 142\ 198$). Actually there should be about 2 484 of these families that stayed in their district ($\times 7 = 17\ 388$) and 1 800 families that joined them as internal refugees ($\times 7 = 12\ 600$). In total it makes 4 284 sedentary families actually living in the district ($\times 7 = 29\ 988$). The number of nomad families seems to us even more rough as an estimation.

2.4.4. Nawa-e-Barakzai (see map Nr 5)

We only visited the manteké of Sorghduz and Hazarasp in this district.

Sorghduz had 16 kili with a total of 522 sedentary Nurzai families. All of them are now in Girdi and Okar refugee camps. The big irrigation canal of Shamalaan that passes here doesn't give any water here. Before the war about 5 000 nomad families used to pass the winter here, now there are 500 of them camping here.

Hazarasp had more than 200 kili and between 6 000 and 7 000 sedentary families, mostly Populzai. Actually there are a 1 000 of them still living here, the Shamalaan canal brings some water to here. The refugees from Hazarasp are in Okar 2, Girdi and Panjpay in Pakistan and some went to Iran.

The remains of the district is inhabited by Barakzai.

2.4.6. Nad-i-Ali (see map Nr 5)

Before the irrigation and drainage projects 30 years ago there was no sedentary population of importance in the region. Since this project made agriculture possible, two big manteké exist: Marja and Nad-i-Ali. The people living here are all nakil. Marja is by majority inhabited by Nurzai, Barakzai, Ishakzai and Daftani. Nad-i-Ali has the same mixed population but there are more Populzai here and there lives a big community of Hazaras in the south of this manteké.

Nobody was able to give us an estimation of the pre-war nor the actual population of this district. Most people we interviewed thought that 60% of the population was refugee in Pakistan but some families begin to return since 2 months. There is a huge number of internal refugees in the district since 5 to 2 years; they come mostly from Mussa Qala, the provinces of Uruzgan and Farah and even from the region of Turkestan.

3. The refugees

3.1. Comments on their departure and installation in Pakistan

* The biggest part of refugees from the Helmand province arrived very early in Pakistan; even before the arrival of Soviet troops

in Afghanistan. There are no mountains where one can live to hide from war activities, the desert is even less hospitable and Pakistan is not that far away; so people had no choice. Only the poorer families which had no means of transport nor money to pay it took refuge in calmer spots in the province or in the woods.

* Apparently the people of Deh Shu, Khanneshin and Garmser were more free to go to Pakistan than those living more to the north where we have been told that some khan and commanders didn't allow their population to seek refuge in Pakistan.

* The nomads were frequently attacked in the desert and they searched more security towards Pakistan too.

* The refugees in Pakistan installed themselves as they were in Afghanistan. It's to say each kili or village grouped together around the place where their chief is.

* The chiefs kept on having relations with their people that had stayed through members of the family that were commander or mujahid there. These relations have intensified during the last six months since travel between Pakistan and Helmand became easier (less war activities).

3.2. Comments on their return to Afghanistan

* Everybody in Helmand told us that the refugees will not come back unless there is no danger for war anymore and the irrigation and drainage systems function again. The small canals leading to the fields are not a problem, they can repair them themselves with the shovel. But the bigger canals of the manteké for example represent a much bigger work that needs organisation, a lot of people and time. They can be repaired by shovel also. The big canals made by the american project need heavy machinery for their cleaning and repair.

* Other problems in relation with the return exist but they don't necessarily prevent the return:

1° The houses in Helmand of the refugees that are in Pakistan must be considered as destroyed. Everybody knows how to make the walls of a house. The roof of woodbeams, smaller branches and covered with mud or the lighter roof made of a kind of matting woven of small branches and covered with a thinner layer of mud are in general made by the families themselves. But there is not enough wood and branches in some regions. Especially the region between Landay and Benadir, the regions of Khanneshin and Hazarjuft, Soighduz, Marja and Nad-i-Ali have lost their woods. The technique of making a dome roof of bricks is only known by bricklayers and only the rich families can pay the cost of it. Wood for windows and doors must come from Pakistan we were told, but for the wooden beams for the roof there are different possibilities: a) The refugees can bring with them the wood of the house they built in Pakistan, but the cost of transportation is so high that most families that have no means of transport (tractor, camel or car) can't pay it.

b) We were often told that it is cheaper, transport included, to buy wood in the region of Lashkar Gah. It's not that easy for the moment to buy something there because of the soldiers. One can also foresee that the price of wood will

increase sharply if there is a massive return of refugees and the price is already high now (at least 1 500 Afgh for a wooden beam of 4 m.).

c) The refugee that came back will have to do with what he finds and eventually use in a first time tent cloth for his roofing.

Anyway it's sure that there is not enough wood for the reconstruction in South Helmand. In general people told us that as much wood as possible should come with the refugees from Pakistan and that eventually international aid should pay the transport.

2° Energy: for light it's kerosene or petrol that is used and apparently people see no problem in relationship with this. But as cooking happens on woodfire and as there is not very much wood, there is again a shortage to foresee. Even if straw and dung is used to a maximum, the problem still exists since there is less cattle and less harvest. During the last ten years, huge amounts of wood for fire have been taken from the Helmand province to be burnt in the refugee camps in Pakistan.

* All Khan are sure that their families will return to the fields as soon as it is possible to live a normal life. The nakil also are expected to go back to their lands as it is often the only source of life they possess. In the districts of Deh Shu, Khanneshin and Garmser we only heard about 50 families that returned to Benadir Ulia and 10 in Mean Pushta. But a higher number returned to Nad-i-Ali, Marja, Nawa and places more to the north such as Nauzad and Mussa Qala.

* The internal refugees that stay now in south Helmand are expected to go back to the region where they come from. However some Khan offered such refugees to stay. Poor families that found a better life in Helmand than in their own region, are ready to stay as happened already in Safar.

4. Military situation and the Resistance

4.1. Military situation

4.1.1. Short history

* Being a flat country, the army could easily move in south Helmand. Eleven district centers have been transformed in government army bases and several other camps were installed around to defend the center. The center of Khanneshin for example was defended by two military camps of each about 900 soldiers and a small post of some 100 soldiers. The villages and trees around were destroyed and anti personal mines were placed. Helicopters and jetplanes bombarded the villages and overflowed the plains attacking all caravans. Armed vehicles crossed the desert to destroy convoys and put mines and they "visited" villages to complete the work. This explains partly the enormous exodus in the beginning of the war when the resistance was badly armed.

* The district centers of Mussa Qala, Sangin, Baghran and Nauzad have been taken by the mujahidin some 4 years ago. The military

post of Paygel that controlled Deh Shu was deserted by the army more than 2 years ago but re-occupied 1 year ago.

* Since 6 to 8 months the whole region south of Hazarjuft and Marja and Nad-i-Ali have not been bombarded. Babaji and Malgir however were bombarded in the beginning of february this year from very high by fast jets, 35 persons have been killed. It's also since 6 months that it became possible to cross the desert between Pakistan and the Helmand river without being attacked from the air. We have seen indeed various destroyed cars along the road.

* In august 88 the government troops left their bases at Khanneshin, Paygel, Hazarjuft and Kajaki because it became apparently more difficult to defend them and because the troops were needed to defend Lashkar Gah and Girishk. Three months ago the government left their base at Nad-i-Ali to establish a new one near Nawa and that is part of the outer defense circle around Lashkar Gah.

4.1.2. Actual situation

The government troops hold Lashkar Gah, Girishk and Chanjir. Lashkar Gah is totally under their control including the bridge over the river and the airport east of the Helmand and north of the Arghandab where there are only helicopters (the jets bombarding the region came from the Shindand base). Three circles of army posts defend the city of which the outer ones are situated near the ancient city of Bost and the district center Khalach. Lashkar Gah is surrounded by mujahidin but the army seems very well equipped. Two months ago the mujahidin took some posts at the north of the outer defense circle but the soldiers took some of them back meanwhile.

In Girishk the government troops control a rather small surface including the bridge over the Helmand. The area between Lashkar Gah and Girishk is under control of the mujahidin most of the time but becomes a battlefield when a government convoy has to pass through which doesn't happen often.

The post of Chanjir is a small outpost and it's connection with Lashkar Gah is government held.

Most commanders told us that it's still too cold now to start a serious fight, but they believe that they can beat the army within a few months. Some commanders however believe that there will be a lot of deserting soldiers if the situation for them over the whole country worsens and that the mujahidin will be able to take the city with relatively minor efforts.

4.1.3. Mines

There are three kinds of mines in the region:

* Anti vehicle mines have been placed by mujahidin to protect the villages. These mines are never inside the villages nor between them in, but on the roads coming from the dessert. Most of these mines are still there often because the people that placed them forgot the exact localisation or died meanwhile or because they are afraid to touch them now (with reason). Some of the places where such mines are said to be: south of Landay on the roads

that go to the road of Poshti towards Pakistan, on the roads between Dewalak and Kertaka along the right bank of the Helmand, on the desert roads between Khanneshin and Hazarjuft. The places where there are not such mines are known and all kind of traffic is possible there.

* Anti personal mines were placed by the government troops everywhere around their bases with a preference for small dry irrigation canals, small tracks coming from the desert and fields near the bases. There are not such mines in the villages. Around Hazarjuft for example about 20 persons got wounded or died of such mines and lots of sheep and goats did the same. The 7th of february this year a man died when he lost his leg by a mine in the small dry Sarband canal near the river where that canal starts.

* Anti cattle mines are mostly placed on desert tracks used by the nomads. They are detonated when an invisible wire gets moved by cattle for example and they explode in multiple fragments as a handgrenade does. Such mines have been reported in the desert east of Safar and also north of Khanneshin.

4.2. Resistance

In this chapter we write also about relations between tribes because they are reflected in the relations between different groups of mujahidin.

4.2.1. General observations

* In general the khan became commander when the war began, because it was his role and responsibility being a tribal chief. He had to find the weapons from a resistance party. This was often the only reason why they adhered to a party. The choice of adhering to a party was in general not in function of an ideology but rather in function of friendships and tribal relations. Often the khan stays in Pakistan with his families when he is an old man; his son taking the command of the mujahidin of the group. If the khan is still a young person, he himself is the commander inside Afghanistan. There are many contacts between the mujahidin in Afghanistan and the refugees in Pakistan that way.

* The nakil mostly grouped themselves around their wakil who became commander and has the same behaviour as the khan-commander. However you can find also nakil among the mujahidin under command of a khan-commander. The nomads too have their own groups of mujahidin and their commanders.

* The relations between these mujahid groups follow the traditional pattern and we give some examples in the next chapter. But in general the khan tend to minimize the importance of the nakils probably because they speak of them as poor people without any prestige. The nakil among mixed mujahid groups often expressed this by telling us that they didn't want to be neglected, that they also perform Jihad and that they suffer from the same problems as the khan. In general there are no open conflicts between nakil and khan mujahidin but in some cases there exist a kind of 'ghetto-spirit' especially among the

Hazara communities. Let us precise that a 'ghetto-spirit' is created by both sides, the community itself and the people around.

* There are persons with a religious authority (mollah, maulawi) that became commander of a group of mujahidin. This 'type' of commander doesn't exist south of Hazarjuft. But in Marja, Nad-i-Ali and the whole region to the north of the province the clergy-commanders are frequent. South of Hazarjuft most of the mollahs went with the refugees to Pakistan. The small number of them that stayed are much respected and occupy functions such as judge, teacher, adviser and of course authority for all religious matters. Apparently they don't have the same power as commanders, khan or wakil here.

* Some commanders are not khan, nor wakil, nor mollah. We met on our trip two commanders that could be depicted as people that based their power for a part on their education. Their power however is less clear and they need the support of religious authorities and khan (mostly smaller khan).

* We observed a difference in style and mentality between the region south of Hazarjuft and north of that place. This difference is not abrupt; it rather are tendencies and we try to depict them in the next chapter.

4.2.2. Some more details

* In the district of Khanneshin and the manteké of Landay, Bagat and Benadir, we were impressed by the friendly and decontracted relations between all the khan, nakil and nomads of the region we just depicted. Their different ethnic background and the fact that they take weapons from resistance parties that are sometimes violently opposed to each other, doesn't seem to have the slightest impact on their solidarity. They told us that it's normal because they are all united through marriages, they all speak at least Pashtu and one of the Baluch tongues and they all live the same kind of life.

All the commanders are khan and have rather limited mujahidin groups and their bases are very basic and seem rather neglected. There are no party banners nor posters or slogans painted on the wall. We never were witness of political or ideological discussions here.

Their image is more that of friendly farmers than of well organized resistance fighters.

* The style of the mujahidin bases in the region between Benadir and Hazarasp is different from the ones more to the south: bigger, cleaner and more signs of affiliation with a party (banners, posters, etc.) and there is more discipline and organisation.

To resume the big lines of relations between the groups one can observe a kind of quiet respect between the Nurzai from Safar and their Alizai neighbours. The Barakzai have much better relations with these Alizai than with the Nurzai in general. We learned that there was a higher than normal tension between the Alizai-Barakzai and the Nurzai of Darweshan when commander Yahya took control on Hazarjuft. One has to know that Yahya was based at

Marja before, but had serious problems there with the Harakat Inquelab and Jamiat parties with which mainly the Ishakzai are affiliated there. There have been agreements made between commander Yahya (Nurzai) and the commanders of the Alizai and Barakzai to avoid open conflicts. That's why one can describe the relations between the various groups here as correct, calm or formal but not always friendly.

* The mujahidin bases we visited in Marja and northwards of that place are even more organised and disciplined; some commanders forbid their mujahidin to smoke tobacco. We remarked that actuality was much more followed here and sometimes we saw discussions on political items. In some bases even we could not pronounce a name of a commander or a tribe without provoking a certain kind of bad reaction. One had sometimes to weight well his words and questions. There was in general a tense atmosphere that contrasted sharply with what we had experienced in the south.

* In Marja the Nurzai, Barakzai and a part of the Daftani are allied in the Ittehad-Sayaf and to a certain extent Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin. The Ishakzai chose Harakat Inquelab and recently four commanders changed to Jamiat without however leaving the Ishakzai-unity. The 13th of february this year a heavy conflict broke out between the main-commander of Ittehad-Sayaf and a commander of Harakat Inquelab who didn't survive it. As a result the Ishakzai and their allies are in war with the unity of Nurzai, Barakzai and part of the Daftani. When we arrived in Marja the 14th we were told that one car was destroyed and six mujahidin killed.

* More detailed information on this subject can be obtained in the MSF office when necessary.

5. Medical and sanitary situation

5.1. Official pre-war structure

5.1.1. Lashkar Gah

* The central hospital for whole the province was situated in Lashkar Gah. It was build by an American project and had a capacity of 70 beds. The dispensaries of the district centers sent their severe patients there and the population of the districts of Bost, Nawa and Nad-i-Ali and a big part of the district of Nahre Saraj (with Girishk as it's center) went there directly. The population of Sorghduz for example preferred to go to Lashkar Gah some 3 to 4 hours by local bus for medical assistance than to go to the dispensary of Hazarjuft that was only 1 hour far by local bus.

* Now this hospital is under government control and works for the population of Lashkar Gah. From outside the city only old men go sometimes to the hospital and we were told that they are only accepted when they are wounded. Medical consultations are often refused to this people coming from outside the city and they

cannot be hospitalized unless they have relations with the personnel of the hospital or people that have the power in Lashkar Gah. A consultation costs 500 Afgh. and one has to buy the prescribed medicine in the bazar. It seems that poor people only have to pay 100 Afgh. for a consultation.

5.1.2. Hazarjuft

* The dispensary of Hazarjuft is composed of three buildings of baked bricks and concrete. One building for consultations and laboratory, one building where the doctor lived and one building for hospitalisations with a capacity of 20 beds. There was electricity and running water. Before the war one medical doctor and 4 nurses-malaria supervisors worked there. Apparently there was not very often a hospitalised patient there because of lack of personnel. They preferred to send patients that needed hospitalisations to Lashkar Gah with the ambulance some 2 hours far or with the local bus some 3 to 4 hours away.

* People from Kertaka and Damak and the whole left bank of the river from Hazarjuft to Benadir went to this dispensary for consultations. People came by truck from Kertaka and as the road was bad it took 3 to 4 hours travelling. A local bus started from Safar and needed 4 hours to reach Hazarjuft. The population of Benadir preferred to go to Hazarjuft rather than Khanneshin even if they first had to walk or take a camel for 3 to 4 hours to get in Safar where they could take the bus.

* Now it's commander Yahya that has this empty and damaged dispensary under control. The buildings are situated at about 300 m. from the bridge over the river.

5.1.3. Khanneshin

* The dispensary of Khanneshin was almost identical of the one in Hazarjuft: three buildings of baked bricks and concrete and also about 15 years old. One 'doctor' and 4 nurses-malaria supervisors worked there; it's not sure if the head of this dispensary was a real medical doctor. So there were consultations done and a laboratory worked but never a patient has been hospitalised although there was a capacity of 20 beds. Patients needing hospitalisation were sent to Lashkar Gah with the ambulance, a trip that took 4 hours. The local bus to Lashkar Gah passed by Marja and needed 8 hours to reach the province capital.

* This dispensary served the whole district of Khanneshin and also the population of Landay and Bagat as for them it was maximum 4 hours far on foot or by camel crossing the river. In the months february up to march the river was crossed by a boat between Landay and Khanneshin.

* Now this dispensary is empty and better preserved than the one of Hazarjuft. It's the different groups of mujahidin around that control that place now.

5.1.4. There were also such dispensaries in Deh Shu and Nad-I-Ali but we didn't visit them and have no news about them.

5.1.5. Malaria control

Helmand is a region where malaria is endemic and there existed before the war a network of malaria supervisors. Each dispensary had a number of such persons and they were each responsible for a number of manteké. They visited each kili or village about once a week, taking some blood of suspected malaria patients and coming back next day with the result of the lab examination and the eventual therapy. One such person for example surveyed with his motorcycle Landay, Bagat Sufla and Bagat Ulia. At Sorghduz the 'doctor-e-malaria' had a small building in Haji Baluts and performed sometimes consultations. The same happened in Marja. Meanwhile there was an other network of persons that sprayed insecticide in an effort to eradicate the mosquitos, vectors of malaria.

5.1.6. Vaccination

Before the war each year some vaccination teams came to the region. People only remember the vaccination against 'cholera' or the syndrome they call that way. Remark that people who vomit and suffer from diarrhea and eventually die from deshydration are said to have 'cholera' by the population. There has never been a microscopical confirmation of these 'cholera'-cases that are so frequent during the summer in Afghanistan. Since 10 years there has been no vaccination in the regions we visited.

5.2. The actual medical structure

5.2.1. The official structure

Of the whole pre-war structure we described above, only the hospital of Lashkar Gah is working, however mostly limited to the citizens of Lashkar Gah and a very small number of old wounded people from the countryside.

5.2.2. Traditional healthcare

The traditional healthworkers have moved for a part with the refugees to Pakistan. But some of them stayed with the community where they live in:

- * We only heard about two shekestaband (traditional bonesetter) and both of them are old men: one lives in Bemeroza (the northern part of Mean Pushta) and the other is called Zarghan and lives in Karisidi (northern part of Marja).

- * Circumscision is done by the barbers as it has probably been done for centuries.

- * The dai (traditional midwives) are mostly older women with some experience. They too continue their activities according to the customs and traditions. In the region we visited there were only such dai and no real trained midwife (called kabila) or not even a traditional dai that might have received a formation by aid

programs.

* The nomads have their own traditional healers that often work with herbs. This traditional medicine seems still very much practiced and well preserved.

* Most village shops sell some bottles of syrup, pills and even injections as they sell onions or cigarettes. The medicine comes from Pakistan in general.

5.2.3. The 'new healthworkers'

* The whole district of Khanneshin, nor Landay, Bagat or Benadir have any person that has been formed in healthcare, not even a one month first aid course. The mujahidin buy medicine in Pakistan when they are there and take them with them to Afghanistan to treat themselves. The very small amount of population here goes to a traditional healthworker or buy some medicine in a village shop or sometimes get medicine from the mujahidin. The groups of mujahidin dispose of cars and transport their wounded or ill brothers to Pakistan (mostly to Girdi). The population that is heavily ill or wounded can sometimes travel with the mujahidin. If this is not possible they stay home because the travel by camel takes too long (from 3 to 6 days depending on the kind of animal) and most people don't have a tractor or a car. To hire a car to get in Pakistan costs about 100 000 Afgh.

* The situation in the other regions that we visited is more or less the same except that here and there one can find a kind of healthworker trained during the war by a resistance party or a foreign aid organisation in Pakistan. Some people that worked before the war in the official medical structure are still in Afghanistan, but they are a minority; most of their colleagues preferred to try their luck in Pakistan.

These healthworkers work independent or in service of a commander. They often have a limited knowledge and are poorly equipped. The following pages describe the health facilities we visited:

* In Safar there is a clinic that works for commander Awrang Khan since may 88. We visited the facility on 7.02.89 but the Afghan healthworker that works there had just left to Pakistan to get medicine. In fact there are two healthworkers working here: Abdul Jabar and Kuchi. Both followed a 9 months course of the Saudi Red Crescent in Peshawar and one works in the dispensary of this organisation in Girdi while the other works here and they interchange place regularly.

The clinic is an old house of mudwalls of about 4 m. to 8 m. big. There is one door and a small window of 30 cm on 30 cm. Inside there were three tables on which we found a chaotic mess of bandages, medicine boxes and cotton; the dirt floor gave the same picture and everything that normally should have been burnt or buried was there. There was no other furniture or mattresses or whatever.

We were told that the healthworker here disposes of a stethoscope, a bloodpressurecuff and some instruments for wounddressings. There seems to be a bicycle used to visit patients in the villages.

This clinic was not known by the people of Benadir or Leki and it is hard to know to which extent it is known to the population of Safar. The place seemed to us badly organised and even not acceptable to perform a serious consultation.

* We were told that there lives a real nurse in Bemeroza (northern part of Mean Pushta) that worked before the war in the hospital of Lashkar Gah. He works independent and sells medicine, injections and 'serum' (IV solutions) which he buys in Pakistan. He also does wounddressings. We could not visit him and apart from Abdul Ahmad (brother of commander Abdullah Jon) nobody else we met knew of the existence of that person.

* Commander Abdul Baki Khan in Kuchnai Darweshan told us that in autumn 87, the ICRC hospital of Girdi had proposed to each resistance party to give a formation in first aid for two mujahidin per party. Abdul Baki Khan sent two of his men there and they received indeed lessons during three days and came back with a kit of dressing material and some medicine. This kit has been used and since that time they never received another one. Both mujahidin that received the lessons continue being normal mujahidin now; it means they are not healthworker at all.

* Commander Yahya in Darweshan has a mujahid in his group that received one year ago a three month course by the Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin in Pakistan. He received dressing material and medicine and used them for wounded mujahidin. Since the problems of Yahya with the party there came no other material and the mujahid-healthworker has only some bandages left.

* We have visited Fazil Ahmad, locally known as "doctor Nazir" in Khareko. We were told that he was a real nurse that had worked in the Hazarjuft dispensary before the war. In reality he has studied the normal school until the eleventh class and has never worked in a dispensary. He has "learned medicine" from his uncle Khan Wali who seems to be a doctor and has a "pharmacy" in Liji refugee camp now. He also learned something from his friend Mohammed Ashem, a real nurse who worked in Hazarjuft before the war and has a "pharmacy" in Chaghi now. Fazil Ahmad works here in his house since 8 years and has a stethoscope, bloodpressure cuff, syringes, needles and an extractor for teeth. He buys medicine in Pakistan and sells them here. He uses lidocaine 2% as anesthesia when he performs a toothextraction. He "sterilises" his instrument and needles by dipping them in a glass of boiled water. The room where he works is the guestroom of his house, a clean place with rugs and mattresses. He says that he receives an average of 150 patients a week mostly for common cold, malaria and anemia. It is his intention to continue that kind of work but he has no interest in studying more or working in a clinic; he likes to be independent he told us.

* In Sorghduz, commander Mahmel Zakum told us about a clinic somewhere near Khalach in the Nawa district. This clinic works for commander Ustad Baridad (Jamiat) and is probably a dispensary

supported by IMC Peshawar. Mahmel Zakum told us that this clinic only works for the mujahidin and the families affiliated to this commander. He himself had been there with some of his mujahidin that were wounded or ill and they were refused help.

* Commander Mohammed Hashem Khan in Hazarasp has his own healthworker Habibullah. Habibullah has been often ill when he was young and stayed once for more than 4 months in a hospital in Kabul. That is how and where he learned his "actual job". He works with the commander since 8 years and gets even a salary from him: 15 000 Afgh. monthly. He buys medicine in Pakistan and sells them here and sometimes he receives medicine from the party. He has a stethoscope, needles, syringes and a toothextractor. He "sterilises" his instruments by washing them with soap and dipping them in boiled water. He works in the mujahid base or visits patients at home. He performs teeth extractions and uses lidocaine 2% as anesthesia or when he has no lidocaine, he gives an IM injection of Sosegon. He told us that he once tried to cure a tibiafracture with bandages, but it was no success and he sent the patient to Pakistan after some weeks. Women consultations are not very common and limited to asking questions and prescribing the therapy. He claims to see between 150 and 200 patients a week. He wants to continue his work like this in the future and showed no interest in taking more lessons.

* There seems to be an other healthworker of the same style in Khalach working with commander Abdul Halim Khan (NIFA); his name is Abdul Ahmad Khan.

* In Marja we visited the clinic of commander Haq Bin (Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin) that receives since september 88 support from MCI Quetta. We met two persons working there: Abdul Satar, a nurse who finished 16 years ago his studies in Kabul and worked in several hospitals before the war and Mohammed Shah who prepares the small bags of medicine for the patients on order of Abdul Satar. Normally two persons more work here: Khawaz who followed a 1 year formation in Peshawar 2 years ago and Marjan who followed a 9 month course in Quetta one year ago. Both were at the moment in Quetta to search medicine.

The clinic is a clean room of 3,5 m to 3,5 m. The medicine is neatly stored on shelves. Abdul Satar is seated on a chair behind a table from where he asks some questions to the patients, writes in his register and orders to his assistant to prepare the medicine required. We didn't see him doing any examination and there is no place to do it neither. He has a stethoscope, bloodpressure cuff, thermometer, urinary catheters and some instruments for wounddressing and injections. He says he boils the instruments to sterilise them but apparently he ranges them afterwards in a box that might be clean but not sterile. He says that sterilisation is for him not that important because he gives systematically an antibiotic therapy to the wounded patients. He knows to suture and drain abscesses. He knows how to do tooth extractions but has no instruments for it, so he doesn't do any.

He has his own motorcycle but doesn't perform homevisiting unless it's really an emergency. The clinic is normally open from 8 to 14 a'clock everyday except for Fridays. The day of our visit (12.02.89) we arrived at about 9 a'clock and he was not there, but arrived about 20 minutes later from his house. He says he sees about 150 patients daily but when we asked if we could have a look at his register he refused it in a gentle way. The morning we were there he had about 25 patients to consult. He would like to study more in the future but has no intention to work in a dispensary or hospital. He wants to work on his own. The mujahid groups of Jamiat, Harakat Inquelab and Ittehad know this dispensary but nobody of them had ever been there and even if it could be necessary they were visibly not inclined to go there.

* In Nad-i-Ali we met Rahmatullah, the healthworker of commander Rahmatiar. He is a nurse and finished his studies 25 years ago in Kabul. He's working here since 9 years for the mujahidin and the population. He has 1 pincet, 1 pair of scissors and 4 needles and a syringe. He says he boils them to sterilise. He buys medicine in the local shops or gives prescriptions. He said he is the only healthworker in Nad-i-Ali and that he has a lot of work. Sometimes he performs homevisits with the motorcycle of the commander.

* We visited the dispensary of commander Hafizullah in Babaji on 13.02.89. Since three months they receive support from MCI Quetta.

Agha Mohammed is the main healthworker, he studied 3 years nursing and 3 years anesthesia in Kabul and works since 9 years here now. His two assistants, Aqduz and Nar Ali followed a 3 months course of MCI in Quetta. Every morning an old traditional midwife comes to perform women consultations with the help of Agha Mohammed.

Apart from the old woman, the healthworkers live in the dispensary which is a house of mudwalls with three rooms and a small garden. A room of 4 to 2 m functions as the consultation room; there is a mattress and a chair. A room of 5 to 4 m is the living room of the healthworkers and contains a woodstove, some rugs and mattresses and two beds that were occupied each by a wounded mujahid. The third room is the hospitalisation room, measures 6 to 4 m and contains another bed also occupied by a patient. It was the only healthfacility we saw on our trip where hospitalisation was possible. There were 4 mujahidin hospitalised at the moment of our visit: one had a superficial bulletwound in the back, one had lost his hand by an exploding grenade and Agha Mohammed had performed an amputation, one had a bullet wound on top of the skull and the suture was well done and clean, one had a haemothorax as a bullet entered his chest. All wounds were clean and the patients were in a relative good shape. Agha Mohammed has no thoracic drain but uses a syringe and a small catheter to suck regularly the wound.

They have a stethoscope, bloodpressure cuff, urinary catheters and his personal instruments for wounddressings. Mohammed Agha says they have between 70 and 100 patients daily and he performs

regularly circumcisions.

5.3. Sanitary situation

* The big majority of the population takes its water from the irrigation canals which is water from the Helmand river. Knowing that this river is the biggest one of Afghanistan and that its sources are in the Paghman mountains west of Kabul, there is no doubt on the poor quality of the water for consumption; especially in the summer. The bigger farms however have a digged well mostly between 6 to 12 m deep. They seem to be relatively easy to dig (it takes 2 or 3 days), but it's a dangerous work as the soil is soft. Most of the wells we saw were not protected by a small wall or a cover. During the summer these wells often are dry and then the people take water from the river.

* During our trip we only saw one latrine. The use of latrines is not a custom in the region.

* Since 10 years there has been no vaccinations done in the whole region.

* The Helmand was a rich agricultural region and even the poorest families had a rich and varied nutrition in relation to the Afghan average: Now agriculture is limited to wheat, corn and cotton. Vegetables and fruits became rare and are expensive. As cattle stocks diminished year by year, meat and milkproducts are also harder to find.

* The healthworkers we met told us that the main causes of death in the region are: tuberculosis and "cholera" (dehydration because of diarrhea and vomiting). In Hazarjuft we were told that various children died of measles this winter.

* Everybody told us that there is much more malaria now than there was before the war. The reason we were given for this was the fact that the eradication program for mosquitos stopped 10 years ago.

* Respiratory infections, stomachpain, skininfections and general bodypain are the most common diseases we were told. One healthworker added malnutrition in children and warstress.

* Only Rahmatullah (Nad-i-Ali) and Agha Mohammed (Babaji) spoke us about the enormous problem of childbirth and gynecological disorders in general. The only people that have acces to such problems are the traditional midwives and their treatments are mostly unsuccesfull.

5.4. Other remarks

* All persons to whom we asked if vaccination for children younger than 5 years and women is acceptable, answered that it was even necessary. But to vaccinate women it must be a woman that performs the vaccination and as they saw no possibility to find an Afghan woman that has the freedom to do such work, there is almost no other way than to have expatriate women for that. The best time of the year to vaccinate seems to be the winter as the people have less work in general and thus have more time to cooperate. During the winter the nomads settle for about 3 months

along the river and they can be easier included in a vaccination program then. The only way to assure an acceptable result of such program is to have the cooperation of the tribal chiefs. It means that one has to work kili by kili, each khan taking the responsibility to inform and gather his families.

* We asked to most commanders and healthworkers we met if it was acceptable for them that each patient coming for a consultation to an eventual dispensary in their region should pay 50 Afgh. This would be the price of consultation including the treatment. In case that the treatment requires that a patient has to come back regularly for a follow up, this patient only has to pay once because this price is for a whole treatment even if this treatment needs more than one month of time. The price for a child's consultation might be less. Nobody seemed surprised and thought it was normal. People would see no problem in paying that small amount on condition that the consultation is well done. Anyway people have to pay medicine they buy in a shop and transport if they want to get a consultation.

The reason for asking a small amount of money for a consultation, would be to avoid too much healthy people coming to the dispensary just to get free medicine. One problem might be that quality of medical work doesn't mean the same for an average Afghan as for an expatriate doctor. Some patients might think that they have the right to insist on getting an injection for example just because they have payed something. That's why it should be clearly explained that the doctor only gives medicine for the people that needs it from a medical point of view.

* Every commander assured us that an ambulance transporting wounded or ill people would be able to pass their region without any difficulty or without having to pay "taxes". They all said that they would respect this whatever kind of patient it would be including if it were somebody with which they live in conflict.

* Most people we saw in Helmand did not count on help from whatever government there might get installed in Kabul in the future to rebuild the dispensaries and equip them. It was clear that for such a project and all other kinds of projects they expect help from the international community.

* As the reader of this report might have observed already, the healthworkers in Helmand we met, don't have the intention in general to work in an official medical structure. They prefer to work on their own behalf and independent.

5.5. Comments on the return of CHW to Afghanistan.

The CHW (community health workers) are Afghan refugees that have received a standard formation in public health issues by several organisations. Their territory of action are the refugee camps. There is one such program for men and another one for women more concentrated on pregnancy, childbirth and childcare. They are trained to propagate and stimulate public health and prevention, not curative medicine apart for some basic notions on wounddressing and the use of ORS (oral rehydration salt) to prevent deshydration. In the camps of Chaghi district these people are also called PHV (public health volunteer).

There is some doubt on the impact of that program in Afghanistan once these people will have returned to their regions. We met two male CHW that had returned already and from what they have told us we make some cautious conclusions. When these men return they have a lot of work on their fields and with the reconstruction of their house. In case somebody wants them to continue their work as CHW in their region, they will require a salary as compensation for the time they cannot do their own work. The two men we met were not very enthusiastic to continue this work if it consists only of giving advice. "If there is nothing we can give to the people, such as food or soap, nobody will be interested", one of them told us. Apparently the only way such a program could continue is much alike the pre-war malaria program: a base or office in a district dispensary from where several CHW work and have the responsibility each for a determined part of the district. They want to have a means of transport (bicycle or other) and a salary. Supervision of their work could be done by a district responsible in the district dispensary. But it doesn't look that easy to establish such a system having in mind the attitudes mentioned above and knowing that these men have not always a particular power or prestige which would enable them to impose certain measures. Meanwhile one can only hope that the formation they received will at least be used by themselves for their family and relatives. The CHW we saw had no intention at all to act as a healthworker, selling medicine or giving prescriptions.

There is much more hope for a slight positive impact with the female CHW, more precisely when a dai received such training. These traditional midwives will continue their work as it has always been their task for centuries. If such a dai has changed her traditional way of assisting childbirth in something more acceptable from the medical point of view it can already be called a success. It might be a very good idea to establish a kind of supervision or at least permanent contacts with a female doctor working in the district dispensary. The problem of salary is not interacting here as the system of paying a dai for her services will continue as it was before. However if she has to be busy also with propagation and advices without assisting childbirth the same problems as the male CHW face may arise.

6. Logistical information

6.1. The roads

To pass the mountains which form the frontier between Pakistan and the Helmand province, there are as far as we know three different ways possible by car. The road of Poshti is the one that is the most used and also the most controlled by the Levi (tribal police under Pakistan authority). There must be a number of smaller roads for travelling by camel.

Once the mountains passed, there is the desert plain with a multitude of tracks and roads. Mud (from January to April) and sanddunes are the most common obstacles and a four wheel drive car is necessary to pass them. Some tracks might still be mined.

but they are not used and the tracks free of mines are wellknown. The travel from Chaghi to Bagat by car takes between 8 and 10 hours. A tractor needs one day and a half up to two days, a fast camel 3 days and a slow camel 5 to 6 days for the same distance. One has to take with him everything he needs for survival as for whatever kind of desert trip. We heard that there are some groups of desert bandits raiding travellers. This problem seemed to us a bit exaggerated. They never attack cars with armed mujahidin. Along the Helmand river all roads are also dirt tracks. Some of them seem impossible to pass by car during the rainy season because of the mud. This is the case for the tracks between Deh Shu and Landay and between Dewalak (Khanneshin) and Kertaka. Moreover these tracks might be mined on some places. It is recommended to travel by two cars on these tracks because nobody lives there now and so there is no help to expect in case of trouble.

The tracks just aside the American-made irrigation canals are much better. There are regularly bridges for cars over these canals (for example 6 or 7 good bridges for cars over the Sarband canal between Leki and Sarband).

6.2. The river and bridges

There are 4 bridges over the Helmand and none over the Arghandab in the whole province. The bridge of Hazarjuft is intact and all mujahid groups can use it although it is under control of the group of commander Yahya. The bridges of Lashkar Gah and Girishk are under control of the government troops. The bridge of Kajaki (in the northern part of the province) is in hands of the mujahidin. These bridges are the only way to cross the river by car, from February up to April. In the other months of the year one can cross the river on a lot of places by car, by camel or on some places even on foot. We found one small boat with a capacity of 8 to 10 people between Loy Wala and Dewalak. It was the only one in the whole region we visited. We payed 500 Afgh to get across the river with 6 persons. Before the war there were several boats and much bigger, among others there were between Kertaka and Mean Pushta and between Khanneshin and Landay.

6.3. Communication

Some groups of mujahidin dispose over communication by radio between their base in Helmand and a place in Pakistan. They exchange every day messages this way.

6.4. Business and services

The only real bazar we saw that was active was in Marja in a place called Loy Chari. There were about 35 shops selling the average products one finds everywhere else in Afghanistan. Almost all products come from Pakistan. The commercial links with Lashkar Gah are minimal. In the regions more or less inhabited one finds regularly a small shop and sometimes a group of 3 to 5

shops on places where there is more traffic than normal (for example at a bridge over a canal).

In Marja there was the only mechanical workshop we found, capable of repairing motors. There is also such a workshop in Kuturi (north of Safar) and an other one in Darweshan but both are very small and have not enough tools and other material to assure a correct service.

We observed that the nearer we came to the road Kandahar-Herat, the more choice and abundance there was in the shops. Petrol and kerosene are easier to find and in bigger quantities in Marja, Had-i-Ali and Babaji than in the regions more to the south. We have the impression that the region south of Hazarjuft gets its goods mostly from Chaghi district crossing the desert while the region more to the north gets it through the Herat-Kandahar road. Friday is a traditional marketday in the region. Farmers and nomads gather on big open spaces to sell and buy. The bazaars were also full of activity that day. For that reason the dispensaries worked on Friday but were closed Thursday afternoon and Saturday morning.

7. Agricultural information

7.1. General information

* Traditionally all agricultural activity was linked with the system of tribes, clans and Khan; the kili being the unit of production.

* All agriculture in the region we visited needs irrigation or drainage. There are no karez (underground canal that captures water and brings it to the village). All irrigation happens by canals that take water from the river. The miraab is the responsible for the functioning of the canals and the distribution of the water to the fields. He got money or a part of the harvest from the khans.

* In the years 60, American companies constructed big irrigation and drainage systems in cooperation with the Afghan governments of that time. The irrigation canals take water from the river with big concrete walls in which several movable gates are placed that permit to control the amount of water taken. These canals can be up to 10 m large and their earth banks are regularly fortified by concrete walls. On several places the canal could be totally closed by means of gates. Each smaller canal taking water from the big one was connected with it by a concrete structure with a gate permitting to regulate or stop the waterflow. The drainage canals can be as big as these irrigation canals, but they have no concrete walls. They drained the swamps so this land could be used for agriculture.

* As a result of these projects, a lot of new fields were created. The governments of King Zahir Shah and President Daud distributed these fields to Afghan families from the region or from other Afghan provinces: the nakil. Each family received between 8 and 30 jerib of land.

* Before the war, fertilizer and selected seeds were commonly used. Tractors and other agricultural machines became more and

more a common thing too.

* The maincrops of the region we visited are: wheat, corn and cotton. But there was also rice and all kinds of vegetables and fruits. Two kinds of wheat were grown; the people speak of the old kind and the new kind. The old kind is sown in december and harvested in jui and needs less water and fertilizer than the new kind that is sown in february-march and harvested in june. Often there is corn sown on the same field some 14 days after the harvest of the wheat. This corn is harvested in september-october and it is to this system that people are referring when they speak about a double harvest. The other crops (cotton, rice, etc.) don't permit this system, apart from some vegetables. But in the region south of Hazarjuft there were not very much vegetables grown; only for own consumption and the local market. The farmers have a system of changing year by year the crops to grow on a field.

* The farmers often had some cattle such as sheeps, goats, cows, donkeys and poultry. But it are the nomads that posses the big flocks of sheeps, goats and camels (no cows).

* Before the war there was a school specialised in irrigation in Hazarjuft. It was the only one in the whole of Afghanistan and students from all over the country graduated after 3 years of studies. One had to complete first the 9 first classes of the normal school system; the selection to be accepted was severe and only the best students were accepted. Each year between 100 and 150 persons graduated as irrigation-specialist; they had the possibility to continue studying at the faculty of agriculture in Kabul, but could also work as miraab. The schoolbuildings (in baked bricks and concrete) in Hazarjuft are situated just in front of the dispensary and comprise a big dormitory building. Now only the walls and the roofs stayed and they are damaged by war.

7.2. Actual irrigation and drainage system

7.2.1. Khanneshin district (see map Nr 3)

* The district has 7 manteké, each with their own irrigation canal digged in the earth and with a wall of stone, wood, a woven matting of thin branches and mud in the river to capt the water. These canals were between 2 and 3,5 m large at their surface and between 3 and 6 m deep. These canals make sometimes a lot of curves which make them longer than one would imagine. The lenght in km of the canals has been given to us by the Afghans we interviewed.

* The canal of Dewalak starts on the other side of the river of the southern part of Safar and seems to be 30 km long. It was said to irrigate about 5 000 jerib (we calculated 5 150 jerib according to the information we got from each seperate kili). Now only 250 jerib is used to grow wheat. Because it has not been cleaned since 9 years, it only gives a small amount of water from december up to june-july.

* The canal of Khanneshin starts on the other side of the river of Loy Wala and winds down for about 70 km. It's totally dry now

because the wall to capt water has disappeared. This canal irrigated about 12 000 jerib before the war.

* The canal of Qala-i-Naw starts just north-east of Zaman Khan kili which belongs to manteké Khanneshin and it's 40 km long. Since december 88 some 60 labourers are cleaning it by shovel. Almost half of the canal has been cleaned this way in two months of time. The five khan of Qala-i-Naw pay the salaries of the labourers; each pays a part according to the number of jeribs of land he possesses. The salary is 500 Afgh per day per labourer. This canal was still in a relatively good state when they started the work and the wall to capt water in the river was still intact. The canal irrigated about 8 000 jerib before the war and now about 1 500 jerib is in use for wheat. Remark that the khans and their families are still living in Pakistan, waiting to return untill the work is finished and untill it's harvest time at condition that there is no danger of war anymore.

* The canal of Khairabad starts near the district center of Khanneshin and is 50 km long. It irrigated 6 000 jerib but is totally dry now.

* The canal of Taghaz starts near Ghulaman which belongs to Khanneshin manteké and is about 75 km long. It gave still a bit of water during the spring as the wall to capt water is still good. Since october 88 about 100 labourers are cleaning it but unfortunately we could not get more details on this work. This canal irrigated about 30 000 jeribs before the war.

* The canal of Malakhan starts near Qala-i-Naw and is said to be 100 km long. It irrigated 28 000 jerib but is totally destroyed now.

* The canal of Paygel starts near Khairabad, is 75 km long and irrigated 5 000 jerib. It's dry now.

7.2.2. Deh Shu district

The district of Deh Shu has the same system of irrigation as Khanneshin. Nobody could tell us how much canals there are and in what state they are exactly. But they seem all to be dry.

7.2.3. Garmser district (see map Nr 6)

* Landay, Bagat Sufla and Bagat Ulia had each their own irrigation canal of the same style as in Khanneshin. They are all dry now and their walls to capt water are destroyed because the river has changed its course more to the south since some years. The canals of Landay and Bagat Sufla start both at the west of Benadir Sufla. The canal of Landay is about 40 km long and irrigated about 13 000 jerib. The canal of Bagat Sufla is 30 km long and irrigated 1 200 jerib. The canal of Bagat Ulia starts near Loy Wala, is 40 km long and irrigated 1 400 jerib.

* The big canal of Sarband has been constructed by the American teams and takes water from the river in a place called Sarband, situated 7 km north of Hazarjuft. The water of the river is capted by a concrete wall that has 4 big gates and the entrance of the canal is controlled by 3 other gates. Everything is intact but the mechanical systems of the 4 gates in the wall have lost the chains to move them; the mujahidin replaced them by steel

cables but these are definitely not strong enough to survive long time. The canal is about 10 m large at it's beginning and runs about 50 to 55 km southwards untill Kuturi (south of Leki) where it's rather 6 m large and where it splits in two smaller canals. Between Sarband and Kuturi there are regularly some concrete walls and gates. None of them is still functional and in some places the damage is impressive; the same is true for the gates that lead to the smaller canals. From Kuturi farther southwards there is no concrete and there are no gates. The two canals that start in Kuturi are 2 to 3 m large; there is one that irrigates whole the manteké of Safar and the other continues to Durzi (south of Safar) where it splits in three canals: one to Benadir Ulia, one to Loy Wala and one to Benadir Sufla. The distance from Kuturi to Benadir Sufla is almost 30 km; that brings us on a total lenght from Sarband to Benadir Sufla of 80 to 85 km. Mollah Gulistan, the miraab of Darweshan told us that the canal irrigated 175 000 jerib in total (from Sarband to Benadir Sufla). The canal has not been cleaned since 1979. The canal gives enough water to grow a double harvest untill the north of Leki while in Leki itself there is no water after june-july. In Safar and Benadir Ulia there is only water untill the end of may. The canals of Loy Wala and Benadir Sufla are dry most of the time. Haji Armad Khan of Benadir Sufla has tried to maintain the canal of Benadir Sufla during the last for years and on some places a new canal has been made just aside the old one. The result is that he can grow wheat on 80% of his fields.

* Some 500 m north of the beginning of the big canal of Sarband, the small canal of Sarband took water with a wall of stone, wood and mud that meanwhile disapeared. It was a "Khanneshin-style" canal and irrigated 12 000 jerib of land in Khareko and Hazarjuft. It's dry now.

* In Safar there was another "Khanneshin-style" canal of about 30 km long, known as the Pumbayi canal. It irrigated 6 000 jerib of land in Benadir Ulia. This fields belonged to several khan and were mostly used to grow cotton on. The canal is destroyed now.

* There are various smaller drainage canals near the river and most of them don't function anymore. There was also a big drainage canal of 45 to 50 km long and 5 m large. This canal starts draining in Hazarjuft and Khareko and continues southwards, crosses the big Sarband canal through a kind of tunnel in Mean Pushta and continued draining west of the Sarband canal in Leki and Safar where it ends in the river. Now it's full of mud. Another drainage canal of about 12 km runs through Mean Pushta and is also full of mud.

* The right bank of the Helmand river in Garmser district had 4 "Khanneshin-style" irrigation canals: one for Kertaka Sufla of 4 km long, one for Kertaka Ulia of 6 km and two for Damak (10 and 15 km). They are all dry now. End december 88 about 400 labourers worked one week on cleaning the canal of Kertaka Ulia and repaired 1 km. The work has been stopped because it was too cold and because there was not enough money to pay the salaries.

* The part of Hazarjuft west of the river received water from an American-made irrigation canal (known as the Shamalaan canal) that ends there. Now there is no water arriving untill there.

7.2.4. Nawa-e-Barakzai and Nad-i-Ali (see map Nr 7)

* A big American-made irrigation canal takes water from the Helmand about 7 km east of the city of Girishk. It crosses the Herat-Kandahar road near Girishk and continues to the south-west where it divides in two canals at a place called Shamalaan. One canal runs to the south, passes the whole district of Nawa and ends in the west part of Hazarjuft; this canal is known as the Shamalaan canal. The other canal continues to the south-west and irrigates Nad-i-Ali and Marja where it stops. These canals are relatively well preserved but filled up with mud during the war. The Shamalaan canal gives enough water for a double harvest untill Hazarasp, but Sorghduz and west-Hazarjuft hardly receive any water. Nad-i-Ali receives enough water from the other canal as is the case for the northern third of Marja where a double harvest is possible. The central third of Marja only has enough water to assure one harvest of wheat and the southern third (also called Shinegazak) doesn't receive water.

* South of Marja a whole network of drainage canals come together and form a big drainage canal that carries the drained water eastwards to the river. This drainage canal crosses the Shamalaan canal in Jeti (a village of Hazarasp). Now the inhabitants of the south of Hazarasp made a junction of this drainage canal into a smaller irrigation canal that didn't receive enough water from the Shamalaan canal. This was supposed to increase the amount of water in the small irrigation canal leading to the south of Hazarasp. But as there is not very much water in the drainage canal (it's full of mud) the operation doesn't give the result that was looked for.

* An other drainage canal starts near Khalach and runs southwards into the big drainage canal coming from Marja. But also this canal needs to be cleaned as it is full of mud.

* Another drainage canal starts south of Nad-i-Ali and runs towards Nawa where it ends in the Helmand. This canal seems to be in a better state, but we couldn't visit it.

7.3. Decrease of the agricultural production

* The general agricultural production is very low in comparison with the pre-war situation, because a lot of fields cannot be irrigated nor drained as needed. More over the production is mostly limited to wheat, the very basic food in the region, because there is not enough place to grow other less important crops and because there are often no seeds for other crops.

* Everywhere we passed, the farmers complained that the output of their fields is much less than it was before the war. There is no fertilizer and that makes that production decreases with 30 to 50 % of the normal output and that the soil gets poorer and poorer, especially the ones used for double harvest. Before the war, fertilizer was much used in the whole province. People bought it in Lashkar Gah and the ones that couldn't pay it immediately, took a loan and payed it back after the harvest. Now fertilizer is bought in Pakistan but it's expensive (about 140 to 150 Pak. Rs. for 50 kg) and most people are too poor actually. A small

amount of fertilizer is sometimes brought from Lashkar Gah, but it is even more expensive.

* Another reason for the production decrease is the lack of good quality seeds. Before the war there were government projects that produced selected seeds for cereals and fruit trees (in Marja for example). These projects disappeared and the farmers use the seeds they save after each harvest to sow for a next harvest which decreases apparently the quality of the seeds. Some farmers sell the seeds they have too much on the local market (the farmers from Khanneshin bought their seeds that way in Benadir, and the ones from Benadir bought them from Darweshan). The seeds sold on bought on the local market are of the worst quality we were told. The price varies from 210 to 250 Afgh per man (1 man = 4,5 kg).

* More over the old kind of wheat is much more sowed now again than before the war partly because the new kind of wheat is harder to find. But also because the old kind of wheat needs less water, less fertilizer and less input than the new kind of wheat. But the old kind of wheat gives less output than the new kind, this gives us another element in the general decrease of production.

* It seems that the old kind of wheat is more resistant against diseases and parasites than the new kind. That's maybe why nobody spoke us about a problem of diseases and parasites destroying the harvest although there are no insecticides and other chemical agents in the region.

* Some farmers said that the fact they have to plough now with animals again, where they possessed a tractor before the war, makes that the fields are less good ploughed and the productivity decreases too.

* We were told that the same problem and reasons are true for other crops. The problem seems to be even worse for the corn harvest.

* Some numbers (all numbers express kilogram):

place	kind of wheat	input	pre-war output	output now with fertilizer	and without
Safar	old kind:	27	600	/	150
Safar	new kind:	31,5	800	/	150
Leki	old kind:	27	600	300	180
	new kind:	31,5	800-900	450	300
M. Pushta	old kind:	22,5	450	/	225
	new kind:	36	900-1125	/	450-560
Darweshan	old kind:	36	315	/	160
	new kind:	36	630	/	315
Marja	new kind:	36	900	750	180
Babaji	old kind:	36	450-500	/	220
	new kind:	36	900	/	450

7.4. Other agricultural problems

* All regions that didn't receive enough water, have lost all their fruit trees and vineyards. Everywhere where government troops have settled for a time, all trees disappeared (Khanneshin, Hazarjuft). The forests of Marja don't exist anymore. Before the

war there were government programs producing young trees of all kinds. In Marja in Bloc 2 B, there was such a program of 700 jerib and 75 people worked there. Apart from all kind of trees, also cereal seeds and vines were produced there.

Most people we met were very interested in cooperating with such a project in their region (Khanneshin, Darweshan) that grows young trees and vines to sell them in february next year which seems to be the best month here to plant them.

* Cattle flocks have suffered very much during the war. A lot of persons told us they possessed for example 400 sheep and goats and now are left with none or " animals. A nomad swore us that he had 850 sheep and goats before the war and now there are 5 animals left. We were told that a man with 100 animals in his possession before the war was a rather poor man among nomads. Now one is considered rich when he has 5 animals. Animals have been sold, eaten or destroyed during the war. Some people told us that there are more diseases of the cattle now than before the war; we had no means at all to check this statement. The amount of cows, camels and donkeys has suffered in the same way.

* From Benadir to Mean Pushta the Helmand river displaced itself towards the east, during the last years. Some fields have been lost that way.

* Some Khan complained that labour became expensive. For example a labourer was payed 20 Afgh per day for working at the cottonharvest; now the daily salary is 100 Afgh.

8. The schools

8.1. Pre-war structures

* Landay, Benadir Sufla and Benadir Ulia had each a school of three classes. In Adam Jan Agha Kili, which is approximately the geographical center of these three places, there was another school that gave lessons from class four to six for the students coming from the other three schools.

* There was one school of three classes for Benadir Sufla, Loy wala and Benadir Ulia together. It was situated near Tur Zahir Khan Kili.

* In the center of Khanneshin, there was a school of six classes where also the children of Dewalak and Qala-i-Naw had to go since there was no school in this two manteké.

* Safar had one school of eight classes in the center of Safar.

* Leki had two schools: one of eight classes in the center of Leki and another of three classes in Karam Zai Kili.

* Mean Pushta had one school of three classes near Fakiran and a place called valve 38.

* Kushnai Darweshan had one school of five classes.

* Loy Darweshan had a school of nine classes near Haji Abdul Samad Khan Kili. The children of Khareko also had to go there.

* At Derzekorya there was one school of six classes.

* Hazarjuft had two schools: one of eight classes and one school specialised in irrigation which had three classes (see chapter 7.1.).

* There was a school of six classes between Kertaka Sufla and

Kertaka Ulia. The children of Damak went also there since there was no school at their place.

* Sorghduz had one school of nine classes situated near Haji Shawali Khan Kili.

* Hazarasp had two schools: one of eight classes situated in the south of the manteké near the drainage canal coming from Marja; the other also of eight classes situated more to the north near a place called valve 52.

* In Marja there were eight schools: one of twelve classes in the center of Marja; the other seven schools had nine classes.

* Babaji had five classes: one of eight classes and four of six classes.

3.2. Actual situation

All the buildings of the schools mentionned higher are destroyed or damaged. Actually none of them is used. In the villages often a mollah gives religious lessons to the children in the local mosque. Sometimes the children learn some writing, reading and mathematics there.

In general the people we interviewed didn't perceive schools and education as the highest priority. Schools for girls are not acceptable in the whole region we visited. Sometimes our guide advised not to speak about that issue with certain persons we interviewed.

There are some schools other than the ones of the mollahs in the region. We didn't visit any of them because we travelled in a period of school holidays.

* In Lekki, commander Mohammed Umar Khan has established two schools two years ago. One has three classes and is situated in the mosque of Haji Wazir Kili (northern part of Lekki); three teachers give lessons there at 47 children. The other school is situated in Ghaza Nader Mohammed Umar Khan Kili (southern part of Lekki) and has six classes; four teachers give lessons to 120 children. This school is located mostly under the trees of the local cemetery, but at cold and rainy days they stay in the mosque. It's only since 6 months that these schools have a fixed location; before they changed from place regularly because of the fear for bombardments. These schools receive some help from a school in a refugee camp in Pakistan, but this help is far from sufficient. The commander pays the teachers' salaries: 5 000 or 6 000 Afgh monthly. Lessons are given during the morning as is the case for the other schools we heard of and the school year runs from end march to half november.

* Loy Darweshan has two schools established by commander Yahya about two years ago. One has four classes and is situated in the south of the manteké; four teachers give lessons to 90 children of which most are nakil children. The other school has 6 classes, 6 teachers and 150 pupils; it's situated in the north of Loy Darweshan. These schools received books, notebooks and other material from the party, but it's commander Yahya who pays the salaries: 8 000 Afgh per month. Since the commanders conflict with the party, it's not sure that the schools will receive any help for the coming school year.

* In Dezekerya there is a school of three classes, 3 teachers and about 95 pupils. It exists since 21.08.86 and received books and material from a school in Girdi refugeeecamp supported by a Saudi Arabian committee. The teachers have no salaries, but receive money or food from the parents of the pupils. In august 88 a person of this committee came here but fell in discussion with certain persons of the villages on the contents of the teaching. We were told that the population doesn't accept anymore the "indoctrination to Wahabism" of their children and the school will not start again with the new schoolyear.

* In Marja, commander Haji Obaidi established a school of 3 classes, 3 teachers and 40 pupils in a mosque. They don't receive any help and it's the commander that gives the money to buy the material that is necessary for the school. The teachers have no salary but receive food, cloths, kerosene and sometimes money from the commander.

III. POSSIBILITIES, PROPOSALS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. General remarks

* It should be clear that there are some serious needs in the region we visited. For the Afghans it's agriculture and more precisely the cleaning of the canals that is the top priority. However reconstruction of the houses, medical care, education and mineclearing are needs for which the people expect help from humanitarian and other organisations.

Once the refugees will return to that region the needs and problems can only increase. Most refugees are unlikely to return home if they don't have the possibility to grow crops on their fields and if there is no certain garanty that they will not be victim again of war activities.

* From the logistical point of view, the region is almost a dream in comparison with a lot of other Afghan regions. It's relatively easy to reach by car and in a short time. Passing the border with Afghanistan is not easier nor more difficult than on other places.

* Security of a program or a team working in the region can be threatened in general by three dangers: mines, bombardments and tribal conflicts. Mines are not that a problem if one only uses the roads and tracks that are known to be free of mines and that are used by everybody else.

In a flat country as the south of the Helmand province, one is very vulnerable to bombardments or attacks from the air especially when travelling through the plains. Although the region has not been bombarded since almost eight months and although most commanders think that the probability of a new wave of bombardments on the region is rather small, the possibility still exists. A program should be garded by mujahidin that give an alarm when helicopters or jets aproach and places to hide in

case of an attack should be foreseen. The probability seems small because the region is situated marginally from the big points of conflict in the country and since the Soviets retreated from Afghanistan there are apparently less jets and helicopters. Moreover the pilots fear the anti-aircraft missiles and most bombardments are performed now from a very high altitude which makes them less efficient. As the government in Kabul looks in a certain way to get a better international image, it would be a mistake for them to bombard refugees that came back to settle in their villages and take up normal life again. The same could be said for programs that are helping in the resettlement and reconstruction. The government might not feel threatened by a population that is mostly busy with agriculture and even the presence of expatriate teams in south Helmand will probably not keep their attention away from the heavy military problems they face around and in the places where they still hold power.

The presence of a program in the region will mostly be regarded by the Afghans in the context of tribal society. An expatriate team can be perceived as an ally of this or that commander and so become an enemy of other persons without even knowing them. That's why it's so important to have accurate information on the local relationships and to follow well what happens in the region. An organisation working with a certain person should know who eventually could be opposed to the program not because of the program itself but because of jealousy and rivalry. It might be of great help that the organisation has contacts with these people in order to explain their presence and program and in order to obtain guarantees in case of a conflict. Of course the person with whom the program works must know about these contacts and agree, otherwise he might turn also against the program. This looks not easy and not always realistic and a better way to act in such a situation might be to work with a shura (see below).

* A program will be accepted if it corresponds to a need felt by the people and if it is executed in a way that respects the local traditions, customs and religious rules. If a program works with for example one commander, it may happen that the commander gets too much power on the program and takes personal profits from it. This mostly prevents other people from accepting the program.

* Rather than working with one person, it is recommended to work with a shura. A shura is a counsel of important persons. It should truly represent the population for which a program works and include important khans, representatives of the nakil, religious authorities, commanders or other representatives of parties, nomad chiefs if nomads are included in the program, miraab if it goes about canals, etc. It looks more complicated to work with a whole group of persons than with only one person but for the daily work and the normal contacts the shura can accept the responsibility and power of one commander or a representative of the shura. So the shura does not slow down the activities of a program by endless discussions. It's mostly when starting a program that a shura should be gathered so that: the program is known to everybody with its possibilities and limits; the program is accepted by everybody once the shura agreed on it; it gives more possibilities of getting local cooperation; the power, and responsibility of the commander are defined and agreed on. If the

commander is doing things with the program that are not in the general interest or if there is a conflict, the shura can be gathered again and may prove efficient and powerful in resolving a problem.

In the region we visited and especially south of Hazarjuft there are surely possibilities to work in such a way with success. More over contacts can be taken in the refugee camps in Pakistan as most of the important people or their representatives are still there.

* As there is a need of all kind of programs in the region and different organisations might work there in the future, it's important that they work together (one may suppose that they have the same goals). There should be a free exchange of information, a planned harmony between the programs and as much cooperation as possible in general.

2. The possibilities

* In agriculture, it's cleaning the canals that is the most urgent work. The big American-made canals need heavy machinery for this and the gates and concrete walls have to be repaired. In the refugee camps, one can find Afghans who worked on the construction and maintenance of these canals; some of them know how to work with such machinery and often speak some English. A detailed study done by more specialised people is necessary to have an idea on what has to be done and how.

The smaller "Khanneshin-style" canals can be repaired by shovel. The best time to rebuild the walls that catch the water from the river is from June to September.

As this work is an absolute must, a program busy with this will receive all possible cooperation from the population. It's so important to them that they are ready to pay a part of the costs.

* Projects that grow young trees and vines and produce selected seeds are necessary too and there is a lot of interest among the people. In Marja there are still persons that have experience with that kind of work.

* Farmers will surely ask for fertilizer, tractors and other accessories for agricultural work.

* As cattle became very scarce, a project of cattle protection and breeding will be very welcome too.

* Help in repatriation of refugees will be much appreciated and especially transport of wood needed for the reconstruction of the houses.

* Detection and destruction of mines is another necessity.

* Medical programs can rebuild the dispensaries and start curative activities for the population. Out from such a working dispensary, vaccination, malaria- and tuberculosis control and public health education can be organised.

* Schools have to be rebuilt and equipped.

3. Conclusions

The actual military and general political situation of Afghanistan, together with other realities seem to announce a chaos in the near future for the country.

Meanwhile the silent majority inside Afghanistan or as refugee in Pakistan tries to survive whatever the future may bring. Most of these people want a return to their pre-war life style. They expect international help that gives them the means to take up a normal life again, hoping that the military and political situation will allow them to live quiet, independently and in peace. It's this majority with its simple but healthy sense of reality that will essentially rebuild the country, if only they have the possibilities to begin with it.

The south of the Helmand province has not received a lot of help during the war. The refugees of course received their part in Pakistan but meanwhile the region itself looks like an enormous ruin. It has however great possibilities of agricultural production and it is economically important for the whole country. As it has a rather marginal position in relationship with the major battlefields in Afghanistan, this region might be one of the first to receive its refugees back in big numbers and to know a peaceful reconstruction.

Let's start with it!