

UN Special

Afghanistan

TRYING PEACE AGAINST ALL ODDS

N°778 - APRIL 2018

GLOBAL AFFAIRS P.20

Sri Lanka and the Work of the Conference on Disarmament

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ALEXANDER MEJIA
Rédacteur en chef / Editor-in-chief

ÉDITORIAL / EDITOR'S NOTE 3

FEATURED / À LA UNE

- Operation enduring war 5
- Interview with Her Excellency Suraya Dalil 8
- Female polio workers reaching every last child 10
- Afghanistan, still a country in conflict 12
- Dilemmas around using militias to fight the Taliban 14
- From Kabul to Nashville. Building bridges via photography 16

UNITED NATIONS / NATIONS UNIES

- The Defeat-NCD Partnership Universal NCD care. Everywhere. At anytime. 28
- Simultaneous interpretation 32
- Knowledge and Learning Commons. Celebrating Multilingualism – Language Days at UNOg 36

WHO / OMS

- Exploring precision global health at the Geneva Health Forum 2018 26
- Alternative working arrangements in the UN common system 30

GLOBAL AFFAIRS / AFFAIRE GLOBALES

- Sri Lanka Permanent mission interview 20
- Working from the heights of La Paz, Bolivia. An experience to share. 44

ART & CULTURE

- Tradition: a museum object? 38
- Myanmar (Birmanie) 40
- Pagodes, temples et monastères 40
- Curcuma – a miracle for your *corpore sano* 42

JEUNES REPORTERS / YOUNG REPORTERS

- La science dans le changement climatique 46

This issue of *UN Special* highlights the conflict in Afghanistan that has been running for 17 years. This war, unfortunately, hasn't generated the global awareness necessary to reach a negotiated peace and continues to rage. We invite you to learn more about the situation in this war-torn country in the opening article, which tells the history of the war, where we stand now, and lays out the – admittedly difficult – way ahead. Additionally, you will find interviews with Ambassador Suraya Dalil, the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan in Geneva and with Dr. Rik Peepkorn, WHO Representative in Afghanistan. The centerfold will give you a timeline of the ongoing conflict. We also invite you to read about the dilemmas surrounding the relationship with the Taliban, and how photography can be used to build bridges.

In this edition we also speak about Sri Lanka's contributions to the international community. You can read an interview with H. E. Mr. Ravinatha P. Aryasinha, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka in Geneva, who shares his thoughts on his country's role on the global stage and, among other things, the recent meeting that allowed the Conference on Disarmament to resume its substantive work after many years.

Several other articles in this edition are related to health. You will find an overview of the upcoming bi-yearly Geneva Health Forum that brings together participants from all over the world. This year saw also the launch of a non-communicable diseases (NCDs) initiative, called the Defeat-NCD Partnership. We encourage you to learn more about this initiative's work and ambitions. Going back to this month's main focus, Afghanistan, you may also read about the important work done by female polio-workers in this country. In this light, we wish you a healthy month ahead! ■

Cette édition de *UN Special* met en lumière le conflit en Afghanistan qui dure depuis 17 ans. Malheureusement, cette guerre n'a pas généré la prise de conscience globale nécessaire pour parvenir à une paix négociée. Dans le premier article, nous vous invitons à en apprendre davantage sur la situation de ce pays, l'histoire et origines de la guerre, et où nous en sommes aujourd'hui. Vous trouverez aussi des entretiens avec l'Ambassadeur Suraya Dalil, Représentant Permanent de l'Afghanistan à Genève et avec le Dr Rik Peepkorn, Représentant de l'OMS en Afghanistan. La page centrale vous donnera une chronologie du conflit en cours. Nous vous invitons également à lire les dilemmes entourant la relation avec les talibans et comment la photographie peut être utilisée pour construire des ponts.

Dans cette édition, nous parlons également des contributions du Sri Lanka à la communauté internationale. Vous pouvez lire une interview de S.E. M. Ravinatha P. Aryasinha, Représentant Permanent de Sri Lanka à Genève, qui partage ses réflexions sur le rôle de son pays sur la scène mondiale et la récente réunion qui a permis à la Conférence du Désarmement de reprendre ses travaux de fond après de nombreuses années.

Plusieurs articles de ce numéro portent sur la santé, tel que cet article sur le prochain forum sur la santé Geneva Health Forum qui rassemble des participants du monde entier, ou le lancement d'une initiative sur les maladies non transmissibles (NCDs), appelée le partenariat Defeat-NCD. En lien avec le sujet principal de ce mois, l'Afghanistan, vous pouvez lire sur l'important travail accompli par les agentes d'éradication de la polio dans ce pays. Sur ce point, nous vous souhaitons un mois en bonne santé! ■

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Operation enduring war

Afghanistan today is in a dire situation and is still struggling for peace. We are left to wonder: how could it have come so far?

ALEX MEJIA, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I went to Kabul as a UN official for the first time in 2009. I still remember the uneasy anxiety I felt while riding downtown from the airport to the Serena hotel in an armored car. The hotel had been bombed the previous year and I was relieved when I arrived and had to go through four security layers to reach the reception. My initial meetings at the ministry of foreign affairs and the ministry of finance were only the prelude for what would become a multi-year project that would put me back in

Kabul once a year until 2013. I developed a special appreciation for this war-torn nation and ended up feeling at ease roaming Chicken Street or going out at night to eat kabuli palaw.

In December 2014, it was announced that the war was over. Sort of. The tone of international headlines following the official end of the U.S. combat mission in Afghanistan was grim and the outlook pessimistic. After 13 years of bloodstained conflict, hardly anyone believed that the end of *Operation Enduring Freedom* would equal the end of war. On the contrary, recent years have been some of the bloodiest since the beginning of the war in 2001. And while America's longest war in history may have officially ended some three years ago, Afghanistan today is in a dire situation with little hope for peace. We are left to wonder: how could it have come so far?

A tournament of shadows

Grand mountain peaks cover large parts of Afghanistan. Their jagged, snow-covered peaks have not only fueled into the never-ending cat and mouse game between opposing forces, they stand as a persistent reminder for the intense history this country in the heart of south-central Asia had to endure.

Looking back in time, it is difficult to pinpoint an exact moment that defined Afghanistan's situation in the modern times. Lying along historically important trade routes, it has long been a coveted prize for grand powers. A series of wars in the 19th century, dubbed Great Game by the British and Tournament of Shadows by the Russians, left the country unstable and isolated. Short periods of opening and liberal reforms were quickly succeeded by violent coups and civil wars. In 1979, the Soviet Army invaded

Afghanistan and installed a communist government which was finally toppled in 1992 by western-backed mujahedeens.

The consequential power vacuum saw the rise of the Taliban who finally took control of Kabul in 1996. In the same year, Osama bin Laden established his al-Qaeda's headquarters in Kabul and initiated a partnership between the two terrorist organisations. With the support from al-Qaeda, the Taliban took over large parts of the country and introduced a hard-line version of Islam.

Back in the spotlight

Following the 9/11 attacks in the United States, attention quickly focused again on Afghanistan. After all, Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind the attacks, was stationed in the country and the Taliban had provided a training ground for the terrorists that crashed the planes on American soil. When the Taliban didn't meet the United States' terms for handing in bin Laden, on October 7, 2001, US President George W. Bush announced that airstrikes targeting Al Qaeda and the Taliban had begun in Afghanistan. *Operation Enduring Freedom* had commenced. In the course of the following weeks, more and more countries offered troops for the effort. Initially, success was swift. The U.S.-led coalition quickly removed the Taliban from power and seriously crippled al-Qaeda and associated militants in Afghanistan.

In the following years, the Afghan people elected several presidents in democratic elections and saw the establishment of a government that has tried to provide public services that continue to be challenged outside urban areas. Since the invasion, hundreds of schools and health facilities have been constructed, billions of dollars in aid have been invested to improve the country's infrastructure, economy, transport, and agriculture. However, while the government was able to build some democratic structures, much of the initial success has dwindled and Afghanistan's security situation outside its capital is dire. Indeed, not much time passed between the Taliban's swift fall from power to their return as an insurgency, stirring up chaos in several provinces.

Responding to the growing instability, American troop numbers began to surge upwards, first under President Bush, and then under President Obama, under whose administration they peaked at around 100'000 in 2010 – 10 times more than after the war's first year. The huge surge in troop numbers was part of the Obama administration's renewed strategy for Afghanistan. The objective, the US said, was to diminish the Taliban and to strengthen Afghan institutions, aiming to bring the war to its end by 2014. The so-called troop surge ended by late 2014, when troop levels had decreased to roughly 10'000 and Operation Enduring

Freedom came to its official end. But did it really?

A decline in confidence

General Assembly resolution 68/11 and *Security Council resolution 2344 (2017)* request the United Nations Secretary-General to report every three months on developments in Afghanistan. The latest report from 27 February 2018 calls the security situation in the country "highly unstable" and sees the "already minimal progress towards peace negotiations" hindered by series of attacks and the public reactions to them, threatening to further the decline in confidence in the Afghan government.

The solution for Afghanistan, ultimately, has to be political, the US State Department said last February. Meanwhile, the diplomatic situation can at best be described as "complicated". Recently, at an international conference in Afghanistan's capital Kabul on 28 Feb, Kabul's government offered to work with the Taliban as a political actor. However, the Taliban view the government as illegitimate and argue that the conflict is not between Afghan parties. They are instead calling for direct negotiations with Washington.

The way ahead

So how are we going to solve this crisis? At least in theory, all parties have in common that they view a military solution as impossible. Indeed, it seems hard to believe how a military solution could be conceivable after the war has dragged on

for so long. The official strategy of the US, mainly continuing President Obama's approach, is to use a mix of conventional military force and diplomatic pressure on Pakistan, where it is argued that jihadist find sanctuaries.

While a coherent and comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan would be more welcome than ever, it seems far out of reach today. "We don't want to talk to the Taliban. We're going to finish what we have to finish, what nobody else has been able to finish, we're going to be able to do it," President Trump said in January of this year, deviating from his administration's official stance and causing some surprise among US officials.

Susan Rice, the Obama administration's National Security Advisor and its first ambassador to the UN wrote in the *New York Times* in late March that peace talks are the only way to end the war, but that in her opinion they will likely fail. Jim Mattis, the Trump administration's current Secretary of Defense said during a recent surprise visit to Afghanistan that some Taliban factions are interested in talks, however so far they have not responded to the peace talks proposal. It seems they believe they have the upper hand in a continued military campaign. Military analysts assume that the Taliban has increased its financial capabilities last year and that they have what it takes to continue fighting. Opium production in Afghanistan has



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reached a record high despite US and international efforts to destroy poppy fields and opium production for more than a decade. Unemployment and a protracted war have driven an increase in both supply and demand in the country and last year 9,000 tonnes were produced, an increase of 87 percent versus the previous year. With that increased revenue, the Taliban has more cash for weapons and fighters. That is hardly the case of a nearly defeated insurgency, as the US administration has been trying to portray its enemy until recently.

A new day

To this day, the war has resulted in over 100,000 war-related deaths and over 110,000 injured people. At least one third of the Afghan territory is in the hands of the insurgency. If the military option is not viable to defeat the Taliban, the

political option would be the only road ahead. However, if the Taliban is not interested, it would be –unfortunately– likely that the status quo will lead to a stalemate for many years to come. President Trump has considered that option and his administration has assumed already that 15,000 troops will remain in Afghanistan, at an annual cost of \$45 billion, the minimum necessary to maintain the Afghan government in place and avoid the danger of increased terrorist attacks around the world. That scenario does not include the defeat of the Taliban and could last only until the American public supports the investment in blood and treasure. That could lead to an eventual replacement of the American-led intervention by support troops from Russia, Iran, China or India. The Afghan government would continue a strategy of survival and the country will continue to bleed.

17 years in, central questions remain unanswered and nobody really knows what lies ahead for this country. The UN and its mission in Kabul, UNAMA, remain at the center of the peace efforts to end the war. But the outlook becomes even more bleak with the passing of the years. This is a good moment to remember an illustrious compatriot of mine, the late Ecuadorian diplomat Diego Cordovez, the UN Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs that led the peace negotiations that ended the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1988. When the negotiations seemed doomed and the warring parties were no longer willing to engage in diplomacy, he would travel back and forth to Afghanistan, the Soviet Union, Pakistan and the United States for the sake of maintaining communication with the actors over dinners and cigars. He managed to convince the insurgency

to return several times to the Palais des Nations where he would keep them in separate rooms and would do whatever necessary to avoid face-to-face encounters with their enemies. It is part of the anecdote book of our beloved Palais that one day he ordered our security to lock opposing representatives in separate bathrooms to prevent unplanned encounters. He can still teach us that there is always hope at the end of the tunnel. “It has happened that everybody has given up except myself. But not to give up was my duty.” Mr. Cordovez told the Washington Post once.

Thirty years after that peace agreement, it remains our duty to not give up. We remain convinced that Afghanistan will see peace again. Optimism against all odds is part of the essence of who we are. This is the UN after all. ■



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Interview with Her Excellency Suraya Dalil

Ambassador Suraya Dalil¹ is a physician by training and earned a Master's Degree in Public Health from the Harvard School of Public Health.



Ambassador Suraya Dalil with UN Special Editor-in-Chief Alex Mejia.

SEBASTIAN HOFBAUER

Before working with the Afghan Government, Ambassador Dalil worked with UNICEF in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nairobi and also with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF) in Afghanistan. Between 2011 and 2014, she was first acting Minister and then Minister of Public Health in Afghanistan. For almost 2 and a half years, she has been the Ambassador of Afghanistan to Switzerland and Permanent Representative to the UN and International organisation based in Geneva.

UN Special Editor-in-chief Alex Mejia sat down with Ambassador Suraya Dalil to speak about gender advancement, Afghanistan's path towards peace and her expectations of the United Nations.

Ambassador Dalil, along your career you have been very active on gender advancement: how do you see, both globally and specifically in Afghanistan, the challenges and opportunities of gender advancement?

Gender equality is an important issue for many of us, and we need to act in many areas such as social policies, education, health care, governance and security, conflict resolution and prevention, the fight

against corruption, accountability, transparency or even climate change.

In Afghanistan, women used to be largely discriminated against during the Taliban time. Today, they are still affected by many challenges, such as the conflict situation or the social-economic constraints, including poverty. But what I am hopeful for is the young women, girls - and also boys - who see things differently. They ask questions in a way that very few people have asked before. I also see that they are very enthusiastic for positive change, and that they want to have a voice in decision making.

Afghanistan's women and girls have made a lot of advancements in the last few years. Around 40 % of enrolment in the primary schools are girls and 27 % of seats in the parliament occupied by women, which is a quite impressive number given the region, but even worldwide. We have three female cabinet members and four female Ambassadors, including myself. It is also important to say that women are now very open to explore new fields like IT, entrepreneurship, engineering, security and police, and they do not stick to being teachers or nurses as they did until the 1980's.

A few years ago, when I was minister, a mother told me that since they had water at home, her daughter didn't need to go and fetch water, which took several hours every day. Thanks to this improvement, she now has enough time to go to school. So various improvements in life, in terms of access to water, to electricity and food security, can all be important predeterminants of decisions that a family will make about girls' enrolment, about their retention in school, and even early marriages.

Today, unfortunately, we witness an urban-rural divide in Afghanistan. Can you tell us what will happen to places, especially in rural areas, where the government cannot fully provide its services to citizens?

First of all, the Taliban have demonstrated their inability to keep control of a place that they capture. There are places which are controlled sometimes by the Government and sometimes by the Taliban. The Government is trying to reach out with services to the entire population but, unfortunately, the urban-rural divide exists in the country. We have a Ministry of Rural Development that, with support from donor agencies and international development partners, is working to reduce this.

Specifically, the government developed the Citizens' Charter last year. It aims to improve the delivery of core infrastructure and social services to participating communities through strengthened Community Development Councils. The Citizens' Charter was an important step to reducing the gap and to increasing attention and investment into the rural population.

When I was a child, in my history books, I read that Afghanistan is the heart of Asia and it was the transit point for the silk road. We want to revitalize that heritage because we believe that, when countries are trading, they don't fight. We have regionally cooperation conferences in Afghanistan called RECCA (Regional Economic Cooperation for Afghanistan). There is also the TAPI Pipeline (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) which passes four countries, creating thousands of jobs. Similarly, there is CASA-1000 (Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Program), which is a program for electricity transmission between Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. With more connectivity from such projects, we hope that the regions or the countries will have an interest in maintaining the peace.

Many people tend to think that military solution is not the ideal solution in Afghanistan and that a political solution is needed. President Ghani recently invited the Taliban to political dialogues. Does this offer have a timeframe and what are the next steps?

The peace offer that our President put on the table last month, on February 28, is a remarkable one. And differs from all discussions that took place during the last couple of years is putting bold items on the table. There hasn't been a signal from the Taliban yet but we don't discard any potential answer from them. They either have to face the battlefield or come to the table. Other countries have handled this process, in Europe for example, only a few decades ago.

On March 21, we celebrate New Year in Afghanistan, which is the first day of spring. Unfortunately, spring is also the period when conflict is intensified in Afghanistan, because the good weather enables the insurgency to leave the shelters. So the coming spring will tell us how far the Taliban have considered the peace proposal that President Ghani put on the table.

It's also important for the entire region, our neighbouring countries, to understand that peace in Afghanistan is also for their own benefit. Because time and again it has been proven that they cannot be in peace and prosperity in the long term if their neighbour is not in peace. This is a lesson that, I think, humanity should have learned.

How do you see the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations organisation, as a whole, in the future?

I am reminded of an important statement: "The purpose of foreign aid is to end the need for its existence." The United Nations should help the Government in Afghanistan

to reduce, or to gradually end, the need for foreign aid.

How is that possible to do? It's possible through system development and institutional development. However, usually the United Nation's time and patience is not enduring to do that, because the organisation is usually working on short-term projects and then there is also staff turnover. Really, I would like the UN to do less things and do them with more efficiency and more output and impact. ■

1 Ambassador of Afghanistan to Switzerland and Permanent Representative to the UN and International organisation based in Geneva

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Mansoura vaccinates a girl in Kandahar, December 2017.

Female polio workers reaching every last child

There is no cure for polio, but it can be prevented. The polio vaccine, given multiple times, can protect a child for life.

TUULI HONGISTO, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, WHO AFGHANISTAN

I meet Zainab¹ in front of a busy park full of playing children.

She kneels with a team of female polio vaccinators in the middle of a noisy group of children and they start vaccinating, one by one, with confident, quick moves.

One of the team members hands out orange and green balloons after marking the children's fingers in blue marker pen to show they have received the vaccination. The children enthusiastically show off their balloons and blue fingers.

Zainab has recently been promoted and now supervises five female vaccination teams. She enjoys her work. "I like to be a supervisor and have my own teams. I used to be a

vaccinator in a health centre, and have been working in the polio eradication programme since I graduated."

We move to meet her next team. This team has vaccinated 49 children today, and it is only 9.30 in the morning. It is now the second day of the last vaccination campaign of 2017. On the first day of the campaign, the team vaccinated a total of 138 children.

Convincing people to vaccinate their children is not always easy. "People believe that vaccinations reduce fertility and cause disrespectful behaviour in children. We tell them this is not true", Zainab explains.

This time all children are vaccinated without problems and Zainab's team member Asma¹ marks the wall with chalk.



© Tuuli Hongisto

Mansoura (right) supervises a female vaccinator team.



© Tuuli Hongisto

Waris, 5, gets OPV in Loya Wala, Kandahar, December 2017.



© Tuuli Hongisto

5-year-old Waris received a balloon after OPV vaccine in Loya Wala, Kandahar In December 2017.

More female workers, more children reached with vaccines

There are almost 70,000 front line polio workers in Afghanistan, of whom less than 10% are female. This is possibly the largest female workforce in Afghanistan.

Some regions have more female workers than others. In urban areas, around a third of the workers are female, whereas in rural areas the proportion is much lower. However, the role of females is crucial. Habibur Rahman, who works

as a district polio officer in Kandahar, explained that prior to using female polio workers, children who were newborn and sleeping were often missed in the vaccination campaign. “When the men were working in town, there was often no-one who could take the children out of the house to be vaccinated when the teams knocked at the door. Females can enter the houses, but males cannot.”

The vaccination coverage in the region is now improving, as female vaccinators have more access to the children.

Kandahar is a challenging area for polio: the first case in the world was found here in 2017, and recent environmental samples have found poliovirus circulating in the region. In 2017, one district in the province, Shahwalikot, had 5 polio cases in 2017, more than any district in the world.

Rahman explained that although there are female polio workers working in the area, it can be difficult to recruit them as many think women should not work. She added that her joining the polio workforce was

not something women would often do in her region. “It is not very usual for women to work in Kandahar, but my family supports and encourages me.” Women like Zainab are in the frontline of polio eradication, ensuring vaccines reach every child every time. ■

1 Name changed.

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Interview with Dr. Rik Peeperkorn, WHO Representative Afghanistan

Afghanistan, still a country in conflict

“The lack of peace, insecurity and high level of volatility is on everyone’s mind and the major challenge, not only for all Afghans, but also for WHO and anyone working for development. Access to large parts of the country is limited and a major obstruction to helping provide more sustained humanitarian and development support.”

Dr Richard Peeperkorn



© Tuuli Hongisto, Communications Officer, Afghanistan

EMERGENCY Trauma Care Hospital, Lashkargah, Helmand Province, December 2017.
Dr Mohamad Khushal (Chief Trauma surgeon), patient and Dr Rik Peeperkorn.
WHO supports the NGO EMERGENCY which runs three trauma hospitals in Afghanistan.



Dr. Richard Peeperkorn is a national of the Netherlands, and WHO Representative to Afghanistan since August 2013. He leads a large and comprehensive programme with more than 350 staff, one central office and eight sub-offices, offering implementation support and technical assistance in many key health and humanitarian areas. He talks to *UN Special* about his work in this country in turmoil.

What are the main challenges you face as WR Afghanistan?

Substantial progress has been made over the last 15 years in adverse circumstances. Although Afghanistan has a comprehensive public health strategy, the health indicators are still worrisome, and the coverage and quality of services delivery need to be improved. The biggest challenge for the

Health Sector, and therefore for me as the WHO Representative, is the lack of financial investments in health. With approximately 5 US\$ per capita for the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) and Essential Package of Hospital Services (EPHS) it will be a massive challenge to improve service delivery.

Afghanistan receives considerable official development assistance, however support is mainly focused on security, rule of law, and infrastructure, while basic services are underrepresented. Domestic resource mobilization needs to be substantially increased as well. Investment in health is and will remain a key challenge.

How close is WHO to eradicating polio in Afghanistan?

Afghanistan is close to stopping the transmission of the Wild Polio virus. Afghanistan has made significant progress in polio eradication. Together with its partners

(Government & UNICEF) WHO staff are doing an incredible job in very challenging circumstances. Most of the country is free of polio, and transmission is now limited to 2 provinces, Kandahar (South) and Nangarhar (East). These provinces have issues of access, pockets of families refusing vaccines, nomads, internally displaced people, refugees/returnees and overall high population movement between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which form one common epidemiological block.

The access situation in Kandahar has improved significantly over the past few months due to continuous dialogue at all levels with relevant authorities for maintaining neutrality for polio. In principle, all parties to the conflict respect health/polio as a neutral subject. Even so, issues of access still occur on a regular basis, particularly for polio vaccination.

Afghanistan is implementing a new National Emergency Action Plan for 2018. The plan has a specific focus on the Northern and Southern corridors with Pakistan, as well as a strategy to reach high risk mobile populations.

What are the main achievements since you took up office in the country?

This is my 5th year in Afghanistan. With my team, I focused on local resource mobilization for the very much needed programmes. We have been very successful in resource mobilization; not only in the humanitarian area (Polio & Health Emergencies & Epidemics and Outbreaks response), but also in Communicable diseases such as TB, Malaria & Neglected Tropical Diseases), the Expanded Programme on Immunization, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, Gender Based Violence (GBV), nutrition and some of the health systems areas.

It is good to note that WHO Afghanistan is providing implementation support in key areas, besides policy advice and technical assistance. WHO is managing 8-10 Polio campaigns annually; ensuring that 65,000 volunteers are professionally engaged and in each round 8.5 million children are vaccinated. Almost 100 million oral poliovirus vaccine doses are administered every year! In addition 27,000 volunteers are part of a well-run surveillance programme. WHO is also the Health Cluster lead; coordinating and supporting the many NGOs and

government, guiding the humanitarian health response, with a focus on trauma care, emergency Primary Health Care, supplies & equipment and monitoring of epidemics and outbreak.

But WHO is also providing drugs for treating TB & Neglected Tropical Diseases (assisting The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria & the Vaccine Alliance GAVI), reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and nutrition surveillance. Introduction of the gender-based violence medical treatment protocol proved to be an innovative WHO

project, aiming to train more than 7,000 frontline health workers.

We refocused and prioritized the WHO support programme in line with and complementary to the overall Government Development Framework and National Health Policy & Strategy, and as part of the ongoing One UN exercise, which is led by WHO. ■

Given the situation, where the work pressure is intense, Dr. Peeperkorn finds the work challenging but fascinating, and describes Afghanistan a great place to work. In short WHO has become a well-positioned and a prominent player in the health and humanitarian area in Afghanistan.

Jami Attenberg – Ted Conover – Helene Cooper
Shulem Deen – Douglas Kennedy



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Dilemmas around using militias to fight the Taliban

The risk of using militias to fight the Taliban and the Islamic State is that it may ultimately lead to an increase in instability and violence.

DEEDEE DERKSEN¹

In eastern Afghanistan, the government piloted this winter a new militia program. Its plan is to roll out the program to other areas of the country after mid-2018 and eventually mobilize 36,000 members (including 7,500 officers from the Afghan National Army). The government is struggling against an increasingly strong Taliban insurgency, which controls or contests at least 40 percent of Afghan territory (according to U.S. government watchdog SIGAR, or the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction) but perhaps as much as 70 percent (according to a BBC study); more than at any point of time since 2001. These areas are mostly remote, but two devastating attacks in Kabul over the winter (killing 130 in one week) showed once again that the insurgency is not just a rural phenomenon. Every large scale attack is followed by another public outcry over the government's apparent inability to protect its citizens, increasing the pressure on it to act more effectively.

In this mountainous and thinly populated country, it is, however, impossible for the regular Afghan security forces (counting around 330,000 members) to stay and hold areas after they have recaptured them from the Taliban or a (much smaller) local branch of the Islamic State. This would be the main purpose of the new militias, a so-called village defense force, named the Afghan National Army Territorial Forces. They are cheaper than regular armed forces and more quickly deployable as their training is more compressed. As they deploy in their home areas, they also have intimate knowledge of the local security landscape, which regular security forces often lack. They would probably play a major role in securing remote areas for the parliamentary and presidential elections, which are supposed to be held respectively this and next year.

As the program is rolled out, it is useful to explore some of the potential pitfalls that this plan could face based on experiences

with previous initiatives. The first stems from Afghanistan's history of government and foreign supported militias committing human rights abuses – a long-standing problem. Over the past 16 years much has been done to improve oversight over official 'village defense forces' such as the current Afghan Local Police or ALP (with 29,000 members) and make them more accountable, though numerous illegal militias continue to exist without oversight. In its annual report on civilian casualties in 2017 UNAMA, UN's mission in Afghanistan, noted that ALP response to human rights violations had improved, but also expressed concern about weak oversight and a 'prevailing lack of accountability'. While civilian casualties caused by all pro-government armed forces had decreased by 23 percent since the year before, those caused by the ALP had nearly doubled.

Yet, reactions to the ALP have been mixed. Many communities have indicated that the village defense force has improved security in their area, while at the same time many have also complained about them. Indeed, during years of research I have conducted on Afghan armed groups in around ten provinces, villagers regularly pointed to militias' behaviour as a reason that they were disillusioned with the government, with some even citing this as a reason to support the Taliban. They were especially frustrated about the impunity with which these armed men operated.

The apparent paradox – the ALP seen as improving security by some, and as causing more violence by others – is, at least partly, explained by the second pitfall: ALP commanders and fighters are often loyal to powerbrokers with informal influence in their areas, rather than to the state. These powerbrokers might be parliamentarians. They might be provincial council members or governors or strongmen without a government position. In some cases ALP commanders are loyal to the provincial police chief, but not always primarily as part of the official chain of command, but



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Afghan Local Police (ALP) forces sit on the back of a police pickup in Kunduz city.

as part of an informal local network. In my research I have not come across an ALP commander without these sort of connections – whether they primarily directed his loyalty or not.

If they do – and it seemed often this was the case – then ALP commanders and fighters are accustomed to providing security for some (namely, the powerbroker’s own followers) but not others, and in some cases they resort to violence against local rivals. This then, at least partly, explains the apparent paradox mentioned above: many communities view them as security providers, while many others see them as troublemakers. Another problem is that the ALP may not always be trusted to fight the Taliban, if that is not in the interest of their patrons.

The third pitfall in mobilizing militias is that when resources dry up they may end up joining the insurgents that they were supposed to be fighting. Indeed, my research has showed that in some places commanders have repeatedly switched back and forth between pro-government militias and the Taliban, depending on resources.

Is it possible to mitigate against these pitfalls? Afghan authorities and their foreign backers claim they can do so, citing new measures to keep control over the Territorial Forces. Much about how and where the Territorial Forces will operate

is unclear, as is the question if they will absorb existing militias or recruit new men. But the Afghan government has announced that in contrast to the ALP the new force will be under command of the Ministry of Defense. This ministry is generally seen as less corrupt and less politicized than the Ministry of Interior. Moreover, they will reportedly receive more rigorous training.

Possibly this will make a difference, but some fundamental dilemmas cannot be solved. What makes deploying militias attractive is also what makes them dangerous. They are cheap and quickly deployable because they receive less training than members of regular armed forces. Were these militias to receive the rigorous training of regular forces, risks would diminish. But doing so would defeat the purpose of using them and not the regular army or police.

The other problem lies in deploying militias in their own, often remote and volatile, areas. To put the Territorial Forces under command of the relatively capable Ministry of Defense sounds good on paper, but if the government has little control in the areas where the militias are deployed, oversight will always remain difficult. At the same time, to protect themselves, also for when the program runs out, militia commanders will have ties to powerbrokers with strong local influence pursuing factional and personal interests, which do not always align with the government’s agenda.

In short, that the Afghan government and some of its international backers contemplate all options to fight an increasingly strong insurgency is understandable. But the risk of using militias to fight the Taliban and the Islamic State is that it may ultimately lead to an increase in instability and violence. Some steps can be taken to mitigate. Ultimately, though, what makes militias or ‘village defense forces’ attractive – that they are cheap and locally deployed – is also what makes them dangerous. ■

1 Doctoral Fellow at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy

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We are shop neighbours in the bazaar. We are both blacksmiths in the Parwan Province (not father and son – they are friends).

From Kabul to Nashville Building bridges via photography

Throughout the west, creative initiatives are launched in an attempt to challenge the war and conflict-dominated media coverage of the Middle East.



Senzela Atmar

MASIH SADAT¹

Young Americans and Europeans with roots in the region, in particular, are dealing with their frustrations with what they view as an imbalanced depiction of a wide, diverse region with much else to offer than seemingly only conflict and tragedy.

By visualising everyday lives of the peoples in the region, these alternative media projects are seeking to nuance and humanize westerners' information on the wider Middle East and build bridges between the two.

One such project is the Tennessee-based non-profit organisation Relief Without Borders², previously known as People of Afghanistan. Focusing on the

art of photography, young Senzela Atmar is facilitating from Nashville a successful platform through which a broad, international audience are given an insight into everyday life in Afghanistan as well as the option of directly contributing to the restoring and empowering of the war-torn country.

Born in Afghanistan herself, for Senzela, founder of RWB, the project also has a very personal aspect to it.

Giving back

Senzela Atmar was just a small child when she and her family were forced to leave their home country in 1995. A 72-hour long ceasefire offered the Atmar family a rare chance to flee the shelling and rocketing of Kabul,



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"My father taught others how to be a mechanic, so I naturally learned the skill. My father also told me to join the military – to help defend our country. After many years in the military, I became a taxi driver. 35 years later I continue to drive the same vehicle. I don't know how I haven't wrecked it, or how the engine hasn't broken down."

crossing the border to neighbouring Pakistan where they sought refuge in the camps.

After two years of waiting and living under harsh conditions and extreme insecurity, during which Senzela's 11-year-old brother was murdered by the Taliban, hope finally arrived when the family of seven received news from their visa lottery, containing a chance to join their relatives in the United States.

Years later, now a citizen in the US, Senzela has certainly not forgotten about her country of birth. By making use of the knowledge and tools that she has gained through her growing up in America, Senzela decided to materialize her wish to give back and support the people of Afghanistan by launching the awareness and empowerment project, Relief Without Borders: "It's like this big circle for me right now, where I'm trying to use the skills that I've learned

in the US to connect the two countries and show people here how to get involved in the Middle East."

Social media as a gateway

Senzela Atmar believes Americans' knowledge on Afghanistan and the Middle East region in general sorely lacks nuance, restricted only to what they see and hear in the news, and it has long been her wish to bring about change in this regard: "I'm always having

conversations in which people ask me about my name and where I'm from. And so every talk I have ends up becoming about Afghanistan, and then I always have to clear the air and tell them how it's not a bad country. It's sad because I can tell that the only thing they've seen is in the news and what they show in the news is scary men with AK47s killing each other. I'm always defending it. After getting tired of doing that at a local level,



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"I heard my male sheep every year to the "Eid-al-Adha" celebration, an Islamic holidays celebrated by Muslims worldwide each year to commemorate the willingness of Abraham to follow Allah's command to sacrifice his son."



© Relief Without Borders | <http://www.reliefwoborders.org>

Faroza is the oldest daughter to an afghan family that migrated into Kabul from the Laghman province, that was no longer safe for their family so they were forced to move. In this picture, Faroza indulged in adding Henna to her hands. Henna is a temporary dye prepared from the plant Lawsonia inermis.

I wanted to create a project where I could show this common humanity."

By sharing people-focused pictures and videos on their social media platforms, captured by talented young photographers in Afghanistan, RWB communicates shared human experiences across borders – and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Senszela tells of many cases where people have changed their attitudes and opinions about Afghans completely, offering consequently all kinds of help to their aid programme, and she is certain that her awareness project is having a great impact on the outside view of Afghanistan and its people.

"It is unfortunate that there are profiles classed on regions of the world," she adds, but Senszela still enjoys creating awareness on Afghanistan: "It's okay that people that don't know and for me it's not a frustration. I actually enjoy telling people about it because I

actually see their lack of interest for a region of the world change."

Help to self-help

The support for Relief Without Borders was tremendous even from the early stages, and it did not take long for the project to grow further. With more than 45,000 followers on their social media platforms, the awareness project has evolved into one of several objectives.

Today, the organisation has launched several, successful aid missions in Afghanistan, focusing on providing basic goods and necessities to families in need, and works both with the Afghan government and at a local level. Relief work is a core element at RWB, but Senszela prioritises education greatly as well as micro financial projects and underlines their emphasis on empowerment and helping to self-help: *"We want to provide farmers with tools so that when we leave their village they have the equipment they need to provide for their*

families. So it's being smart about how you deliver and doing it strategically in a way in which people are involved."

Next level

"The beauty in our culture speaks for itself. Traditions, the respect level that they have, the generosity. There's just so much to show, that I never run out of things to talk about."

RWB have great visions for the coming years and are no longer limiting themselves to Afghanistan – but right now, that's where the focus lies. Sharing human-focused content to the outside world on Afghanistan and everything it contains, thereby nuancing the view of the country and its people, remains a great passion for Senszela and is something both RWB and their many followers are enjoying. By taking it to the next level, Relief Without Borders is now also actively engaging Americans and other followers, through their visualisation of Afghanistan, in connecting with the

Afghan people and supporting them in various ways.

For Senszela, this seems like a dream come true. Picture by picture, she is creating awareness and building bridges while at the same time reconnecting with the place where she was born but later forced to flee from.

"I was fortunate enough to win the visa lottery to come to America but that could easily have been someone else, and so for me, I see so much of myself in the work that we are doing because I think I could easily have been another kid who lost their leg because they stepped on a butterfly mine ... My heart really goes out to them." ■

1 Masih Sadat is the Founding Editor-in-Chief of "The Turban Times", a blog-based web magazine focusing on the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia.

2 Learn more about this initiative: <http://www.reliefwoborders.org> or visit their Facebook page www.facebook.com/reliefwithoutborders/



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On 16 February 2018, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) under the Presidency of Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha, unanimously adopted Decision CD/2119 establishing five subsidiary bodies to discuss all items in the CD Agenda, with a view to advance the substantive work of the conference. The UN Secretary-General António Guterres addressing the High-Level Segment of the CD on 26 February 2018 welcomed this decision stating, "I believe you are off to the best start in nearly two decades, and I look forward to building on this new momentum".

Sri Lanka's contributions to the International Community

H. E. Mr. Ravinatha P. Aryasinha is the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to the UN in Geneva.

Under your leadership, the UN Conference on Disarmament has just passed a historic decision, on 16 February, to resume its substantive work. Please share your thoughts with us on that process and its result.

The decision taken on 16 February 2018 was an important moment in our collective efforts to bring the Conference on Disarmament (CD) back to substantive work. As President of the CD, my plea from the outset was that while the Conference must be guided by the rules of procedure, it must not

allow itself to be held captive by those rules.

Our ability to forge this agreement is testimony to the fact that Sri Lanka makes its best contributions, when it leads from the center. It would not have worked if our positioning had led us either to be taken for granted or to be isolated. I think Sri Lanka was able to carry everyone along because we were open and transparent, willing to listen, and had no pre-conceived agenda. As a result, countries were able

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Ambassador Aryasinha with heads of international organisations such as United Nations Office at Geneva, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the World Health Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the International Labour Organisation, UNCTAD, the Inter Parliamentary Union, CITES, the World Trade Organisation, the International Telecommunications Union, the Conference on Disarmament, CERN and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, at the inauguration of the 'Facets of Sri Lanka' exhibition at the Sri Lanka Independence Day celebrations.

to trust us. I think this trust is what enabled us to forge an understanding on this decision, enabling the CD to try to move forward.

This decision was a compromise and many parties wanted to see things happen soon. The necessity was for us to provide a basis to move forward on all the issues on the CD agenda in parallel: to safeguard the interests of both - those who believe only one issue on the agenda is ripe for negotiation and others who are of the belief that there are equally important low hanging fruits in the agenda. From the beginning, we were therefore determined to carry everybody along. To me, the most significant point was that once the decision was adopted, some of the delegations who have been the greatest skeptics of the CD process, expressed willingness

to work constructively. We must not lose this momentum.

Sri Lanka is home to four major religions and two main ethnic groups. What can you tell us about your country's initiatives in interfaith, inter-ethnic, and intercultural dialogue?

As a country we have existed for more than 2,500 years, and across this time, all of these diverse communities have intermingled. Yes, there have been tensions, but there are also many mechanisms and safeguards in place at the constitutional, institutional, and societal levels, to help living together.

I believe that people are essentially good. However, that goodness can get corrupted by power, money, and other means. I think one of society's greatest needs, which Sri Lanka is now re-discovering, is the


need to live and let live. Living out this ideal of course becomes more complicated when you face a threat like terrorism, as Sri Lanka did for almost thirty years. It is easy to talk about these concepts, but when realities such as terrorism come into the picture, even the greatest advocate for harmony may find it hard to stay balanced. In this context, Sri Lanka has at times perhaps lost its balance. But what is good and very visible in my country is a conscious attempt not only to ensure inter-religious harmony, but also to keep in place institutional mechanisms, so that in case something does go wrong, that can be mitigated. I think such, both formal and informal structural safeguards, are the greatest strength of any society.

We know that Sri Lanka enjoys a high Human Development Index

with respect to its region. What do you think accounts for this success?

Our nation's success story with human development is not new. In many ways, the concept of sustainable development is built into the Sri Lankan way of life. One might say it even goes back to the advent of Buddhism and the concept of ecological equity. This value has helped build a symbiotic relationship between the people of Sri Lanka and our environment. Yes, there have been conflicts from time to time, but through it all; I believe we have managed to keep focus. One key factor is that, despite being a lower-middle-income country, Sri Lanka has provided free access to education, health, and many aspects of social welfare for the past five to six decades. Many of us are the beneficiaries of this system, which mitigates

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“Rhythms of Sri Lanka’ State Dance Ensemble”



H. E. Mr. Ravinatha P. Aryasinha,
Ambassador and Permanent
Representative of the Democratic
Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to
the UN in Geneva

income inequalities, class and gender barriers, and other gaps. This emphasis on the basics has been key. According to the most recent report, Sri Lanka has a Human Development Index of 0.766, and is ranked 73rd among 188 countries. This success hasn't happened over night, but has happened over time.

Now, our challenge is to enhance the quality of education, provide access to information technology, ensure the employability of youth so that they get better paid decent jobs within and outside the country, enabling them to contribute to the economy as productive citizens. Starting with a good Human Development Index is important for countries when they want to leapfrog; and that is what Sri Lanka is doing right now. In these efforts we have been able to leverage the support of many Geneva based UN and other international organisation dealing with development and humanitarian issues such as - the UNCTAD, UNITAR, ITU, WHO, ILO, IOM, ICRC, WIPO and the World Economic Forum. As a country, we have also been mindful of ensuring

civil and political rights and the close cooperation with OHCHR and other human rights mechanisms have been engaging closely with the Government

As soon as the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development came into being in 2015, Sri Lanka very quickly identified the need for a national vision for it. Our Parliament also passed a Sustainable Development Act in October 2017, and the Government will also soon set up a Sustainable Development Council and a Secretariat, to implement the national sustainable development policy. In addition, we remain very involved with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) in Colombo. Our first Voluntary National Review (VNR) will take place in June this year in New York.

Could you tell us a bit about your own career in public service, and is there any advice you would offer to young diplomats?

I was one of a small band of people who helped set up television in Sri Lanka in 1982. At the time I was mainly a

TV correspondent and interviewer. However, having studied international relations, I later decided I wanted to go beyond merely reporting policy, and actually help in making it. In 1988, I joined the Sri Lanka Foreign Service and was sent on my first posting to New Delhi. During my period back in Colombo, on a secondment, from 1993-1994 I worked as the National Information Officer to the UN system in Sri Lanka. Later between 1995-2000 and again in 2007-2008 during the height of terrorism in my country, I served as Foreign Ministry Spokesman, as Sri Lanka fought back the propaganda war of the LTTE. I also served as Deputy Chief of Mission to the US with Ambassador rank in Washington, D.C., and subsequently as Ambassador to the European Union, to Belgium, and to Luxembourg, before assuming the current position in Geneva in 2012.

To a young diplomat, I would say that even though your job is primarily to serve your national interest, one must also always seek to reconcile it with the broader global interests. These two things are not

mutually exclusive. This job is not ultimately about what speeches you make or decisions you get passed, even though of course these are important milestones for professional record; but rather, we must judge our work by how many lives we empowered and what harm we prevented. We must always endeavour to make a difference. Therein lies the eventual success and self satisfaction for any diplomat. We must never forget that we are here to serve the common good, as we seek to protect our national interest. ■



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War in Afghanistan timeline (2001–present)

An ongoing conflict

2001 'War on terror' US-led invasion

October – Following the September 11 attacks on the United States, US-led bombing of Afghanistan begins, supported by allies including the United Kingdom. Anti-Taliban Northern Alliance forces enter Kabul shortly afterwards.

December – Hamid Karzai is sworn in as head of an interim power-sharing government.

The United Nations authorized an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), with a mandate to help the Afghans maintain security in Kabul and surrounding areas.

2002 'Operation Anaconda'

U.S., Canadian and Afghan forces begin "Operation Anaconda" against remaining Al-Qaeda and Taliban elements.

2003

March – The United Nations Security Council votes unanimously to extend the U.N. assistance mission in Afghanistan for another year, enough time to see the country through to general elections.

April – The United Nations Children's Fund warns that millions of Afghan women and children continues to face major health and nutrition problems, with maternal and infant mortality in Afghanistan among the worst in the world

August – NATO becomes involved, taking the helm at ISAF. Taliban and other armed groups regroup in their strongholds and launch an insurgency against the government and ISAF.

2004 Elections

January – Loya Jirga adopts new constitution which provides for strong presidency.

October – Afghan presidential election, 2004. In the country's first direct election, Hamid Karzai wins the presidency with 55.4% of the vote.

2005

June – Operation Red Wings results in the death of 19 Americans and many Taliban fighters.

December – Parliament opens with warlords and strongmen in most of the seats.

2006

February – The Afghanistan Compact is developed, establishing a framework of international cooperation with Afghanistan.

October – Nato assumes responsibility for security across the whole of Afghanistan, taking command in the east from a US-led coalition force.

November – the U.N. Security Council warns that Afghanistan may become a failed state due to increased Taliban violence, growing illegal drug production and fragile state institutions

2007

March – President George W. Bush approves 8,200 more United States troops for Iraq and Afghanistan March

May – Afghanistan–Pakistan Skirmishes – Afghan soldiers attack Pakistani military outposts which they claim were illegally built on Afghan soil. Pakistan's military respond with artillery fire on targets in Afghanistan.

August – Opium production has soared to a record high, the UN reports.

2008

February – Kandahar bombing kills 100 people, the deadliest suicide bombing of the war.

June – President Karzai warns that Afghanistan will send troops into Pakistan to fight militants if Islamabad fails to take action against them.

July – Suicide bomb attack on Indian embassy in Kabul kills more than 50.

September – United States-Pakistan skirmishes. US President George Bush sends an extra 4,500 US troops to Afghanistan.

2009

New US approach. Number of soldiers peaks under Obama

March – US President Barack Obama unveils new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. There is a surge in the number of American soldiers in Afghanistan to around 68,000.

December – US President Obama raises the strength of US forces in Afghanistan to around 100,000. The objective is to put brakes on the Taliban and to strengthen Afghan institutions.

2010

February – Nato-led forces launch major offensive, Operation Moshtarak, in bid to secure government control of southern Helmand province.

July – The Sangin airstrike kills a large number of Afghan civilians mostly women and children in Nangarhar province. Whistleblowing website Wikileaks releases 90,000 classified US military documents relating to Afghanistan.

November – Nato agrees plan to hand control of security to Afghan forces by end of 2014.

2011 Bin Laden killed in Pakistan

January – President Karzai makes first official state visit to Russia by an Afghan leader since the end of the Soviet invasion in 1989.

April – Burning of Koran by a US pastor prompts country-wide protests in which foreign UN workers and several Afghans are killed.

May – The number one Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden is killed by U.S. Navy SEALs in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

2012

February – At least 30 people are killed in protests about the burning of copies of the Koran at the US Bagram airbase. US officials believed Taliban prisoners were using the books to pass messages and that they were extremist texts not Korans. Two soldiers are also killed in reprisal attacks.

May – Nato summit endorses the plan to withdraw foreign combat troops by the end of 2014.

July – Tokyo donor conference pledges \$16bn in civilian aid to Afghanistan up to 2016, with US, Japan, Germany and UK supplying bulk of funds. Afghanistan agrees to new conditions to counter corruption.

2013

The army of the United States continues to conduct missions throughout Afghanistan, began closing forward operating bases (FOB).

February – President Karzai and Pakistan's Asif Ali Zardari agree to work for an Afghan peace deal within six months after talks hosted by Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron.

2014

End of combat operations

September – Afghanistan signs a bilateral security accord with the US and a similar text with NATO: 12,500 foreign soldiers, of which 9,800 are Americans, will remain in the country in 2015, after the end of the NATO combat mission at the end of 2014.

October – The US and Britain end their combat operations in Afghanistan.

2015

May – Taliban representatives and Afghan officials hold informal peace talks in Qatar. Both sides agree to continue the talks at a later date.

October – At the height of combat between armed groups and the Afghan army, backed by NATO special forces, a US air raid bombs a hospital run by Medecins Sans Frontiers (Doctors Without Borders) in northern Kunduz province, killing 42, including 24 patients and 14 members of the NGO.

2016

Over one million Afghans are on the go during the year, either due to internal displacement because of the war, or are forced to repatriate by Pakistan, Iran and the European Union, according to the United Nations.

July – US President Barack Obama says 8,400 US troops will remain in Afghanistan into 2017 in light of the "precarious security situation". NATO also agrees to maintain troop numbers and reiterates a funding pledge for local security forces until 2020.

2017

January – A bomb attack in Kandahar kills six UAE diplomats.

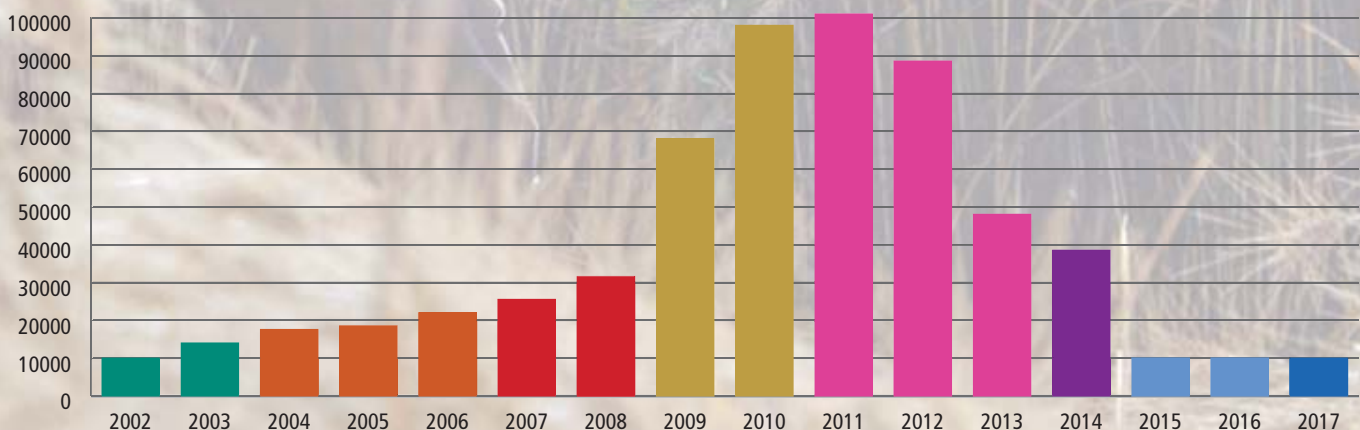
April – The US military drops 'MOAB' the largest non-nuclear bomb it has ever used in combat, hitting the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) group positions killing 96 fighters.

August – US President Donald Trump says he is sending more troops to fight a resurgent Taliban.

2018

January – Bomb-laden ambulance explodes in Kabul, killing more than 100 people. It is one of ongoing attacks attributed to the Taliban.

US Troops in Afghanistan





Exploring precision global health at the Geneva Health Forum 2018

The Geneva Health Forum was created in 2006 by the Geneva University Hospitals and the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Geneva. Every two years, the GHF attracts both Swiss and internationally renowned stakeholders, and bring together participants from all sectors (health, academia, politics, civil society and private sector professionals).

NORIA MEZLEF, COORDINATOR GENEVA HEALTH FORUM

The Geneva Health Forum is the forum of innovative practices in global health with the aim to showcase innovative, accessible and sustainable practices in order to facilitate access and health equity; and to be a not-to-be-missed international event where the major health issues, fed by field experiences, are challenged.

The GHF promotes dynamic networking and partnership among various parties active in global health.

The 7th edition of the Geneva Health Forum: Precision Global Health in the digital age

For the 2018 edition to be held from 10 to 12 April 2018 at the International Conference Center of Geneva (CICG) the GHF will explore the impact of the digital revolution in the health practices. The GHF will address emerging global health issues such as future pandemics and health security, antimicrobial resistance, non-communicable diseases, access and affordability to essential medicine and health equality, chronic diseases, universal health

GHF 2016 highlights



2018 Key Figures

1200	Participants expected	88	Innovations in the Global Health Lab
8	Plenary sessions	12	Exhibitors Stands
25	Parallel sessions	3	Photo Expositions
12	Workshops	6	Sponsored Lunch sessions
14	Experience sharing sessions	7	Side events
420	Speakers	6	Hosted events
200	Posters		

coverage, neglected tropical diseases, essential diagnostics with a special focus on health initiatives from Central Asian countries, by inviting the Russian Federation as guest of honor, and the Republic of Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic as special guests of the GHF 2018.

This Edition of the GHF will mark the 100th anniversary of the memory of the 1918 pandemic influenza victims. It will also celebrate two anniversaries, the creation of WHO (1948) and the Alma Ata Declaration (1978).

The Global Health Lab

This year again the GHF will set up an interactive and dynamic hub where participants will be able to try out new technologies and products, it's a way to present collectively innovation in the same field and to create meaningful connections that could lead to new ideas, new opportunities and partnerships. The Global Health Lab is also a space from which the scaling of good practices can emerge.

The Global Health Lab is divided into four dedicated areas, in each of them ten digital, sustainable and affordable innovations in health care from different partners will be presented to the public: Diagnostic & Treatment, Capacity Building & Community Empowerment, Digital optimization of health system, Russian Pavilion.

An inclusive partnership

The GHF is indeed organized in partnership with the key actors of global health present in Geneva and under the patronage of the International Geneva Bureau.

The complexity of global health practices requires an integrated and multi-sectoral

approach; the GHF fosters inclusive partnerships among various parties active in global health, among them: Geneva University Hospitals, Geneva University, Swiss Development Cooperation, International Committee of the Red Cross, World Health Organisation, Médecins Sans Frontières, Swiss TPH, DNDi, FIND, Swiss Academy of Medical Science, Cité Internationale de la Solidarité, Haute Ecole de Santé de Genève, International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, PATH, IUMSP, International Hospital Federation and The Swiss School of Public Health (SSPH+).

The UN and the GHF

The United Nation, especially WHO, through its various departments has been strongly represented at each edition of the GHF. Speakers, moderators, session hosts from WHO have shaped parallel and plenary sessions that have added value to GHF's content. For the 2018 edition we will have the honor to welcome Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus who will deliver a keynote address at the opening ceremony that will take place on April 10th 2018 in the evening.

The United Nations staffs members are granted free admission to the Geneva Health Forum by presenting their UN badges but should pre-register at contact@ghf2018.org.

Who should attend?

For this 2018 edition the GHF wish to welcome the experience and showcase innovations from a large spectrum of global health stakeholders from health professionals, specialists in health economics, ethics,

social sciences, new digital technologies to data sciences. All sectors being represented from the field, university-based teaching institutes, public and private sectors, international organisation and non-governmental organisation. ■

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The Defeat-NCD Partnership

Universal NCD care. Everywhere.

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The smell of antiseptic and the sound of echoed footsteps permeated throughout the ward. Though there had not been a war or natural disaster recently, there were row upon row of amputees. The question was what had happened to these people?

ALIYAH ESMAIL, THE DEFEAT-NCD PARTNERSHIP

For Dr. Mukesh Kapila, the fact that these amputations were caused by diabetes was shocking. And in that Tajik hospital ward, a germ of an idea was born.

“The world was sleeping and when we woke we realised that this is only going to get worse in the decades to come,” said Kapila.

He said that there was no real organised effort to deal with any of the non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Business as usual would not work, he said, because of the nature of these conditions – including diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and chronic respiratory diseases – which can cause great personal, social and economic impact. That meant that a new way of doing business was required.

The World Health Organization (WHO), which focuses more on

prevention, surveillance and standard setting then treatment of NCDs, has said that these diseases were the cause of 70% of deaths in 2015 and that number is likely to rise¹. Approximately 48% of deaths of people under the age of 70 in 2015 in low- and middle-income countries were attributed to NCDs². The WHO also estimates that between 2008 and 2030, NCDs will cost low- and middle-income countries about US \$21 trillion due to illness and lost production³. These statistics, though mind numbing, are only the beginning as many of these diseases are treatable and the complications or premature deaths they are causing are completely avoidable.

“I consider that to be quite outrageous in this day and age when we have all the knowledge and capacities to be able to handle this,” said Kapila. Adding that his own personal reality as a Type 1 diabetic made him better able to understand what it must be like

for people in lesser developed countries who did not have access to the modern medicines and healthcare that he was fortunate enough to have.

Because of his work as a humanitarian, his experiences throughout the world and his own realities as a diabetic, Kapila and a few other likeminded people began the journey of creating the Defeat-NCD Partnership at the end of 2017. The Defeat-NCD Partnership is addressing one of the most significant global health problems of this age: premature death, sickness, and disability from selected non-communicable diseases, primarily diabetes and hypertension. It aims to reduce the burden on resource poor countries through increased access to a range of interconnected essential services and resources, especially through treatment.

“What I want to do is reduce the barriers and costs for people with non-communicable diseases and we’re starting with diabetes and hypertension because they are the biggest causes of mortality and morbidity from the NCDs taken together. I want to make access to treatment and healthcare as easy as possible and as cheap as possible so that everyone can afford modern treatments,” said Kapila.

For him it is a matter of looking at all of the obstacles posed

by unnecessary regulations or medicalization of what he considers simple conditions to treat with the help of trained health-care staff as opposed to doctors as they are in short supply and expensive.

By partnering with governments, civil society, the private sector and regular people, the Defeat-NCD Partnership will ensure that every country has the medicines and equipment it needs to treat these diseases. He wants to start by making sure that the knowledge required to understand these diseases, especially diabetes and hypertension, is accessible so that everyone with these conditions or who is at risk of these conditions is better able to understand themselves and manage their own risks. “You would call this democratizing, demystifying and de-medicalizing these conditions,” said Kapila.

On the same note, Kapila explained that he wants to eliminate the barriers that exist for smaller nations. “One of the barriers we want to remove is that the small countries don’t have the financial clout/purchasing power to buy the essential medicines they need cost effectively. We want to be able to combine the purchasing powers of small countries and make it easier and cheaper for them to access these medicines,” he said.

And the earlier these conditions are detected through screening,



© Dr. Tuvshinjargal Chimed

Mukesh Kapila, Chief Executive of the Defeat-NCD Partnership, in Kenya with the Red Cross and Ministry of Health investigating NCD treatment programmes throughout the country.

the better the chances of living a healthy life. Conversely, if they are missed or detected later and sufferers have complications or are at high risk of complications they become more expensive to treat, which makes this an economically responsible choice for governments everywhere.

For Kapila, the best way to reduce complications for all NCD sufferers is by focusing on country governments. These governments are participants in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and target 3.4 – which calls for the reduction by one-third of pre-mature mortality from NCDs through prevention and treatment – needs the systematic tackling of constraints around NCD treatment. By supporting governments through a sustainable business model that is less about foreign aid and more about incentivising the community along with

each nation to take responsibility for itself, the Defeat-NCD Partnership will be making universal healthcare more viable in the future.

He also recognises that not all countries can support their NCD sufferers: “we have to do something special for the most vulnerable people on the planet. Those who are poor are vulnerable of course in every society and those who are living in crisis. There are a billion people in the world, which is a massive chunk, who are marooned in a crisis. Either they are chronically in a crisis – their countries are in turmoil – or they are going into or recovering from a crisis,” said Kapila, adding that not all the people who suffer from these conditions will survive or they will suffer complications and disabilities, which lowers their chances of making it through the crisis.

By focusing on country realities and humanitarian situations, Kapila sees the Defeat-NCD Partnership acting as a hub of a global network of knowledge and capacities that will help to create a mass movement of people who will be conscious of the risks that they face as NCD sufferers and are empowered to do something about it themselves. He also sees a systematic programme of investment from governments, civil society and the private sector to tackle this enormous problem facing the world. “Though our focus is very much at the country level, there are innovative methods such as better forms of connectivity, better information, maybe a new marketplace for drugs and supplies to reduce costs that could do a lot to reduce the barriers and costs that stop people from receiving the care that they need,” said Kapila.

He explained that many people talk about prevention – for example why people do not stop smoking, do more exercise, lose weight, or eat less sugar and salt – which would be the healthiest lifestyle choice. However, he still regularly struggles with this good advice everyday and others must realise, with compassion, that sometimes it is very difficult to put this good advice into practice. For the poorer populations, who have fewer choices and greater stress, living and eating healthily or the environment in which they live is not necessarily a reality they can change.

“This is why I believe that while promoting healthy lifestyles and preventive approaches are good and we should redouble our efforts, we must match it by giving attention to the treatment of people who have these conditions and also identifying and treating those who have the conditions and don’t know it,” said Kapila.

He believes that giving voice and allowing people with diabetes and hypertension to show leadership to both help themselves and to help others at risk of these conditions is a very, very important part of the Defeat-NCD philosophy.

Remembering the hospital visit in Tajikistan, Kapila is hoping to help people before they get to the position of having to have amputations.

“I believe in making a start by finding the right partners with a very strong ambition to scale up. It’s not that we need to do grand things but we need to do small things everywhere, in every place. It is a sum total of small things, happening everywhere that will make the ultimate difference,” said Kapila. ■

- 1 http://www.who.int/gho/ncd/mortality_morbidity/en/
- 2 http://www.who.int/gho/ncd/mortality_morbidity/ncd_premature/en/
- 3 <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/94/3/15-156869/en/>



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Alternative working arrangements in the UN common system

Why should we utilize alternative working arrangements and what are their potential benefits to the workplace?

GEMMA VESTAL¹, TREVOR GRIFFIS, AND CAROLINE SOUTHARD²

Alternative working arrangements are critical in promoting a healthy work-life balance and improving productivity. Flexible workplace policies are a modern-day management approach that would ultimately enable staff to achieve peak performance. As external stressors can detract from staff productivity, arrangements to make workdays and work locations more negotiable may drive staff to be increasingly focused and efficient.

Staff frequently face family demands or issues when they are at work. A staff member may be responsible for taking someone in their family who is sick to a doctor's appointment.

Unforeseen emergencies like this greatly conflict with fixed and non-negotiable working schedules. In contrast, a staff member who benefits from flexible working arrangements can deal with, and adjust to, the unpredictable more quickly and appropriately, assured that he or she can compensate for the missed hours at another time within that 24-hour period. Without this ability, staff may fall behind in their work and face negative consequences, causing stress and hindering their professional development.

Flexible policies can, likewise, ensure safety in emergencies. Extreme weather conditions can endanger those commuting to work. Flexible work arrangements would give staff the ability to work from home instead, so an entire work day is not lost because of uncontrollable circumstances.

Alternative working arrangements could also be beneficial in lessening the stress from lengthy commutes. Working from home and eliminating this commute for certain days will reduce stress from traffic and time lost to travel, as well as fossil fuel emissions and consumption.

Technological Innovations makes alternative working arrangements possible

Digital technology provides a feasible alternative to working onsite. Videoconferences allow staff to communicate regardless of their locations and offer screen sharing options. Programs like Google Drive and Microsoft Office 365 permit co-workers to collaborate on documents, slide decks, and spreadsheets simultaneously.

Types of alternative working arrangements

Compressed working week policies allow staff to add on extra hours to normal work days and work one day less in a 2-week period. Essentially, this redistribution of normal working hours allows staff members, every other week, to work only four days, freeing time for family or leisure. Teleworking arrangements let staff work via email, phone calls, and videoconferences. Ad hoc teleworking relies on these arrangements infrequently and in specific contexts such as projects that require extra hours offsite. Part-time arrangements give staff the opportunity to work fewer hours a week, while job-sharing arranges for two part-time staff members to split one full-time position.

"Hot-desking" is a practice in which limited, shared supply of workspaces prompt staff to alternate who works on and offsite. This could help conserve valuable space in an office, cut costs and keep the office atmosphere calmer. This is also feasible given that most staff go on duty travel a significant number of days a year.

Technology and these work alternatives pose questions challenging conventional workplace arrangements. With digital access outside of the office, why should staff have to work onsite every day? Which alternatives are best for a certain organization's work? To what extent do these programmes hold staff accountable for their responsibilities? These questions must be considered in the context of each organization, but potential benefits of these



technologies and arrangements can certainly extend to a multitude of workplace environments.

Potential downside

Technology provides an incredibly convenient alternative to in-office work completion and communication, but heavier reliance on virtual work may reduce the accountability that employees must maintain in order to be as productive as possible. This can also interfere with the building of a workplace community, and possibly make a staff member feel isolated, which could affect morale and hinder individual and team productivity.

FICSA survey and results

In October of 2017, the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) released an alternative working arrangements survey to staff associations and unions of international organizations³ in order to understand how they have implemented alternative working arrangements. We received responses from 29 international governmental organizations, including one private sector organization.⁴

Approximately 93% of the survey participants responded that they do have flexible hour arrangements. To monitor these hours and hold staff accountable, some organizations utilize badging and clocking systems, but most mainly employ trust. The duration of teleworking arrangements differs between organizations: approximately 56% of surveyed staff could not telework outside their duty station and about 44% of staff could. Some teleworking policies allow for negotiations based on circumstances and project duration, while others maintained

specific and predetermined stipulations. Duration varied from one day a week, three days a week and two days a month. For the respondent from the private sector, their responses did not deviate significantly from the average UN answers. However, the only telling difference was that their organization offers regular teleworking arrangements.

Results of whether an organization provided a rest period following duty travel showed great variability. Teleworking negotiations could facilitate for periods of time when staff would like to rest post-travel but still finish work obligations in a more accommodating way.

The survey found diverse types and durations of leave. Maternity leave ranged vastly from eight weeks to up to twenty-four weeks, a significant gap that could be corrected by a standard length of leave. Paid study-leave is useful for staff looking to undertake courses in order to become a greater asset in their organization and have more potential for promotion.

Furthermore, 72% of respondents answered that their organizations do not offer childcare. This workplace benefit would alleviate the stress of working parents with children younger than school age and especially enable women who want to stay in their positions following the birth of a child.

Additionally, nearly half of the organizations (48%) had not implemented any initiatives to address work-life balance. The value of these types of initiatives should be emphasized to organizations, as they create

1) incentives for staff to complete quality work, 2) a more manageable work-life balance, and 3) a positive work atmosphere.

Conclusions and recommendations

The data gathered by the FICSA survey show that within the UN common system there exists a widespread variability in the extent of alternative work arrangements. Many responses discuss how teleworking and leave are circumstantial, not standardized. We suggest that a more standardized approach ensuring flexible arrangements for all would facilitate a healthy work-life balance while improving productivity and workplace environment across the organizations. These arrangements can be easily actualized through extending the use of technology already employed by these organizations. Technology can certainly never replace the value of face-to-face interaction for professional purposes, but its application provides viable alternatives to onsite work that enable more flexible working arrangements. FICSA aims to convey that implementing standardized flexible work arrangement policies in the UN common system is a way to allow work, personal life, and the unpredictable to coexist more smoothly for its staff, while ensuring the delivery of quality work products. ■

- 1 WHO staff member who is currently released to serve as the General Secretary of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA).
- 2 Boston College Students serving as FICSA interns.
- 3 One private sector staff member agreed to also fill out the survey.
- 4 Organizations that completed the survey: BIPM, Caterpillar, CERN, ESO, EUMETSAT, FAO, IAEA, IARC, ICAO, ICTP, IDLO, IFAD, IMO, IOM, IOPCF, IPU, ITER, ITU, OAS, PAHO, SCBD, UN, UN Geneva, UNFCCC, UNIDO, UNWTO, WHO/EURO, WHO/WPRO, WIPO, and WMO.


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Simultaneous interpretation

The smooth running of a meeting depends on good communication between all the participants. The interpreters sitting in a booth behind the glass are among an army of professionals who facilitate this process.

ALMA BARGHOUT¹, MÓNICA VARELA GARCÍA², LUCIA RUIZ³

It is worth mentioning that in 2016 alone, the Interpretation Service at the United Nations Office at Geneva serviced more than 3,000 meetings with interpretation into two to six official languages of the UN. Simultaneous Interpretation is a highly complex cognitive process which aims to deliver a complete and accurate rendition of the original message in real time. There is a myriad of factors that can influence the process and when professional UN interpreters open their microphones, they are ready to face the unknown. The subject matter can of course be a major challenge, but with experience and good preparation, an interpreter can rise to the challenge of a highly sensitive and political meeting or a very specialized one. Speakers are also very different from one another, different languages, accents, articulation, tone and intonation. However, there is one factor that has become a major challenge to interpreters: the speed of delivery.

How fast is fast?

The recommended speed of delivery in literature and by AIIC (*Association Internationale des interprètes de conférence*) is about 100 to 130 words per minute (wpm). This is the speed at which an interpreter can properly process the information and deliver a

faithful and accurate interpretation into the Target Language, i.e. the language into which s/he works.

However, nowadays many constraints are forcing speakers to deliver their statements at much faster speeds. A statement that would need 5 minutes to be delivered adequately is being read in 2 minutes in that delegates have less time allotted to give their speeches. This is compounded by the fact that when a delegate takes the floor, s/he is often reading a complex, dense and carefully drafted statement. Instead of delivering free impromptu speeches, statements are read out. In a read statement, there are almost no hesitations, no redundancies and, depending on the speaker, sometimes no intonations. This increases the load on the processing capacity of the interpreter and can influence the quality of the interpretation.

To get a more accurate view on the speed of delivery at UNOG and in the context of an academic research project, two norming experiments to calculate the real delivery rate were conducted by the authors, two UN Staff interpreters and a researcher from the University of Geneva. A norming experiment establishes the baseline in research. The first norming experiment was conducted in 2012 to analyze a

corpus of speeches delivered at the Human Rights Council. This first analysis revealed an average delivery rate of 140 wpm whilst as indicated above the recommended rate is 100-130 wpm. The second norming experiment conducted on the Universal Periodic Review in 2016 revealed an average of 162 wpm. This proved the general feeling of interpreters that speed of delivery is increasing. One of the sampled statements was as high as 193 wpm.

At such excessive speeds, even the audience in the room, listening to the floor in the original language, can sometimes miss the substance of the message. The interpreters, whilst trying to cope with the challenge, feel a professional frustration since they are prevented from performing the

job to the highest professional standards.

Recommendations to delegates

For a delegate to be understood by the audience, which is the ultimate goal of interpretation, it is important for speakers not to forget that they are interpreted. Multilingualism is an important *acquis* at the UN and when delivering statements at high speed this principle is being jeopardized.

Speaking or reading at a reasonable pace and verbalizing the statements goes a long way in multilingual communication with interpretation. ■

- 1 Senior Interpreter, Arabic Booth (UNOG)
- 2 Chief, Spanish Booth (UNOG)
- 3 Professor and researcher at FTI, University of Geneva

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Knowledge and Learning Commons

Change ahead – The United Nations Library and the Centre for Learning and Multilingualism will soon be united under one roof in the Knowledge and Learning Commons.

CRISTINA GIORDANO AND SARAH JORDAN, UNOG

Cristina Giordano and Sarah Jordan interview their respective bosses – Francesco Pisano, Director of the United Nations Library, and Thomas Neufing, Chief of the Centre for Learning and Multilingualism (CLM) on their vision for this future venture.

CG – After years of debate and in spite of technological advances, it is now clear that libraries are not dead! What is clear though is that they will have to change. The United Nations Library will be 100 next year. How do you see the future?

FP – As you say, there was a time when it was thought that technology would make libraries obsolete. This is clearly no longer the case and technology is not perceived as a threat. Libraries are turning digital and the question today is how

technology can improve the way we store, organize and distribute knowledge. This is an interesting and exciting prospect for every librarian – what can they do to improve the service they give to their clients? The United Nations Library is a reputable institution, which started life within the League of Nations. Turning 100 is something we are very proud of. The plan now is to look forward to the next 100 years, and that is where the notion of knowledge and learning comes into play.

SJ – And what about the Centre for Learning and Multilingualism? We are not 100 years old, but is training changing too?

TN – Indeed it is. We are the “new kids on the block” compared to the Library, but are no longer in our infancy. In the last two decades, diminishing funds and the dispersed location of staff has required us to deliver

training in a different way, not necessarily in the classroom. The first solution was to almost abandon face-to-face learning and to replace it with e-learning, as it was called at the time. It was hoped that e-learning would be a lot cheaper and more effective than face-to-face learning. I think this was a bit of an overreaction, from which we are now distancing ourselves. If we were a field-based entity, it would probably be different for us at the Centre. Here in Geneva, though, we have all our clients on our doorstep and social interaction is essential. Space is therefore very important to us. We want to foster informal learning and make learning available to our clients in a less rigid, more convivial way. People have less time and cannot always attend long sessions at fixed dates. Bite-sized learning is the buzzword of the day! Like the Library, to remain stagnant and continue to do business as we did in the past is no longer an option.

CG – So what are the factors that bring the Library, knowledge and learning together?

FP – In my opinion, we have two fundamental linkages. First, we are client-driven. We act in

our clients’ interests and help them achieve their aims. The second similarity is that we deal with substance, not processes. A librarian trains a person how to access knowledge – that is where the learning comes in. I’m excited to see what the chemical reaction will be when we put the two together. I think it will be positive: not destructive, but constructive. Genetically speaking, we are cousins!

TN – I remember bumping into Francesco shortly after we first met on the UN Leaders’ Programme. It must be about a year ago. We started talking about the Strategic Heritage Plan (SHP) and the idea of co-location was born.

FP – Yes, the idea has gained momentum very quickly. The Palais is being renovated in the context of the SHP. But there is also the “New Work” factor. Given the accelerators in our respective work domains, I think it is logical to bring our services together so that our customers can access learning and knowledge in one place on the UN Campus. I read in a specialized management magazine the other day that in Europe only 11% of people work alone

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Meant to be.

or together in an office with four walls – so today, we are part of a shrinking minority.

SJ – Do you have any examples of other organizations or structures that have gone through a similar process with a similar result?

FP – Many. At the beginning, when Thomas and I discussed our strategy, we wanted to keep away from long reinventing processes such as you find at the UN and identify instead winning ideas that have already worked outside the Organization. That is how we came upon the idea of the Commons. There are two types of commons: those adopted by large libraries known as knowledge commons, and those of universities and high schools, called learning commons. Our challenge is to try and combine the two and find the right mix of knowledge and learning. Notable examples are Harvard University Law School and the public library in Chicago, but there are many others in the United States, Germany, France and Switzerland. We recruited a researcher last year to help us study existing examples and our requirements so that we could present our

ideas to our Management. The commons is a solution based on the evolution of libraries and learning centres. It has worked for others and we're convinced that it will work for us too.

TN – It's true that the model has been tested and developed in other areas. However, in our UN context, it is something of a pilot. During my assignment with OHRM at UN Headquarters in 2014-2015, I could already see the potential for collaboration between the learning team and the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. The idea, however, could not materialize because of the high turnover of relevant actors. So we are the pioneers in trying to create a knowledge and learning commons in the UN context. At CLM, we have always wanted to be closer to the safeguards of knowledge the Library represents and to tap into its huge reservoir. However, the 500 metres or so that has separated us to date has meant that this has not been possible.

SJ – So this project hinges on co-location?

TN – Absolutely. The Library is a beautiful building and

has such an aura. It's so much better than the facilities we have now. We share the same clientele – not just staff members, but member states and delegates. It will be easier for our 3,000 language students to find all our services in one location. They will bring new life to it – a kind of reenergizing impetus for an institution that is 100 years old! When I see the newly renovated events room that we could use for joint events – International Language Days for example – it is just fantastic. Michael Møller, our Director-General, the SDG 17 partnerships and the Chief Executive Board (CEB) leadership framework are all calling for cooperation and a more horizontal way of working – so now is the time to do it.

FP – Co-location has two advantages to my eyes. If you look at it through the eyes of a hypothetical P2 who graduates from Harvard Law School and is recruited by the UN, this person has studied in the commons there, has met librarians, but also training experts or a coach – all in one location. Once they

arrive at the UN in Geneva, they will find the same configuration here – everything in one place. But I can see it from the point of view of the Organization too. Thomas and I are actually doing what the Director-General is encouraging the Organization to do. We are putting the narrative into action – walking the talk as they say. Working across silos, collaborating, inventing new things, doing more with less... I'm delighted that the Director-General and Clemens Adams are supporting this initiative. The contrary would have been a cold shower.

CG – So what are the next steps?

FP – We want to keep it simple because good ideas don't need to be complicated. We have discussed the project within both teams. The next step is to bring the teams together. The premise is that co-locating two similar teams will have beneficial effects. We are going to select a number of ideas proposed by various team members. We will test them in 2018 and in 2019 we'll be making them available to everyone in the Commons in Building B.

SJ – So clients will be informed of pilot courses and participate in them? Then based on ongoing feedback on what they liked and didn't like, new products will be added to the catalogue?

FP – Yes – what everyone is talking about today is co-creation. We are going to try this using the skills of trainers and the skills of knowledge experts. Together we have the content and the instructional designers who make it digestible for the learner. The learners are aware of their requirements and know where the gaps are. We have 1.7 million books in the Library. I would say that the odds of us not being able to find something on a particular learning requirement are close to zero.

With the help of CLM experts we can match the knowledge to the learners' requirements. In most cases, we should have a perfect combination.

SJ – What about the resources to do all this? Is it going to be part of the SHP? Is there going to be a budget for this?

FP – Of course there's a large budget for this – it is the current budget. We are paid to run the Library and CLM is paid to organize courses. So the only cost will be that of moving offices. The whole building is going to be in upheaval so we thought that now was a good time to go ahead. If the SHP architects have to modify the B building, it might as well be in accordance with our requirements. And they are open to discussing this with us.

TN – And the alternative would have been for us to have a new building for CLM. Our building is no longer fit for purpose and there are many issues about its location that mean that it is not sustainable. A brand new training centre would have been a heavy investment for the UN. The Knowledge and Learning Commons is a cost-effective solution for the Organization. We do, in fact already offer certain courses on the Library premises – for newcomers for example. We combine it with

the Library tour. We also look forward to using the cinema – the beautiful Kazakh Room – as we did for International Mother Language Day when we screened a film on Quechua. We hope to show films in all six UN languages and to extend our cultural offering to add to all that the Library is already doing.

FP – I think there will be a snowball effect. People will feel empowered when they come to the B building – to the Commons – not only the Library – to learn, to read or consult records, to attend a cultural event... We want more people to discover the Library and to enjoy it. It will be good for us, but also for the Palais des Nations and the mission of the UN in Geneva because more people will be talking about us – about knowledge and multilingualism.

SJ – Will the Commons seek to attract new categories of users – young people and retirees, for example?

FP – We already attract many retirees and a lot of external researchers come here too. Working together will allow us to welcome more people. We are open to external researchers, but we are not a public library. Ours is a different mission. With CLM, there



The library building.

© UNOG Library/A. Hernandez

will be more learning food for more people so we will add more tables in the restaurant...

TN – Spouses already follow our language courses and teenagers come to the HIV prevention programme. We are already a learning centre not only for the UN community, but beyond. One thing I would like to say is that we're not talking about a merger here. Both the Library and CLM will continue to run their core businesses. But the chemical reaction that Francesco mentioned earlier will create something new, something better with more to offer than we have now. We are not doing this for rewards, we are doing this because we believe in the potential, but we do hope to stimulate others to explore synergies too.

SJ – It's going to move forward pretty fast then?

FP – Our dream is that in one year from now, the UN top management will see this as an example and tell other parts of the Secretariat: "They did it – why can't you?" We have gone forward very quickly – from the thinking and dreaming stage, to getting Management approval, to liberating the office space, also thanks to the collaboration we have received from Administration and technical central services. When the clients arrive, the rest will happen naturally. You will see! ■

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Un délicieux buffet – dont un impressionnant assortiment de fromages – servi par les traductrices françaises du service de traduction.

Celebrating Multilingualism – Language Days at UNOG Journée de la langue française

À l'occasion de la Journée internationale de la francophonie, la Division de la gestion des conférences a organisé pour la première, avec la participation du Centre de formation et de multilinguisme (CFM) et en partenariat avec l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), la Journée de la langue française.

ANNE FASSOTTE, FABIENNE PAIRON, BLANDINE LEGARDEUR, OLGA MARKIDES

Par un heureux hasard, cette journée coïncidait avec la célébration de la Journée internationale du bonheur. Et il est vrai que la langue française, pour ses locuteurs comme pour les personnes qui l'apprennent, est une matière première réjouissante, qui se prête à tous les usages.

Et c'est son aspect ludique qui a été mis à l'honneur lors de cette Journée. Un quiz sur les régionalismes nous a par exemple appris qu'en Belgique, «avoir un œuf à peler avec quelqu'un» signifie avoir un compte à régler. Les participants ont ensuite été régalez d'un texte humoristique plein d'autodérision qui présente divers accents comme des «calamités» ou des «menaces pandémiques» contre lesquelles on pourrait aller jusqu'à mettre au point des vaccins.

Le Centre de formation et de multilinguisme de l'ONUG (CFM) a présenté les résultats d'un concours d'écriture – une première – organisé pour ses étudiants de français. Le texte devait contenir dix mots représentatifs de la francophonie (accent, bagou, griot, jactance, ohé, placoter, susurrer, truculent, voix, volubile) et ne pas dépasser 100 mots. Le genre était libre – dialogue, poésie, prose, petite annonce, circulaire, discours, vacance de poste, mémo, courriel, lettre... tout était permis!

Cinq textes ont été primés. Nous vous en livrons deux ci-dessous.

1^{er} prix

(par Gregg Caporaso, en cours de français de niveau 4)

Le Griot

«Ohé, Griot!» crient les petits enfants du village au vieil homme,
«Vous, qui êtes le gardien de



UN Photo/Melija Potocnik

Salle comble pour «L'île de la paix».

notre histoire et de nos secrets,
 Vous, aux yeux auxquels personne n'échappe,
 Ni au bagou de votre langue volubile,
 Racontez-nous un conte de notre village!
 Comme le petit oiseau qui susurre à nos oreilles,
 Comme le singe rusé dans l'arbre, votre seul rival
 Dans l'art de placoter,
 Divertissez-nous avec votre jactance,
 Chantez-nous une ballade truculente avec la voix de votre luth
 Et les accents de nos ancêtres perdus,
 Laissez-nous connaître qui nous sommes!»

Prix hors concours
 (par Evgenia Alexeeva-Viel, professeur de russe au CLM, non francophone)

Elle
 Elle, c'est une voix de velours avec des accents différents mais toujours élégants. Elle, voyage partout dans le monde à la manière d'un griot truculent. Haute en couleurs, elle aime placoter et se faire des amis. Certains la trouvent bavarde voire volubile, mais moi, je l'admire comme elle est.
 La première fois que je l'ai rencontrée, elle m'a interpellée par un «Ohé» et c'est de cette manière que nous nous sommes liées. D'abord susurré puis parlé, son bagou et sa jacquetance m'ont toujours impressionnée et c'est pour ça que je l'ai aimée. Elle.
 Elle, ma Langue Française.

Les trois autres lauréats, Tiziana Zugliano (deuxième prix), Shin Ohinata et Jianjun Chen (troisième prix ex-aequo) suivent

ou ont suivi le cours «Regards sur le monde francophone» proposé au CFM. Leurs textes peuvent être lus sur le site du CFM learning.unog.ch

Le Club de théâtre des Nations Unies a également présenté une scène de sa dernière création, «L'île de la paix», mettant en évidence, en grossissant le trait, les travers tragi-comiques de la langue onusienne et managériale.

Enfin un totem interactif, projet conjoint du Service d'interprétation et du Service de la production et de l'appui,

permettait d'entendre des volontaires francophones et non francophones s'essayer à des vire-langues, exercices de prononciation aussi ludiques que difficiles, du type de celui-ci: «Ah! Pourquoi Pépita sans répit m'épies tu? Dans le puits, Pépita, pourquoi te tapis-tu? Tu m'épies sans pitié, c'est piteux de m'épier. De m'épier, Pépita, ne peux-tu te passer?».

Ce projet était intitulé «Bafouillera, bafouillera pas». Et vous, pourriez-vous prononcer ce texte rapidement sans bafouiller? ■

English Language Day

SARAH JORDAN

If, unfortunately, you missed French Language Day, do not despair, English Language Day awaits you on 23 April! The event, entitled "English: A Nobel Language" will be hosted by the Division of Conference Management (DCM), in cooperation with the UNOG Library and the UNOG Centre for Learning and Multilingualism (CLM). The Remains of the Day, the film adaptation of Kazuo Ishiguro's eponymous novel, will be screened from 12 noon to 2.15 p.m. followed by afternoon tea (with scones and cucumber sandwiches) from

4.00 p.m. The English language will be showcased through the reading of excerpts from Nobel prize-winning authors and a Nobel-themed quiz. Watch out for the UNOG Broadcast nearer the day. In it, you will find full details of the programme of activities.

Language days are also planned for Chinese in April, Russian in June, Spanish in October and Arabic in December. Students studying these languages at CLM will be informed of events planned by their teachers. ■

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Tradition: a museum object?

This article is a reflection on my experiences in learning musical traditions in four cultures: Latin America, Japan, India and Europe. After describing what I learned through the different approaches to music, I suggest that music is an effective educational tool to develop one's whole personality.

Dr. LUIS DE LA CALLE¹

I was born in Peru, where at age five, I learned to play Latin folk music on the *quena* (Andean end-blown flute) and the *siku* (Andean pan flute). I learned through orality: observing, listening and imitating. At age fourteen, I was considered the best performer in Peru by the Ministry of Education. I was taught that the original character of the *quena*, which is 5000 years old, is an opening where the soul gives the best of oneself; if the player lacks a cultivated character, the expression of sound will be poor.

When I was fifteen, a Japanese actor heard my solo concert and proposed that I further my career in Japan. I became a disciple of the *Noh* Theatre Master Hideo Kanze. As the director of my concerts, he taught me the inner strength to master the instrument. This took more than simply perfecting a technique and providing entertainment. He taught me about the ritualization in Japanese music, which is a meditation on the unity of the mind, the flute and the body.

After I had been in Japan for five years, he sent me to India. For seven years I studied Vedic philosophy and Vaishnava music, an influential culture in the evolution of the Indian musical tradition. I was taught that performing music is understood as yoga: philosophy and practice in which the mind is controlled and “yoked” with the Absolute and the Divinity. *Vaishnava* music has a system of rhythms (*talas*) and romantic melodic scales (*ragas*). The effects of these sounds and their precise repetition at exact intervals awakens a person's higher levels of consciousness by acting upon the internal personality and transforming its

sensibility, way of thinking, and state of the soul – even one's moral character. *Vaishnava* songs were written by scholarly artists/poets and possess great literary value, which made them widely popular.

After being in India, my curiosity drew me to study the European transverse flute at a music conservatory in Denmark. The change was radical. I discovered fidelity to writing and reading scores, or normative knowledge.

Then, having the desire to integrate the contributions from these four music cultures, I invented a flute: the *quena's* head-joint connected to the transverse flute's body. Based on this invention, I obtained a Bachelor's degree as a soloist and two Masters degrees in education at Lund University in Sweden. Flute associations in Sweden, America, the UK and Australia have recognized me as one of the world's



Classical Bengali Art: Krishna playing on his flute.

most talented flutists— for performing with and inventing this instrument.

After all these experiences, I asked myself, What is a tradition? To answer this question, I approached the University of Geneva in Switzerland and did a Ph.D. in the Sciences of Education. During my studies, I realized that in the oral traditions from the three ancestral cultures I have mentioned, there are two different forms of transmission practices, because of two approaches: the ethno-musicological

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Dr. Luis De La Calle and professors from the National University make a toast after the Honorary Doctorate award ceremony at the Parliament of Peru.



© Uluis De La Calle

Dr. Luis De La Calle with his flute invention «The De La Calle quena flute™», which attaches the Inca's flute (quena) headjoint to the European transverse flute.

approach and the popular/folk music approach. The ethno-musicologist seeks to transmit a traditional way of performing (sonority) in a certain culture through a scientific discourse. The popular/folk music approach is a practice that combines elements of the traditional music with an aesthetic taste coming from elements of Western European music; this is characterised by a national and political identity, with the “show” as a dimension.

These differences led me to conclude that a tradition is a historical construct. It is not pure nor is it a museum object. It is alive and in constant transformation. Then what do we learn from the two approaches? We learn that the oral tradition of these ancestral cultures manifests something

alive precisely because of certain characteristics of its transmission practices.

I compared these characteristics with the practices I used as a student at Sweden’s Music Conservatory:

- The use of the cultural meanings of an ancestral tradition, along with scientific principles (especially in India), enhances the performer’s musical expression, whereas in the conservatories, there is a less scientific approach.
- The use of dance, wherein the instrumentalist’s steps are synchronised with the rhythm of the melody, is a simultaneous double function by the agent, who is the instrumentalist and the dancer. In the music conservatories, the instrumentalists do not dance.

- “Learn to speak before reading”: first make music and only then understand how it is made. In the conservatories I frequented, the teacher begins with the systematic work of playing: breathing, vibrato, etc. (This is called the elementarisation of knowledge.)

In summary, while reflecting on the practices of transmission in oral traditions, I argued that the activities of a person, including one’s musical activity, should be oriented to the elevation of human consciousness. The music of these ancestral cultures could be a model for society today, wherein the formation of an individual’s character comes first and then the performance of other activities. In this case, music specifically could be a tool to educate a person about human values and spiritual principles. Life is an art to live, and a work of art is the expression of our personality as a whole, of our sensibility and ability. ■

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1 Dr. Luis Alberto De La Calle Aramburú – member of the Research Team in Didactic of Arts and Movement (DAM) at the Faculty of Sciences of Education at the University of Geneva – Professor of Flute at the Music Faculty at the International School of Geneva – Sony Music Recording Artist. luis@luisdelacalle.com



© Claude Maillard

L'une des plus vénérées, la pagode Bawgyo est de toute beauté.

Myanmar (Birmanie partie 4/4)

Pagodes, temples et monastères

Bien éloignée de ses voisins absorbés par la modernité, Myanmar est un enchantement pour le voyageur. Le pays est un canevas tissé au fil des royaumes bouddhistes et d'un relief sans pareil, entre l'océan Indien et les contreforts de l'Himalaya.

CLAUDE MAILLARD

Revigorés par notre bon bol d'air frais de Pyin Oo Lwin (voir le *UN Special* du mois passé), nous embarquons dans le train pour Hsipaw, situé à une bonne centaine de kilomètres au nord-est. Quatre heures vont tout de même être nécessaires pour parcourir ce trajet. A déconseiller au voyageur pressé et sujet au vertige. A mi-chemin, le

mastodonte d'acier doit en effet franchir le viaduc de Gokteik qui enjambe du haut de ses 102 mètres une gorge de près de 700 mètres de large. Datant de 1901, faite de poutrelles métalliques, la construction semble bien frêle perchée entre ciel et terre. A une vitesse toute modérée, nous nous engageons sur le pont, le bruit est assourdissant, les craquements de l'édifice et

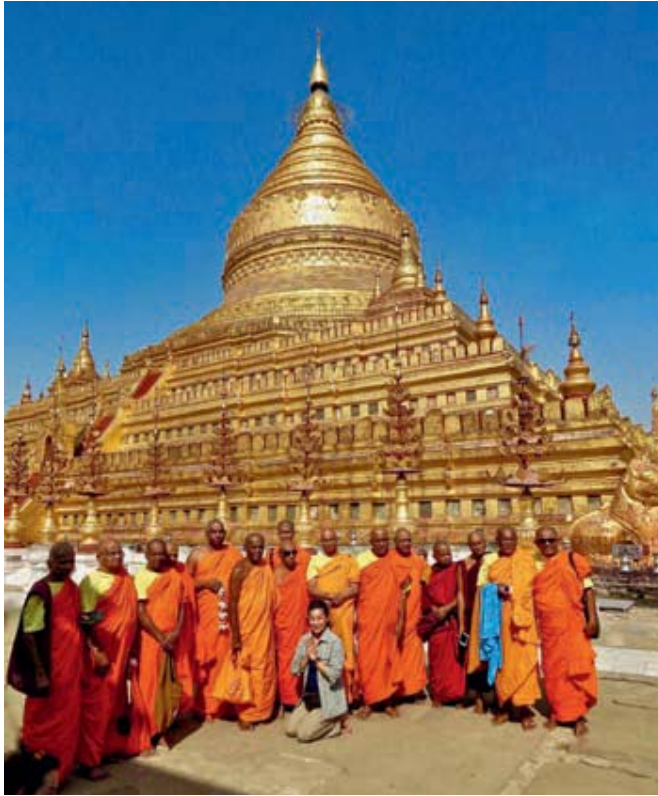
le couinement du train, lui aussi digne de l'empire colonial britannique victorien, nous font craindre le pire. Arrivés à bon port, nous nous remettrons de nos émotions en parcourant la campagne jusqu'à la localité de Nam San habitée par une ethnie palaung. Villageois et moines nous feront un accueil des plus chaleureux.

Des moines vénérés

Chaque birman deviendra moine à un moment de sa vie; cela fait partie du cursus classique. Il peut rester au monastère pendant quelques semaines, un an, voire dix ans. Outre l'apprentissage des principes fondamentaux du bouddhisme, on lui enseigne l'anglais. Chaque matin, avant l'unique repas du jour, ils partent par petits groupes demander

l'aumône auprès des badauds et des marchands. Pour les Birmans, c'est une bonne action. En échange, ils reçoivent la bénédiction des moines.

C'est en pirogue, depuis notre bungalow blotti sur une rive de la rivière Dokhtawaddy, que nous irons à la découverte de la campagne environnante, avec ses rizières et ses villages où le temps semble s'être arrêté au siècle passé. Ici le travail des champs ne connaît pas la mécanisation, des femmes accroupies lavent leur linge à la rivière alors que d'autres confectionnent des éventails en bambou à l'ombre de leur hutte sur pilotis. Plus loin, un paysan fait prendre le bain à son buffle... Ici, la vie est loin de s'être arrêtée, mais son développement a simplement



© Claude Maillard

La pagode Shwezigon, monument le plus sacré de Bagan.

été ralenti par les affres de la dictature.

Ancienne capitale politique des Etats shans du Nord, Lashio tient aujourd'hui un rôle important dans le commerce avec la Chine. La ville est en effet située sur la route qui relie Mandalay à la cité frontalière de Muse. Accueil austère, nous n'irons pas plus loin et reprendrons la route pour le Sud... en devant nous résoudre à faire de l'auto-stop. Bus en panne nous n'aurons pas le choix pour rejoindre Mandalay au milieu d'une circulation anarchique essentiellement composée de camions faisant du commerce avec la Chine. L'Aventure c'est l'Aventure! Sur notre chemin, la pagode Bawgyo se mire dans son bassin. De toute beauté, c'est l'une des plus vénérées de la région.

Bagan n'est plus très loin. Mais avant de rejoindre la plaine, une région montagneuse reste encore à traverser. Culminant à 1518 m, le mont Popa se dresse à l'horizon. Ce volcan a donné

son nom au Taung Kalat, une ancienne cheminée volcanique de 737 mètres de haut au sommet de laquelle se trouve un monastère bouddhiste. Il est considéré comme le refuge des 37 Grands Nats, les anciens esprits de Myanmar avant que le roi Anawrahta (1015-1078) ne fasse du bouddhisme la religion d'Etat. Lieu de pèlerinage important, son ascension se fait pieds nus par 777 marches.

Bagan et ses temples millénaires

L'aube se lève sur la plaine de Bagan hérissée de pagodes, de temples et de monastères. D'une superficie de 42 km², le complexe archéologique est considéré comme l'un des plus vastes d'Asie, comparable à Angkor, au Cambodge, dont il est pratiquement contemporain. Du XI^e au XIV^e siècle, Bagan, jadis orthographié Pagan, a été la capitale du premier Empire birman. Durant cette période, près de 3000 édifices, qui aujourd'hui émergent d'une forêt à perte de vue, ont

été construits. Monumentaux, majestueux ou plus modestes, bien conservés ou en ruine, ils recouvrent Bagan et ses environs, le long du fleuve Irrawaddy. Un site fascinant à visiter à pied, en calèche, en scooter (électrique) ou à survoler en montgolfière.

Monument le plus sacré de Bagan, la pagode Shwezigon en est l'une des constructions les plus anciennes. On attribue sa fondation à Anawrahta à partir de 1059 et son achèvement sous le règne de son fils Kyanzittha, en 1102. Considérée comme le prototype de toutes les pagodes birmanes, Shwezigon est en même temps unique car c'est la seule du pays à être construite en pierre et non en briques. Elle renfermerait dans sa base un os temporal du Bouddha ramené de Sri Ksetra (Royaume du bassin de l'Irrawaddy fondé par le groupe ethnique pyu au Ve siècle) ainsi qu'une de ses dents, reçue du roi de Ceylan.

La visite se poursuivra par la découverte du temple Kubyauk Gyi qui abrite de très riches peintures murales du XIII^e siècle, puis par celle du temple Htilominlo qui, avec ses 50 m, est l'un des plus hauts de Bagan. La pagode Shwesandaw qui renferme un cheveu du Bouddha est avant tout la plus populaire. En effet, sa vaste plate-forme circulaire au sommet offre la possibilité d'admirer le coucher de soleil sur le site de Bagan. L'escalier qui permet de grimper à une trentaine de mètres de haut est vertigineux mais ne décourage pas des milliers de touristes venus s'y risquer des quatre coins du monde pour profiter de ce panorama exceptionnel.

Malheureusement, situé dans une zone sismique, ce haut lieu touristique de Myanmar a subi de nombreux tremblements de terre dont celui de 1975, l'un

des plus destructeurs. Dès les années 1990, une vague de restaurations a été entreprise sous l'égide du gouvernement birman. Mais un puissant séisme de magnitude 6,8 a frappé de nouveau le centre du pays en août 2016, endommageant sérieusement près de 200 monuments.

Un séjour de trois jours au minimum est nécessaire pour se faire une vague idée du site de Bagan et de ses incroyables richesses. Notre périple se poursuivra à Myinkaba, au sud du vieux Bagan, où sont édifiés les temples de Nanpaya (sanctuaire hindou) de Manuha et de Kubyauk Gyi (le plus ancien que l'on peut dater à Bagan). De ses 63 mètres de haut, le temple Thatbyinnyu domine tous les autres monuments de la ville dont ses voisins Shwegugyi et Dhammayan Gyi, le plus imposant du site malgré qu'il soit resté inachevé.

Nous garderons le meilleur pour la fin avec le temple d'Ananda, le plus beau et l'un des plus vénérés de Bagan. Son toit, formé de six terrasses est dominé par une tour-sanctuaire de type indien terminée par un stupa très effilé, couvert d'or qui culmine à 55 mètres. Un très important festival s'y déroule à la pleine lune de Pyatho, de décembre à janvier dans le calendrier traditionnel birman.

Après avoir inhalé de la poussière durant ces trois jours passés à Bagan, perchés sur nos calèches, une pause rafraîchissante sur le fleuve Irrawaddy sera la bienvenue. Né dans les montagnes de l'Himalaya, il se jette 2170 km plus au sud dans la mer d'Andaman après avoir traversé intégralement Myanmar qui est vraiment un pays extraordinaire à découvrir pour son formidable accueil et sa multitude de richesses. ■

Agence de voyage «Adorable Myanmar» – www.adorablemyanmar.com



Mens sana in corpore sano (3)

Curcuma – a miracle for your corpore sano

As many of you seem to be interested in Ayurveda and liked the previous articles, together with my “pen-friend” Oleksandr, we are inviting you today to visit one more Ayurveda speciality called Curcuma.

EVELINA RIOUKHINA & OLEKSANDR SVIRCHEVSKYY

As in the famous saying “What’s old is new again”, curcuma is one of the most fashionable new words in our vocabulary today. But in reality, it has been around for centuries, or even for millennia as a special spice in India and in Central Asia that increases immunity, energy, “purifies the body”, and even in the old times it was known as the strongest antiseptic, or “natural antibiotic”, and has

been used traditionally as a disinfectant and treatment for laryngitis, bronchitis, and diabetes. For many of us, this word is still new, we are not used to hearing “curcuma”. However, we all do know it, having at least once tried Indian curry, of which it is the main component. The spice (and supplement) comes from the underground stems (rhizomes) of the turmeric plant called *Curcuma longa*, and is a member of the ginger family.

Today, more and more scholars study the useful properties of this herb, and keep discovering its really miraculous qualities to treat many health conditions. Today, it is believed to have not only anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant, but perhaps even anti-cancer properties. Curcumin, a substance in turmeric, helps to reduce inflammation. Several studies suggest that it might ease the symptoms of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

In lab tests, curcumin seems to block the growth of certain kinds of tumours. One study showed that turmeric extract containing curcumin could – in some cases – stabilize colorectal cancer that wasn’t helped by other treatments. Other preliminary lab studies suggest that curcumin or turmeric might protect against types of colitis,

stomach ulcers, and high cholesterol. Based on studies, turmeric and curcumin might also help treat upset stomach, diabetes, depression, HIV, uveitis, and viral infections. But it’s important to keep in mind that most of these studies have been done in the laboratory. However, more solid research has also been done by the American scientist, Dr. Milan Fiala, from the University of California, Los Angeles, who found out that the composition of turmeric includes an immunomodulator, which in turn stimulates immune system cells called macrophages to clear away the amyloid beta which cause Alzheimer’s disease by increasing the immune system and decreasing the inflammation, thus reducing Alzheimer plaque formation. “If we can improve the immune system, we can help the body’s natural ability to clear damaging plaques,”

Recipe for health and well-being – the famous “Golden milk”

This drink has several variations. The simplest is given below.

Preparation – 2 steps :

Step 1 – to take half cup of curcuma, 1 coffee spoon of pepper and half cup of water and to heat this mixture constantly stirring, until it becomes like a paste. To cool down and to put in a glass jar, to keep in the fridge.

Step 2 – to take one cup of milk (any milk, soya, coconut, almond, or venetable milk), to add one spoonful of mixture and to heat it (not to boil). When it is hot, to add a coffee spoon of honey (vanille can be added for the taste). To drink warm. This “golden milk” has thousands of healing qualities, and taken before sleep, it helps against insomnia and reliefs tension of the day.

Recipe for ... Beauty – anti-wrinkle mask, or the mask for the “bonne mine”

¼ spoonful of curcuma

1 spoonful of cream (can be replaced by yogurt)

10 drops of oil (Kurjut, or Avocado or Abricot oil)

Mix all and to apply on your face. Leave for 30 minutes and wash it away. This mask will takes off wrinkles, refresh and tonyfy your skin.

Fiala wrote in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*.

Curcumin's health benefits may extend beyond Alzheimer's disease. One recent study, carried out by researchers at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, found that daily doses of the spice were associated with a nearly 60 percent lower risk for colon polyps, a known precursor to colon cancer. A recent study involving mice has shown that turmeric slows the spread of breast cancer into lungs and other body parts. Turmeric also enhances the effect of taxol in reducing the metastasis of breast cancer. It is also said that turmeric can strengthen the blood-brain barrier against

attacks that result from autoimmune diseases (such as Multiple Sclerosis).

Do not be surprised to read today some flashy headings such as “Ten (Twelve or more) Proven Health Benefits of Curcuma – including evidence-based health benefits for the body and brain”. Or “The Miraculous Effects of Curcuma”. These are not only aiming to attract the reader of the popular press, for such headings appear today in scientific, medical or health literature too.

It turns out that we both have been using curcuma for quite a while, after having consulted natural medicine doctors and/

Recipe for health – “Golden mixture”

Prepare a mixture of the following ingredients:

100 mg of honey

2 soup spoons of curcuma

½ coffee spoon of black pepper

2 soup spoons of lemon peel

2 soup spoonful of apple vinegar

To take 1 soup spoon of the mixture daily. To let it “melt” down in your mouth. Not to drink after.

Recipe to raise immunity – wake-up drink

Drink every morning a glass of lukewarm water with the lemon, and add there one coffee-spoon of curcuma (you can also add a coffee spoon of honey for better taste). This drink will improve your digestion and increase your immunity and general well-being.

Recipe for ... Beauty – Glow mask

¼ tea spoonful of curcuma

1 tea spoon of honey

1 tea spoon of milk

Mix the ingredients, apply on your face and leave for 10 minutes.

Rince off with cold water. Your skin will glow.

Recipe against cold and sore throat

1 tea spoonful of curcuma

1 tea spoonful of milk

1 tea spoonful of honey

Prepare the mixture and take it 3 times daily to treat the sore throat and even bronchitis. 1 spoonful daily can be taken as a prophylaxy (instead of “Golden mixture”).

or Ayurvedic doctors in different places/countries, and we have come to similar conclusions: curcuma does indeed contribute to better health. Today, we share with you some recipes that you can try in full confidence, as they have been tested by us for a number of years now. Our recipes are simple and we will be happy if you find any of them useful.

And by the way, you do not need to travel far to buy curcuma, as today you can find it everywhere – from specialised shops to Migros spice corners. You can buy it everywhere, however, Indian shops provide the best quality. There are several in Geneva, in the vicinity, and the closest one is just across the road. ■

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Working from the heights of La Paz, Bolivia An experience to share

When I arrived to Bolivia to work as a UN Volunteer in the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), I could barely imagine...

PAÚL COELLAR RÍOS¹

...I could barely imagine the rich, stimulating, intense and inspiring experience that was waiting for me – and I am not only referring to the side-effects of the heights of La Paz (3,680 m.a.s.l.), nor to its vibrant lifestyle, chaotic traffic jams, or the fast-moving pace of its people.

Beyond the latter, the experience turned out to be unique because I realized how all the global instruments promoted by the UN, which at times appear too abstract or far from reality in the field, can translate into infinite initiatives of change that the UN can promote at

the country and local levels in support of development.

The Country Office of UNODC in Bolivia is in itself a universe that took me more time than expected to explore. Its rich history dates back to the mid-80s, when it operated as the UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control with the purpose of containing the increase of coca cultivation in the country. Ever since, the organizational changes at the global level that led to the creation of what we know today as UNODC have had consequential impacts in Bolivia, broadening its scope of action to crime prevention and criminal justice reform. Therefore,



UNCT Retreat at the shore of Lake Titicaca.

as soon as I arrived, I became very positively impressed when I learned that I had joined one of the biggest and most reputable UN Agencies in Bolivia.

The title does not come without responsibility. The issues we deal with everyday are among the most sensitive in the political scenario, yet we try to tactfully assist the government when our expertise makes a difference and adds value to national efforts. Coca crop monitoring is indeed a critical area of work of our Office: Bolivians are traditional consumers of coca leaf in its natural state –any visitor to La Paz will in fact be grateful if a cup of coca tea is served to mitigate the effects of the altitude on the body– but the controversy lies on those harvests of coca leaf that might illegally be diverged to the production of cocaine. UNODC monitoring of legal and illegal coca crops informs national policy-making and supports the Government in its control activities throughout the country. Alternatively, the Office assists local farmers in growing sustainable agricultural products instead of mono-cultivation of coca, which in the long term has negative effects on the soil. Other pillars of our work in Bolivia are related to the prevention of and fight against organized crime (trafficking in

persons, wildlife crime, arms trafficking, etc.), prevention of and fight against corruption, or reform of the penitentiary and criminal justice systems. Working on building national capacities to effectively deal with these issues is one of the many reasons that make this experience *enriching*.

The work we do in the field is not isolated. As a former consultant in the Country Cooperation Department of the World Health Organization (WHO), I remember working from headquarters to assist field offices in different areas ranging from financing to programming or reporting. Now that I work at the Programme Unit of UNODC in Bolivia, I interact on a daily basis with our colleagues in Vienna and other country offices in our region, whose permanent disposition to provide assistance to our Office is always accurate and is deeply appreciated. My new role has also benefited from the UN system-wide perspective that I gained as a consultant at the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in Geneva: this broad viewpoint has been very useful in my tasks of coordinating UNODC's participation in the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Bolivia, where inter-agency collaboration is a priority in our efforts to deliver as one – an endeavour that is



Paúl Coellar Ríos.

not always easy to address. This is the part of my job that makes this experience *stimulating*.

The experience has so far been fascinating yet not exempted of challenges. Financial resources for development are increasingly scarce, which added to a shrinking donor base in Bolivia, put together acute pressure on the work that UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes would wish to undertake in the country. Human resources at the local level face growing pressure under the logics of “doing more with less,” with most staff periodically worrying about the renewal of their contracts or unpaid interns hoping to be able to join, one day, the Organization. At the same time, global administrative systems and timeframes still need to provide the necessary flexibility to operate in contexts where culture, technology, and ways of working do not follow the patterns or rhythms of industrialized countries. On the other hand, we in the field need to acknowledge and better internalize the need to be more creative in providing comprehensive solutions to the inter-connected challenges of development, instead of repeating the same old approaches and expecting different results. Working in this context is what makes my daily life quite *intense*.

Yet these challenges look minimal when I think about how fortunate I am to serve every day as a Volunteer at the United Nations – and, especially, to work with the UNODC in the beautiful country of Bolivia. During these past nine months, I have learned that the UN does make a difference when it works shoulder to shoulder with the government in dealing with the challenging issues of development. I have witnessed the power of UN pronouncements on sensitive topics of the national agenda, especially when the rights of the most vulnerable are at risk. I cherish the fact that my husband is fully recognized by the UN as my partner, allowing us to walk together through this experience. But, more importantly, I am deeply thankful to be able to work in Bolivia, a country where people are genuinely noble, politics are extremely interesting, wine is unexpectedly good, and landscapes are stunningly beautiful. This is, to finish, what makes this experience *inspiring*. ■

You can find more information about the work of UNODC in Bolivia at <https://www.unodc.org/bolivia/>

1 Paúl Coellar Ríos is a Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer at the International UNV UNODC Country Office in Bolivia



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La science dans le changement climatique

**ZOÉ FRIEDBACHER,
MANON GRANDJEAN¹**

Les changements climatiques ont de grandes répercussions sur la vie quotidienne des populations partout dans le monde. L'activité humaine en est la principale cause, en particulier dans les pays développés. La science peut-elle aider les Etats à lutter contre le réchauffement climatique?

Depuis de nombreuses années, les scientifiques observent une hausse constante des températures à l'échelle mondiale. Ils ont encore une idée assez vague des conséquences de ce réchauffement et ne savent pas précisément ce qu'il va entraîner. La climatologie, la science du climat, doit permettre de réaliser des études plus précises sur les conséquences du

changement climatique et trouver des solutions spécifiques plus rapidement.

Si des mesures sont prises en avance, certaines catastrophes peuvent être évitées ou du moins leurs effets atténués. De nombreuses recherches tendent à prouver que d'ici quinze ans, la température moyenne de la terre aura augmenté de 5 degrés. De multiples organisations se sont mobilisées pour tenter de ralentir cette augmentation de température. Le GIEC, par exemple, est une organisation intergouvernementale regroupant des experts scientifiques qui fournissent des rapports détaillés sur l'évolution des changements climatiques. Ils évoquent les causes, les conséquences et les solutions possibles pour limiter la hausse des températures à 1,5 degrés d'ici 2050.

les émissions de gaz à effet de serre (GES) dans l'ensemble des pays qui se sont engagés dans l'Accord. Les pays qui ont déjà ratifié l'Accord représentent aujourd'hui 83% des émissions mondiales. Il est à noter que les Etats-Unis ont décidé de se retirer de cet accord. Ils sont pourtant le deuxième émetteur de GES dans le monde derrière la Chine.

Grâce à la science, les organisations qui luttent contre le réchauffement climatique peuvent aujourd'hui avoir à disposition des prévisions précises et ainsi convaincre les Etats de participer à ce combat. La science permet aussi de mieux anticiper les conséquences de la hausse des températures et trouver des solutions pour sauver la planète. ■

¹ Zoé Friedbacher et Manon Grandjean sont toutes les deux élèves du Collège Calvin et sont âgées de 16 ans.

En 2015, l'Accord de Paris a été approuvé par 195 Etats lors de la COP21. Il vise à réduire

Jeunes Reporters à l'ONU est une initiative sous les auspices du Projet de Changement de Perception (PCP), dans le Bureau du Directeur général de l'ONU à Genève, la Fondation Eduki et le Service de l'Information des Nations Unies. Il ouvre les portes des Nations Unies à Genève aux étudiants (16-19 ans) intéressés par les affaires internationales et souhaitant discuter avec des experts de diverses organisations dans le cadre d'une conférence de presse. Chaque session est thématique (p.ex.: les enjeux alimentaires, l'eau ou le développement international) et 2-3 représentants d'organisations travaillant sur ces questions viennent parler de leur travail et des problèmes actuels. Les étudiants, en tant que reporters, ont l'opportunité de poser des questions afin d'élargir leur compréhension sur ces enjeux, mais aussi sur le travail effectué pour les résoudre. Après avoir recueilli les informations, les étudiants peuvent écrire un article qui sera publié dans UN Spécial ou les journaux des écoles, ou bien faire une présentation en classe. Cela donne l'opportunité aux étudiants d'en apprendre plus sur leurs centres d'intérêts mais aussi de mieux comprendre l'activité de la Genève Internationale et enfin de communiquer aux autres ce qu'elle signifie.

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Si vous souhaitez proposer un article, n'hésitez pas à me contacter à tout moment.

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Would you like to share your opinion about *UN Special* and its contents ?

Write to us!

We will be glad to hear from you. The most interesting, relevant, or even ingenious responses will be published in the magazine.

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Now, put pen to paper!

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