

THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF DUTCH COMMITTEE FOR AFGHANISTAN

The 25th anniversary of the Dutch Committee for Afghanistan (DCA) was held in Kabul Intercontinental Hotel on November 25, 2015, which was attended by some 140 people from different organizations. The participants included Mr. Mustafa Jawad (President's Advisor on agriculture, irrigation and livestock), officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) and the Ministry of Economy (MoE), and representatives of HELVETAS, NHLP, FAO, Kabul University, Nawzad, NAEC, Afghanaid, AHDP, ENID, VetServ, ICRC, Relief International, AVA, MADERA, RYZ, CARD-F, OSID, Ariana, UNOPS and IGDK. From DCA, both current and ex-staff from Kabul as well as the provinces attended the ceremony.

The celebration was inaugurated by the Afghanistan national anthem and recitation of Holly Quran. Then, Dr Raymond Briscoe, the Executive Director of DCA warmly welcomed the guests and thanked the Afghan government, donors, partners and Afghan people for their support and cooperation with DCA. He added that DCA has had a long journey so far and that the road has had many ups and downs; however, DCA has always continued to realize its objectives, which is improving the living conditions of Afghans through improving their animals' health and production.



Dr Raymond Briscoe



Dr Bram Schreuder

The inauguration speech was followed by Dr Bram Schreuder's presentation of "25 years' experience with veterinary programme building in Afghanistan". Dr Bram has worked with DCA for 27 years. After welcoming the participants, he highlighted the background and characteristics of DCA's programme, and the expansion and coverage of DCA in the country. He indicated that the history of DCA-VET and the development of its veterinary programme goes back to the DCA mission statement, which is "to offer aid and assistance to the population of Afghanistan by improving the health and productive output of the local livestock". He expressed that DCA Veterinary Programmes (DCA-VET) started in 1988 with paravet training in Peshawar,

expanded to eastern Afghanistan with Veterinary Field Units ('89-'94) established by the trained paravets, and then moved to VFUs in Herat ('94-'04). Between 1999 to 2000, DCA obtained official recognition for its paravets and from 2004 – 2006 the veterinary programme spread over almost all Afghanistan with over 300 VFUs and 700 trained paravets.

Dr Bram told the public that DCA opted for intermediate veterinary personnel at field level, with Veterinary Field Units (VFUs) and a veterinary programme to replenish the veterinary capacity gap in the field. DCA's veterinary programme includes training, employment in VFUs, technical support and backstopping. DCA works towards sustainability through gradually reducing the financial support of veterinary field personnel and gradually increasing the local contribution of the farmers (cost recovery).

He also explained that the DCA-VET programme has been economically viable and profitable for the country. The findings of impact studies on livestock mortality in four pairs of districts in Afghanistan show reduction in mortality rate of livestock in those areas covered by the DCA-VET programme. The benefit cost ratio of the programme per district is 4.8. He adjourned his presentation by submitting a copy of his book under the name of "Afghanistan, a 25-years' struggle for a better life for its people and livestock" to Mr. Jawad. This book is based on Dr Bram Schreuder's 27 years working experience with DCA.



Dr Bram Schreuder and Mr. Jawad



Dr Fakhri

Afterwards, the DCA Program Director, Dr Abdul Qadir Fakhri also warmly welcomed the participants and gave a presentation on the current DCA projects, its achievements and working mechanisms, and the coordination with line ministries. He highlighted that DCA currently implements eight projects funded by different donors and provides animal health, extension, training and value chain services to the Afghan people almost all over Afghanistan except in the provinces of Nimroz, Daikundi, Laghman, Kunar, and Nuristan.

He pointed out that DCA has succeeded in establishing and supporting a strong VFU network (585 VFUs) in 29 provinces, training of female paravets, developing of many extension packages, introducing new technologies (churning machines, improved stables, urea treatment etc.), and establishing of feed banks. He further stressed that based on the findings of recent impact studies, there is a 10-25% decrease in livestock mortality rate and a 10-20% increase in livestock productivity. Similarly, DCA has been able to increase the rate of off take and herd size as well as to improve livelihood, food security and safety, household hygiene. DCA also managed to bring about changes in the attitude of farmers through awareness raising programmes.

He emphasizes that DCA runs four Training Centres (Charikar, Herat, Mazar, and Kandahar). The Charikar Veterinary Training Centre will be registered with the Ministry of Education soon and DCA's training certificates will be signed by both MoE and MAIL. Presently, DCA's paravets are being licensed to work by MAIL. So far, 1000 paravets have been trained in DCA training centres.

Dr Fakhri continued that DCA has good working relationships with the public sector and with other NGOs. DCA tries to avoid duplication in its programme/projects in the field and if there are any challenges it tries to raise these in the NGO coordination meetings and with the line ministries. It consults with MAIL for the design and implementation of its projects and submits its timely and regular reports to the Ministry of Economy.



He ended his presentation by pointing out the challenges that DCA faces. These include insecurity in some areas, interventions by other NGOs in the same working area, duplications, lack of coordination and harmonization, and availability of fake vaccines and medicine in the market.

Mr. Jawad was the next speaker and he welcomed the participants to the ceremony and thanked DCA for its continuous efforts for improving animal health and living conditions of Afghan farmers. He also thanked Bram Schreuder for his tireless efforts for improving Afghans' lives. Mr. Jawad emphasized the importance of sustainability of the programmes and projects so as to bring long lasting changes in the lives of Afghans.

The ceremony was concluded by the speech of Mr. Sayed Hashim Basirat, the NGOs Director of the Ministry of Economy. Like the previous speaker, he congratulated DCA with its 25th anniversary and thanked the organization for all its efforts during the past 25 years. He added that MAIL is the core pillar for the development of livestock and agricultural activities in the country and that the coordination and cooperation

between MAIL and other organizations will be fundamental to improving the livestock conditions in the country.



Mr. Jawad, Advisor to the President



Mr. Basirat, Director Ministry of Economy

The celebration was formally ended by distribution of Bram Schreuder's book to the guests and participants of the ceremony.