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BRIEF BAMIYAN MISSION REPORT
AUGUST-NOVEMBER 1991

Introduction

The office in Bamiyan was set up in June 1990 by the first United Nations mission to that province, under the leadership of Micheal Keating. I also participated in that mission. UNOCA activities in that location ceased between Jan 1991 and August 1991, when again I went for three months to facilitate further United Nations involvement in the area.

My terms of reference were:

- a) To remain for three months in Bamiyan, in order to facilitate United Nations activities and assist missions visiting the area.
- b) To strengthen the local Educational infrastructure.
- c) To supervise the emergency works carried out on the cultural heritages in the valley.

I departed from Peshawar on 23 August and travelled via Paktika, Ghazni, Wardak and Kajiqak to Bamiyan in a rented vehicle. UNOCA could not provide me with an ID card, so in one or two places I had to show my old Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) card to enable me to travel freely.

Along the route, especially from Wardak to Bamiyan, I tried to establish contact with influential people to explain the purpose of our mission and familiarize them with the United Nation's mode of operation, etc. Many complained about our lack of attention to their respective areas, so we suggested means whereby they could put forward proposals to aid agencies to come to work in the needy areas. They seemed to trust me and displayed a great hospitality, while committing themselves to actively participate in any rehabilitation effort. This positive attitude might be further encouraged by agencies by carrying out projects along the routes of access to Bamiyan.

I arrived to the office in Bamiyan at 6 p.m, on 26 August, after a journey which included an entire night of travelling, as we expected Salam-01 to land in Yakawlang on the 28 and it was important to get there so as to make the necessary arrangements. However, Salam 01 could not land due to security reasons as thousands of Hezb-i-Wahdat people from all over Hazarajat had gathered in Yakawlang for their party congregation. This unfortunately posed problems for the ATC mine injured deminer, who consequently had to be moved to Peshawar by road.

The original plan was that a mission comprised of UNOCA and WFP Peshawar would come by air, bringing cash to cover our costs. Later it was decided that the mission come by road, so it did not arrive until 3 October. Meanwhile we made public relations, monitored projects, etc, with the little means we had at our disposal. When the mission comprised of Mr. S. Tamrat, Mr. P. Larsen and Mr. Aziz Sakhi arrived, it conducted a number of activities until 9 November, and Mr. Mehari did so until 21 November.

ACTIVITIES

Here is a brief account of the activities undertaken:

A. To Facilitate United Nations activities, and engage in public relations

WFP Wheat: Eng. Zia (WFP) and I were caught up in a problem involving the delivery of wheat for the UNDP/WFP road project between Shashpool and Kalu contracted to two Commanders in that area. As WFP Kabul had not released the wheat to the contractors, these workers were impatient and frustrated. We tried to ease up the situation and reported to WFP/Kabul, Peshawar, and Islamabad in an attempt to speed up the deliveries. The builders became so frustrated that they finally stopped some ATC vehicles in Paymari village, about 1.5 k.m. from Shashpool and in Kalu valley, in the period between 26/9 - 3/10. We were however disappointed that WFP officials in Kabul and Islamabad did not respond in time to our request, which might have prevented these incidents from taking place. Eng. Zia was in captivity for almost a week. We negotiated hard but even Hezb-Wahdat, who believed to have control of the area, could not do a quick job to release the vehicles and drivers.

Still today the wheat for upper Kalu has not arrived, due to problems in the border city of Azam Warsak, and it is difficult to say whether it is safe for United Nations personnel to travel across that area.

Shura Islami and Political Groups

The United Nations had a questionable image in the minds of the political groups in Bamiyan. Complaints about little done in central districts and side valleys and more done in western districts were day-to-day talk. I found it necessary to gradually build up a link of trust to ensure that the locals saw our efforts to help as sincere, but also to make them understand that assistance was delivered keeping in mind the priorities and according to the availability of inputs. We also stressed that their support and backing was essential.

I had many formal and informal discussions with Shura members and a number of individuals so as to strengthen the relationship of trust between them and the United Nations members in Bamiyan.

I also discussed the issue of the UNOCA premises with NIFA and the Shura, who offered me their support in ensuring the security for the office, as well as the potential use of the airstrip. We later indeed managed to land the Salam-01 plane three times in Bamiyan.

Release of Expats

During our trip to Ashpasta/Tala barfak, Eng. Zia and I found two British men who had been picked up in the deserts behind Ashpasta and Kayan and had been brought to the Itehad Islami base. Although the Commander there was extremely suspicious of them, we were able to comfort the captives and ensure their release. We were asked not to report this at that time. This could not have been possible, anyway, as we were not equipped with a radio.

Assistance to United Nations Missions

While waiting for the expat part of the planned mission in Aug-Sept, I travelled on behalf of UNOCA with Eng. Zia (WFP) to Ashpasta to inspect the road project Ghundak-Barfak; to Shekhali to inspect the delivery of 68 MT of wheat and to Quli Khish to monitor a FFW school construction project; to Kahi to supervise FFW school and road construction projects; and to Folladi to further inspect school construction. Due to lack of funds we could not go to other districts.

On 3 October Mr. Tamrat and Mr. Larsen arrived and stayed until 9 November. Mr. Tamrat did not have a translator, so I accompanied him to monitor and assess projects. Details of our activities during that period might be seen in the report by Mr. Tamrat. A great deal of ideas were developed by us so the expat mission could readily seek the possibilities for their realization.

Assistance was extended to Mr. Tike (UNOCA Kabul) and to Mr. Mehari, who stayed for 3 weeks.

The plane landed for the second time on 21 November bringing Mr. Raja Wiekremisinhe (WFP Kabul and a UNICEF staff), who was taken to see the Buddahs and the important caves.

Other Activities in the Office

Apart from carrying out the official activities I was responsible for, I spent time organizing the office premises. The electric wiring to some extent was fixed (the present generator only lights 5 bulbs of 100 watts). I made use of my architectural abilities to ensure that the office equipment was functional and of quality. I even had to redo the desks and chairs the local carpenter made, as they were out of proportion.

The roof antenna for the radio was repaired and refixed, so the office could have a permanent radio station.

B. EDUCATION

Bamiyan has primary education schools, some of which are supported by NGOs in Peshawar. The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, for example, funds 4 boy schools and 3 girl schools in Center Bamiyan, 3 schools in Ghundark and 3 schools in Saigan and Kamard valleys. In addition, 4 schools in Yakawlang are supported by the SCA. Muslim Aid also funded a number of schools in Bamiyan, but this assistance was discontinued after the Gulf war.

The schooling programme in Bamiyan could be reorganized provided the education support organizations decide on a common administration for schools in each locality. In Bamiyan the SCA has a teacher's coordinator who could act as the administrator for the SCA schools in all districts. In Yakawlang the SCA also has a teacher's coordinator.

Today the crucial issue in the Education sector is the school buildings in the area. Almost all of them were damaged during the war. WFP funded the repair and rehabilitation of some of them in Yakawlang and Centre Bamiyan during 1990 and 1991. The emphasis should be on rehabilitating new buildings in areas schools are running in mosques or under trees. The United Nations rehabilitated a large school building next to its office in Bamiyan - but today it stands empty. In September 1991 I wrote a letter to the SCA Education department urging them to start up one more school in Centre Bamiyan, one in Qazan, upper Folladi, as well as reconsider their support to a school in Kalu. Until now I am not aware of the SCA's reaction to this matter.

In the past UNICEF provided funding to the SCA for school programmes, so at present they might try to support education programmes which could be implemented through the local teachers. I have discussed here the possibility of setting up a local teacher's association, but this might only be possible if inputs were available.



C. Cultural Heritages - Supervision of Emergency Work

The need for doing emergency work on safeguarding the Bamiyan monuments was reported by myself last (see United Nations Mission report, June 1990). Due to a number of reasons nothing was done until this year. Also, to my surprise, the local committee for cultural heritages made last year by the Shura Islami, did not exist any longer. The areas in and around the Buddahs have become more militarized than last year. Hezb-i-Wahdat has built its headquarters below the Buddah cliff and the caves around the large Buddah are occupied by armed forces using them as garrisons and living quarters. As the majority of these monuments are of the pre-Islamic period, the issue of restoring or safeguarding them in a time of Islam was a sensitive one.

It was my intention to first work on general public relations and also to strengthen the presence of the United Nations in Bamiyan before tackling the Buddah issue. I started studying the problem of monuments by examining the Islamic constructions and the pre-Islamic ones. However, after having secured the 3 MT wheat for safeguarding projects it was easier to do estimations for first hand emergency work, and soon I found contractors to implement the task. The main job was to clean the mud-filled diversion ditches above the hill, dig some new ditches on the smaller sites, and clean some of the caves where mud had come down from the hill during the 13 years of non-government. This was actually also done in the spirit of public awareness and to make the local responsables understand the importance of the monuments.

Fortunately, I did not observe major man-made damages, with a few exceptions. However, I was really disappointed to see that the Kakrak Buddah's feet had been damaged by people extracting iron bar earlier used in its restoration. They were intact last year. Also one decorated cave was ransacked for its frescos that were reportedly sold in Dashi to a former Bamiyan police officer.

I am confident that the 3 MT of wheat distributed in the area, although not a significant quantity, created positive publicity for the United Nations and laid the foundation for the safeguarding of cultural monuments in Bamiyan.

The distribution was as following:

	<u>Site</u>	<u>Type of Work</u>	<u>Contractor</u>	<u>Wheat in KG</u>
1.	Kakrak Buddah	Cleaning & repair of ditches	Atiqullah (JIA)	238
2.	Small Buddah	Cleaning & repair of ditches & caves	Barat (NIFA) (Harakat Ingelab)	770
3.	Setting Buddah	Digging new ditches above & hill skirt	Qudus (NIFA)	560
4.	Large Buddah	Cleaning & repair of ditches	Nabawi (HW)	350
5.	Folladi Caves	New ditches	Shamsuddin	500
6.	Khawaja Sabzpash & Mir Hashim Islamic domes.	Mud plaster	M. Zahir	378

Through my work in the above sites I met a young man, Mr. Ewas Malang, who from his childhood had worked with the Indian and Japanese teams surveying and repairing the monuments. He was of great assistance to me, as he knew the sites well. To enhance public awareness and enable the Shura Islami to have a person to monitor the state of the monuments, I gave 30 seers = 210 kg of wheat to Mr. Malang, so that once a week he visited the sites, ensured people did not dig or take away soil, and reported on a regular basis to the Shura Islami.

A report on the cultural heritage and the usage of the 3 MT wheat was also sent to the Shura Islami, which they welcomed.

I shall prepare a technical report to UNESCO upon my return to Peshawar.

AWN/ba

Najimi

