Response from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development to the study
"Assessing the Impact of Development Cooperation in North East Afghanistan"
Phase II 2007-2013

The longitudinal study "Assessing the Impact of Development Cooperation in North East Afghanistan" that was begun in 2007 by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) working in cooperation with the Freie Universität Berlin delivers a wealth of findings on how the impact of international cooperation and the presence of foreign forces is perceived by the rural population in selected provinces of North East Afghanistan. Up to 3,000 households in 120 villages in 6 districts were surveyed repeatedly and interviews conducted with local elites and international experts.

The study looked at the trends that could be discerned between 2007 and 2013 and comes to the following main conclusions:

The surveys confirm that international development cooperation reached the people. 91% of the households surveyed stated that they had benefited from the cooperation. 60% said that it had helped to create jobs in their community. 53% reported that they had benefited from measures to support food security.

During the period of observation, the households surveyed experienced improvements in their economic situation. The proportion of people who stated they could easily afford food and commodities rose from 12% in 2007 to 20% in 2013. During that same period, the proportion who reported that they could not afford food dropped from 7% to 3%.

The households surveyed directly attributed their increased material well-being to international development cooperation, particularly with regard to improvements in basic social services, most importantly health services, education, water, roads, agricultural production and jobs.

In 2013, 60% of those surveyed believed that international development actors had improved health services. In 2011, it was 51%.
95% of those surveyed had a **positive attitude** to the support measures for **schooling**. By 2013, 72% of those surveyed believed that international development actors had contributed to improvements in the quality of schooling. In 2007, the figure had been just 40%.

With regard to **water supply**, in 2013 53% of those surveyed attributed the **improvements** achieved to international development cooperation, whilst in 2011 that figure was just 30%. In 2013, 65% of those surveyed believed international development cooperation had contributed to improving the roads, compared with 23% in 2011. 71% of those surveyed credited international cooperation with **improvements in agricultural production**, compared with 16% in 2007.

Whilst in 2007 only 3% of respondents believed international development actors had contributed to **job creation**, by 2013 that figure had risen **considerably** to 45%. The proportion of people who credited international development cooperation with **improving their income opportunities** also rose very sharply between 2011 and 2013 from 6% to 40%.

The responses also indicate that the BMZ’s strategy of focusing on **strengthening subnational governance** was the right one. The study finds a positive correlation between international development cooperation and the increasingly **positive perception of local government**. In 2009, 80% of those surveyed stated that the district or provincial administration rarely looked after local needs; by 2013, that figure had dropped to 59%.

In people's perceptions, the **security situation** deteriorated significantly between 2009 and 2011, but has **slightly improved** since. This change can be attributed to the military activities of anti-government forces and the counterattacks by Afghan and international security forces, which peaked in 2011. The majority of those surveyed, however, currently feel threatened mainly by criminal groups, armed militias, and the Taliban.

There has recently been an increasing trend towards perceiving international security forces and development cooperation players as a **threat to Afghan traditions and Islamic values**. Yet respondents were seldom able to give specific examples to illustrate that perception. So it is more of a general sense of being threatened by Western values. Changes that will **benefit girls and women**, mainly supported by Western donors, are **welcomed**, although a slight falling off in support can be observed. For example, in 2013 95% of those surveyed stated that they were in favour of **schooling for girls**, whilst in 2007 that figure was 98%. Promotion of **wage labour for women** as well as men was favoured by 71% in 2013 and 83% in 2007.
The study looks at how those members of the public surveyed in North East Afghanistan perceive international cooperation and foreign military forces. It provides the German government and the implementing organisations of German development cooperation with valuable insights that can be used in determining the future strategic direction of bilateral development cooperation with the country and its practical implementation.

The BMZ is planning to focus future research on the country strategy for development cooperation with Afghanistan that was adopted in mid-2014, so as to be able to better record and analyse the direct results and impacts of German interventions in future.