

# Aid Afghanistan

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

JULY 2006

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

AA, First Step 1995	1
AA remedial programs	1
Underground Schools during the Taliban era	2
Bombing of the Wadak Schools	2
Teachers Training Program	3
New Canaan Partners with AA	3
Spotlight on students	3
AA 10th graders prepare for American University in Afghanistan	4

## Aid Afghanistan, First step 1995

The trip to Pakistan in 1995 changed my life. I had to leave Afghanistan at the end of 1978 because of the Russian invasion and migrated to the United States where I lived for twenty three years.

Life in the US was challenging yet comfortable. I always wondered what life would have been like if I stayed in Afghanistan.

After my father died in 1994, I felt a burning desire to return home. Unfortunately, the factional war between the different Mujahideen groups was going on and I could only come to Pakistan.

In Peshawer Pakistan, I was able to visit literacy programs in the Afghan refugee camps which helped me reach a different level of awareness.

Some of those experiences will never leave me. When I saw a 50

year old woman learning to read for the first time and her eyes glowed as tears were coming



down her face and she said, "tell me more. What else is out there?"

It made me realize how lucky

I was to be born into a family who could take me to the US and provide a comfortable life for me. I could be any of these women in the refugee camp. I was an Afghan after all.

Another woman who had a set of twin babies asked me, "which one of the babies are strong enough to keep because I can't keep both. I don't have enough milk."

I could no longer live in the US with my fancy house and expensive cars. I felt responsible and obligated to do something for those who we left behind and who had suffered from years of war.

After several long sleepless nights and much reflection on the condition of the Afghan people, I came to the conclusion that education was the fundamental missing element in the life of the Afghans and possibly the reason for their long lasting suffering.

The only contribution I could offer was to assist them with education and therefore, Aid Afghanistan Organization was established by a group of Afghan professionals with academic support of honorable professors from the American University in Washington DC.

—Hassina Sherjan

## Aid Afghanistan Remedial Education Programs

AA undertook a needs assessment after the fall of the Taliban to determine how best contribute to the education process. The result of the assessment indicated that there was a generation of female youth between ages of 12 to 18 attending first to fourth grade elementary school.

AA decided to help these girls who had been deprived of education during the Taliban era to catch up and integrate back into the regular school system.

With financial assistance from DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency), Aid Afghanistan established its first remedial education programs in Kabul in February, 2003. Three schools were established in three different districts of Kabul for a total of 1100 students.

As a result, these students have moved up two grade levels every year and now some of our students are in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

By May, 2004, AA had established remedial education

programs in Wardak, Ghazni, Bamiyan, Parwan and Badakhshan provinces. There are now a total of 1800 female students attending these programs.



AA students in Bamiyan province.



AA students in Kabul

## Underground Schools

While visiting our programs in Peshawar Pakistan, I decided to come to Afghanistan to witness the living conditions of the female population.

I managed to meet with some leaders of the Taliban but after some long and useless discussions, the Deputy Ministry of Education said, "Sorry, we can't do anything for you because our own wives and children are living in Pakistan so our daughters go to school. The order comes from up above and we implement it."

The next day, I started interviewing some of the former teachers who were now begging on the streets to feed their children. I identified five widows with seven to ten children, and organized classes within their homes for a total of 250 students.

These women were educated and had university degrees

with many years of teaching experience. Razia, one of the teachers, said, "My children will all commit suicide if they find out I am begging to feed them. But, what other choice do I have. If I didn't have them, I would have committed suicide a long time ago."



Upon returning to Afghanistan in Dec 21, 2001, I visited the classes and it was a joy to find out that the girls had done well in the schools and were eager to continue their education. In fact, when they took the exam

in order to integrate back to the regular school system, they moved up one to two classes higher than their grade level.

Unfortunately, getting an education had not been easy for them. The Taliban had found out about the schools and came to punish them for learning. They showed me their beautiful hands, as their eyes were filled with tears, and explained, "look, they beat us up. Our hands were bleeding. They even beat up our teacher and she fainted. And they came again and again."

I am still in touch with some of these students. They have a strong bond that holds them to one another. When we get together, all they want to talk about is the time that the Taliban came to the school and how they ran to hide in the chicken house and how much it hurt when they were beaten.

—Hassina Sherjan

Girls in the underground school, during the Taliban era

*"look they beat us up. Our hands were bleeding. They even beat up our teacher and she fainted. And they [Taliban] came again and again."*

## Bombing of Wardak School

Our Wardak program with over 300 students has been one of our most successful programs.

These students were amongst our top category of students with strong commitment and dedication to learning and a desire to become productive members of the society.

Unfortunately, on May 9, 2006, at 1:00 am, three rockets hit the school and four explosives were planted to be set off

Unfortunately, on May 9, 2006, at 1:00 am, three rockets hit the school and four explosives were planted to be set off around the building. No one was hurt physically, but our students have been emotionally devastated. Their hopes and dreams seem to be coming to an end.

AA has no intention of closing the school but we are currently waiting for the government to establish security for the villagers so we

own and have been reading books from the library which was provided for them.



Wardak school before the rocketing

# Teacher Training Ensures Quality Education



AA Kabul Teachers

A total of 72 teachers are working with our programs in Kabul. AA has some of the most qualified teachers with university degrees and many years of experience. These teachers have gone through Nebraska University Teacher Training Program

for three years. To guarantee that high quality of education for our students will continue, we established our own teacher training program in 2005. This program is focused on academic training in Kabul as well as methodological training for our teachers in the provinces.

These pedagogical trainings help raise the teaching levels to international standards. In Afghanistan, learning has been based on memorization with very little class interaction.

Therefore, these trainings allow the

teachers to experience the culture of interactive teaching ; an approach which enables the students to understand key concepts while developing analytical thinking.



Teacher Trainers

## New Canaan partners with Aid Afghanistan

The UN Committee of New Canaan Connecticut initiated a fundraising drive to support two remedial education programs in Badakhshan province. With their generous support, AA established one education program in Layaba and another one in Khash districts for 500 students.

Most of our students show great artistic talents aside from their academic progress. Badakhshan students were provided with

disposable cameras to take pictures. These pictures were sent to the UN Committee of New Canaan and an exhibition was organized on May 29, 2006 where hundreds of people visited. This exhibition included photographs from New Canaan High school as a contrast.

We hope that this exhibition will travel through out the United States.



Photo by AA student in Badakhshan province

*An exhibition of photography by AA students in Badakhshan, opened on May 29th in New Canaan Connecticut.*

## Spotlight on Students

Halima, is a 15 year old girl and Gulalai, is a 16 year old girl. Both are from a nomad family which has settled in Kabul. They were brought to one of AA's program in Kabul 2004. No one in their family is literate.

They were dressed in traditional Kuchi (nomad) dress and only spoke Pashto. Since all the subjects are taught in Dari at the schools. One of the students

agreed to translate for them during the study periods.

Halima and Gulalai are among the top ten students in their class. Two and a half years later, both sisters speak fluent Farsi and are now in the 8th grade. Biology is Halima's favorite subject. She wants to become a doctor. While Gulalai enjoys computer class, and would like to become a computer teacher.

## About Aid Afghanistan



Aid Afghanistan Team

Aid Afghanistan is a 501 ( c ) 3 nonprofit organization based in Afghanistan and the U.S. AA was founded in 1996 by an Afghan woman who left Afghanistan as a refugee in 1979 and has returned to her homeland to participate in the reconstruction process.

Aid Afghanistan was working to provide education for Afghan refugees in Pakistan from 1996 to 2001 as well as supporting five clandestine schools during the Taliban from 1999 to 2001.

Since 2003, AA has established remedial education programs for girls who were denied education during the Taliban era.

Visit us at: [www.aidafghanistan.net](http://www.aidafghanistan.net)  
For more information, contact:  
[h.sherjan@aidafghanistan.net](mailto:h.sherjan@aidafghanistan.net)

## AA students prepare for American University of Afghanistan

The American University is slated to open a campus in Kabul, Afghanistan in September 2006. Prior to its opening, it will have a preparation course, Foundation Studies. The Foundation Studies aims to prepare the prospective freshman for life in an English-based university where all the lectures, notes and tests would be conducted in the English.

As such, Aid Afghanistan is preparing its students to be part of the incoming freshmen. The 10th graders took a qualifying English exam and out of



AA 10 graders gearing for the Foundation Studies at American University in Afghanistan.

undergo a 10 month long course which will teach them how to take notes, study and develop requisite skills for attending the American University.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

**AID AFGHANISTAN**  
**HAJI YAQUBE SQUARE, FIRST STREET, HOUSE 54, KABUL, AFGHANISTAN**  
**PHONE: 93 (0) 702 80 885, 93 (0) 794 28 515**  
**EMAIL: [AID@AIDAFGHANISTAN.NET](mailto:AID@AIDAFGHANISTAN.NET), [H.SHERJAN@AIDAFGHANISTAN.NET](mailto:H.SHERJAN@AIDAFGHANISTAN.NET)**  
**[WWW.AIDAFGHANISTAN.NET](http://WWW.AIDAFGHANISTAN.NET)**