

AFGHANAID NEWS UPDATE

GHOR, THE FORGOTTEN PROVINCE?



EVEN WITHIN THE AFGHAN CONTEXT, GHOR IS ONE OF THE MOST DEPRIVED AND MOST ISOLATED PROVINCES IN THE COUNTRY. SURROUNDED BY HIGH MOUNTAINS AND WITH SEVERE ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATIC CONDITIONS, ACCESS TO MANY DISTRICTS IS OFTEN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT OR EVEN IMPOSSIBLE DURING THESE WINTER MONTHS. VIRTUALLY NO AID ORGANISATIONS OPERATE IN GHOR AND THE ONLY INPUT OF THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT IS THROUGH THE NATIONAL SOLIDARITY PROGRAMME. MOREOVER FEW HEALTH SERVICES OPERATE IN THE REGION, WHILST CHILD AND MATERNAL MORTALITY RATES STAND AMONG THE WORST IN THE COUNTRY AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES REMAIN SCANT.

Afghanaid's chair, David Page, recently visited some of our projects in this province and met people who with the help of Afghanaid - are overcoming the difficulties of living in this hostile environment. Afghanaid is proud to have Dr Abdus Samad, the only qualified Afghan vet in Ghor on our team. In this region the size of Wales, Dr Abdus Samad struggles to vaccinate and look after the many livestock here. His work becomes increasingly important in years such as this one when widespread drought is having a severe consequence on livestock health - which is an important buffer to the perils of the approaching winter against starvation. Ghor is one of the provinces in Afghanistan that is severely affected by drought this year. Villagers anecdotally talked of the fact that in the past droughts came every 20 years, nowadays however droughts are an ever increasing reality for Afghans, their increased occurrence arguably caused by climate change and the destruction of habitats over the last few decades through such things as deforestation and the destruction of irrigation systems.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

One of the many ways we work with communities to tackle the extremities placed on them by the climate etc. is by implementing infrastructure projects such as introducing a water pump or reservoir to a village. To assure these projects stay viable in the long term we ensure that the work is carried out with the support and input of the communities; be that through local labour, sourcing of materials, or a small contribution from the village. This contribution allows individuals and communities to take ownership over the project, which in the long term is crucial in ensuring its success.

Water pumps mean that clean water can reach villages and save a huge amount of time and effort in water retrieval, not to mention the lives that can be saved from waterborne diseases. Women and children are usually tasked with water collection, with improved infrastructure they can spend their time more productively and save injuries that could have been caused by the long journeys in ice covered land to collect water. Afghanaid's chair David Page, commented that in one village he visited a stone reservoir had been built to collect local spring water, this meant that villagers no longer had to organise a night shift to collect it!

Similarly, in the village of Sayed Abad (Nuristan) Afghanaid has recently introduced a pump and reservoir. Here, Jan Mohammad, a male resident of the Sayed Abad village says:

THIS HAS CHANGED OUR LIVES

"Prior to this project half of the villagers used to fetch drinking water over a long distance. The water was not safe particularly for our children's health. It caused different kinds of illnesses and diseases such as diarrhoea and cholera. Now we have access to safe drinking water. The women of our village are very happy. This is an incredible facility for us to get water right by our houses. I can say that this project has changed our lives."

Ghulamullah a male resident of Sayed Abad village says, "During the winter season due to the snow on the ground most of the people especially women and children faced a lot of difficulties to bring water from the river. Sometimes they would even slip and injured their legs and hands. After the completion of the water project, life is getting much easier for our children and women".





Raheema, a women resident of Soyad Abad village expressed that "Prior to the implementation of the water taps, 70 % of the village women had to fetch water from a distance of approximately 1.5 km. It was heavy work for us, and the water was not safe either. Our children usually suffered from diseases such as diarrhoea and cholera. Now we are happy to have access to clean drinking water just by our house doors. We hope that the diseases will reduce soon. Thanks to AAD for their efforts in our community."

Projects like these are integral to our work in Afghanistan of providing healthier futures for Afghans. However, in regions like Ghor there is more than just the aforementioned geographical and climatic challenges to take into account. Ghor is also an important politically strategic area, being situated just to the North of Helmand (where currently UK troops are deployed under

NATO) as it is one of the poorest provinces and thus potentially more vulnerable than others to poppy cultivation and insurgency. Our work in Ghor - providing a safety net for the poorest people through providing alternative livelihoods - is therefore even more critical at this time. We have many trained agronomists within our afghan staff and they have over the years through our observation and experimentation plots helped improve yields and diversify the types of vegetables fruit and non-fruit trees grown. With significantly improved yields for wheat farmers there is less incentive to grow poppies in order to feed their families.

Funding for all this vital work in Ghor however is woefully inadequate and that is why Afghanaid has launched its appeal for the people of Ghor. To find out how you can help and to read more on the issues please visit our website.

AFGHANISTAN IN THE NEWS

Throughout 2006, you will have been bombarded with images and stories from Afghanistan, on the broadcast News, in all the main broadsheet newspapers, and even on programmes such as Panorama.

However, the stories coming out always focus on 'our troops' fighting in the Southern provinces of Afghanistan, and sadly, often portray the Afghan community as the people we are fighting.

However, Afghanistan has over 31 million people and those that are unhappy with the international presence, the Taliban, war lords and drug barons, are the minority. The majority are people who struggle each day, just to sustain life.

Afghanaid works with some of the poorest communities in the most remote rural provinces of Afghanistan. You will have read more of this in the previous article. But the plight of these people and their basic needs are currently being overlooked by international donors.

Funding from the UK Government that is not channelled through the Afghan Government is only being given to NGO work in the provinces where our soldiers are based. This policy is short sighted in that it gives a geographical imbalance and sends the wrong messages to the Afghan community - increased insecurity leads to involvement of our troops, leads to becoming a funding priority for direct services.

In the House of Lords on 5th December, Baroness Rawlings described Afghanaid as "a remarkable charity". Afghanaid is remarkable because it has continued working in Afghanistan,



without a break for the last 25 years, using mainly Afghan staff, and directly improving the lives and livelihoods of more than 500,000 people.

But there is still so much more to do and yet sources of funding for this crucial work have all but dried up. It will take years for the capacity of the Afghan Government to be at the level it would need to be at to provide frontline support to some of the people in greatest need - the people that Afghanaid works with.

We need your help to ensure the British Government re-considers its funding policy on Afghanistan. Also we need your help and support to enable us to identify new sources of funding. Please think carefully of all the different ways you could help at what is proving to be the most challenging time in our history. Call us or email us to talk it through and give us your ideas and support.

FUNDRAISING NEWS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FLORA LONDON MARATHON 2007

...WE STILL HAVE GOLDEN BOND PLACES, BUT THEY'RE GOING FAST! WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN OUR TEAM?

Running the Flora London Marathon for Afghanaid could simultaneously be one of the most exhausting and proud days of your life. Not only will you have run an amazing 26 miles proving to yourself your determination and physical prowess! But, afterwards you could put your feet up knowing your effort has significantly contributed to helping to secure the lives and livelihoods of some of the poorest people in the world.

You don't need to be Paula Radcliffe to participate! Afghanaid has a dedicated marathon team who can support you all the way to the finish line whether you're 18 or 80. We offer running and training tips and advice as well as help and ideas for all your fundraising efforts. Please call this number now to find out more information about joining our Afghanaid Marathon team and sharing the challenge! **0870 010 6657**



RECYCLE YOUR PHONE AND RAISE FUNDS



Afghanaid have teamed up with Aurom environmental to raise money through the recycling of unused/broken mobile phones. At no cost to Afghanaid Aurom will pay to receive your phones via their freepost envelopes and will then recycle its components in an environmentally sustainable way.

Please do consider donating us your old mobile as you could raise crucial funds for Afghanaid as well as disposing of the harmful components of your phone in an environmentally safe way. We have more freepost envelopes available so please do let us know if you or your business would like more.

CHINA CHALLENGE



Photo uploaded to Flickr by Eugene

Do you have a passion for culture, a sense of adventure and the desire to do something challenging for a great cause? If so, you should join Afghanaid China Trek!

Come and immerse yourself in Chinese tradition, history and ancient mythology. Trek along part of The Great Wall - one of the wonders of the world, passing through woodland and terraced farmland, following the contours of these beautiful mountains.

We provide you with a dedicated event manager to help you reach the fundraising target and answer any questions. We also organise a pre-trip event so you can meet all your fellow trekkers.

THE ROCHE SCHOOL, WANDSWORTH

The Roche School heard about Afghanaid as a result of a talk at their Assembly. They used the day to raise money for Afghanaid in all sorts of ways, including no uniform and a cake stall. £615 was raised by their fantastic efforts. Thank you Roche School.

SPONSORED SKIP FOR AFGHANAID



Photo uploaded to Flickr by P17147

GARDENS OPEN DAY

WINCHESTER ROAD METHODIST CHURCH HAD AN EXCELLENT IDEA OF A LOVELY EVENT TO RAISE MONEY TO HELP FUND AFGHANAID'S KITCHEN GARDENS.

Members of the Church opened their gardens for the day, and others paid £3 to go and visit any of the gardens that were open.

Over 80 people visited the various gardens and enjoyed a wonderful day. An Afghan experience was provided in one of the homes with an Afghan member of Afghanaid's staff present to tell people more about the work of Afghanaid. Visitors drank green tea, saw an Afghan meal being prepared, sat on Afghan rugs and tried on a Burkha - to experience how that feels.

This was a very successful day, raising over £700. This money will help fund Kitchen Gardens which Afghanaid cultivate in various remote villages. Afghanaid supplies the seeds and gives training to the women on how to grow the fruit and vegetables and how to preserve and cook them too. Afghanaid values the support and commitment shown by the members of Winchester Road Church.

OAKHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL in Woodford Green heard about the work of Afghanaid as a result of Adèle Bird speaking at their school assembly.

The School Council decided to help Afghanaid and had the idea of a Sponsored Skip. The event was a great success and everyone participated enthusiastically.

They hoped to raise £500 which could build a reservoir in a rural village community in Afghanistan, however, they exceeded their target and more than doubled it, raising a magnificent £1,300. Many people who sponsored the children ticked the Gift Aid box on the sponsor forms and this meant another £105 added to that total, making a grand total of £1,405. A fabulous achievement from a school with just 200 pupils. Well done Oakhill!

POSTCARD CALENDAR 2007 - FACES OF AFGHANISTAN

November 2007		آوردیا قوون
Nov 1	پنجشنبه	شنبه
Nov 2	جمعه	پنجشنبه
Nov 3	شنبه	دوشنبه
Nov 4	یکشنبه	سه شنبه
Nov 5	دوشنبه	چهارشنبه
Nov 6	سه شنبه	پنجشنبه
Nov 7	چهارشنبه	جمعه
Nov 8	پنجشنبه	شنبه
Nov 9	جمعه	پنجشنبه
Nov 10	شنبه	دوشنبه
Nov 11	یکشنبه	سه شنبه
Nov 12	دوشنبه	چهارشنبه
Nov 13	سه شنبه	پنجشنبه
Nov 14	چهارشنبه	جمعه
Nov 15	پنجشنبه	شنبه
Nov 16	جمعه	پنجشنبه



ORDER ONLINE (SEE 'SHOP' ON OUR WEBSITE) OR ORDER A COPY BY POST OR TELEPHONE (0871 288 11 44)

Afghanaid has designed and produced a stunning postcard calendar for 2007. Its theme is "faces of Afghanistan" and each month's photo is in fact a detachable postcard so you can put it up in your home or send it to a friend. We have also included both English and Afghan days and months. For every copy ordered at least £4 will go towards our crucial work supporting Afghans. Buy your copy now and start new year with a smile!

ONLY £6.99 (PLUS £1 P&P)



BOOKS, ARTS AND CULTURE



ENSEMBLE BAKHTAR

Ensemble Bakhtar is a CD that brings together the music of John Baily, Veronica Doubleday, Yusuf Mahmood, and Matthaios Tsahourides, four outstanding and acclaimed musicians. This live album is a traditional Afghan experience with a new twist. With a subtle blend of Greek influence from the Pontic lyra, this interpretation of classical Afghanistan music is interesting and exciting.



NOSHE DJAN :

AFGHAN FOOD AND COOKERY
BY HELEN SABERI

Helen Saberi, who lived in Afghanistan for ten years and married into an Afghan family, has written this compilation of authentic dishes from Afghanistan adding practical advice for Western cooks. Helen includes information on eating habits, traditions and foodstuffs in Afghanistan and the book is punctuated with delightful drawings. Helen Saberi's knowledge and love of Afghan people shines through every page.



ON THE ROAD TO KANDAHAR

BY JASON BURKE

In 1991 Jason Burke set off to join Kurdish guerrillas fighting in Iraq. It turned out to be the start of a remarkable journey that would take him from the sands of the Sahara to the

highest peaks of the Himalayas, seeing at first hand life and death, war and peace, bigotry and tolerance, hate and friendship throughout the 'Islamic World'.

His book 'On the Road to Kandahar' is the honest, fascinating story of how he has travelled in search of answers to perhaps the most important issues of our time: how should we understand Islam, and Islamic radicalism? 'On the Road to Kandahar' is vivid and enjoyable, but it is also important. It allows us to see, in all its variety and contradiction, a broad swathe of the planet that we urgently need to understand better.

Jason is a supporter of Afghanaid and has seen our work in Afghanistan. We have copies of his book available and they can be purchased for a discounted price of just £1.8 (10% less than RRP).