



The Voice of Innocence

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF HELP THE AFGHAN CHILDREN (HTAC)

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Humanitarian Aid Reaches 12,269 Afghan Refugees Fleeing From War

For the many Afghan families fleeing from the fierce fighting between coalition forces and the Taliban in Helmand Province earlier this year, then facing the cold Winter in Karte Now refugee camp on the outskirts of Kabul, the colorful and warm hand-made comforters were a 'gift from God'. For the many children of these families, the school kits brought smiles to their faces and excitement, knowing they would have these much-needed supplies when school in camp started in March. And for concerned families, the hygiene kits would mean fewer illnesses and in some cases, would prove life-saving.

Thanks to our international partner, **The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)** <http://www.mcc.org/> HTAC was able to target and reach those in need who (through no fault of their own), had been forced to leave their homes in Southern Afghanistan and seek refuge further north.

While HTAC's humanitarian performance over the years may seem impressive (we have delivered direct aid to over 1.7 million Afghans since 1993), it is the human stories of gratitude that touch us the most. Here are just a few.

Gulalai: *"This is amazing. Is it done by hand or machine?"*

Gul Ghoti: *"I don't know how to thank those who send these beautiful blankets, but I can say that they have saved my children's lives since the tent gets very cold at night."*



Fatima says: *"My mother was happy to receive the blankets, but for me this (school kit) is the best gift. When school starts I will have my supplies all ready."*



Ajmal Khan says: *"I left Helmand Province with my grandson about two months ago when I hear that the soldiers are coming to find the Taliban. I already lost three of my family members and wanted to take my grandson to a safer place. They gave me 3 blankets, one health kit and one school kit. Thank you for the blankets, but I was very happy to see my grandson's smile when he opened the school kit."*

To learn more about HTAC's humanitarian efforts over the years, please visit our website: www.htac.org

Afghan Girls Help Protect Endangered Species Through Storybook Project

One of Afghanistan's most majestic creatures, the snow leopard has the unfortunate distinction of being on the list of endangered species. With less than a thousand of these animals left on the planet, the snow leopard is being aggressively hunted into near extinction because of the huge price they can bring in their capture, which too often results in killing. But thanks to an innovative creative writing project sponsored by HTAC's newest partner, Concinnity Initiatives (CI), a number of Afghan girls will be playing an important part in helping to protect this animal.

The project is aimed at teaching and promoting literacy and the value of reading, conservation education, as well as global education and awareness. The ultimate goal is to publish and sell an original storybook written largely by these Afghan girls. HTAC was selected as CI's Afghanistan partner because of our established environmental education program as well as our track record in creating our own children's storybooks. Concinnity Initiatives is working with other non-profit organizations in developing countries to produce a series of educational children's books and materials.



Girls selected for the project will initially participate in a series of creative writing exercises designed to acquaint them with the elements of storytelling. Later, they will create their own original stories involving the snow leopard and compete for best story awards. Their stories will be edited by CI writers into one single story book with illustrations that will be sold around the world to raise money for HTAC and to teach children about Afghanistan.

All of us at HTAC are excited about this project and the opportunity for these talented girls to make a lasting contribution to their country and to the environment. For more information about Concinnity Initiatives, you can visit their website at: www.concinnityinitiatives.org

HTAC Brings Educational Programs to Historic Kabul School

Murad Khane, a district in Kabul's historic old city, is an area that has been damaged by neglect and war. It retains much of its original fabric with a network of small streets connecting the bazaar, religious structures, and houses in a layout that represents the area's unique ties to Islamic design and nearly four hundred years of Afghan history. Since 2006, an NGO (non-governmental organization) called **Turquoise Mountain**, has been partnering with Afghanistan's government, local community leaders, and The Prince of Wales in establishing an integrated regeneration project designed to raise the community's standard of living, enhance its economy, strengthen its traditions and identity, as well as enhancing the district's primary school attended by approximately 140 boys and girls.

HTAC is proud to announce a partnership with Turquoise Mountain that has begun to introduce three of its unique programs into Murad Khane's curriculum: *peace education*, *"Read Afghanistan's" literacy program*, and *environmental education*. In the coming months, HTAC will be providing updates on our work with this school via our website and future newsletters.

Spotlight on Our Schools

Since the opening of our first model school in 2003, HTAC has put a premium on establishing centers of learning that make it possible for Afghan children to succeed. One of the best ways to do this is establishing model schools.

Our model schools are well-built, clean, and fully-operational facilities that provide boys and girls HTAC-designed programs that supplement the standard educational curriculum, a team of highly qualified and dedicated teachers, and a safe, clean, and nurturing learning environment. These schools are also distinguished by the strong support of local communities, where HTAC establishes, trains, and empowers community school committees to participate in and take ownership of their children's education. In this edition of **'The Voice of Innocence'** we spotlight three of our nine model schools.

Istalif High School – Parwan District, Kabul

Nestled in a peaceful rural setting in the northern section of Kabul, this area was once the central battleground between Taliban and Northern Alliance forces between 1996 and the Fall of 2001. The community is home to many former refugees and there is a significant demand for quality schools and teachers. With an enrollment of 798 students, HTAC has active programs in computer education, peace education, and environmental education while conducting on-going development for Istalif's 27 teachers.



Abdullah Bin-Omar Middle School – Paghman District, Kabul Province

In the previously under-served district of Paghman where children once sat on the ground outside, learning their lessons, HTAC established the first model in the region and one of the first in Afghanistan since the beginning of reconstruction. Today, the school boasts 26 classrooms, computer laboratory, peace and green rooms (for the study of peace and environmental education), 43 teachers and 1,591 students, representing grades 1-9. **ABO** as it is affectionately called, has been designated as HTAC's flagship model school.



Roshan High School – Laghman Province

Located in the town of Mehtar Lam, not far from Jalalabad in Eastern Afghanistan, Roshan High School became the site of HTAC's first landmine education program in collaboration with our partners, the Marshall Legacy Institute. Roshan also became one of our first schools equipped with internet capability and the school conducts regular Skype-cast cultural exchanges with selected schools in the United States. With an enrollment of 4,622 students and 76 teachers, HTAC also provides computer education classes.



What's New?

Environmental Education – 300 students are enrolled in our environmental education spring program at 6 schools. Students are engaged in planting and maintaining saplings (young trees) and flower cuttings around their school compounds and have learned to apply the same principles around their homes.

Teacher Training – 28 members of HTAC's Farah Province teacher training team, headed by a project manager, have been recruited to begin implementing our massive project. 374 teachers (211 women), have completed their training with a target goal of training 2,337 by project's end in 2011.

Computer Education – We initiated our 2010 program for 10,171 high school students (42% girls), at 11 schools in three provinces, the second highest computer enrollment in our history. Students at two of our schools are learning to use the internet to search and learn a variety of subjects to supplement their regular curriculum studies and to participate in cultural and global citizenship exchanges with US sister schools.

Peace Education – We conducted new peace education workshops for master trainers and key staff who are coordinating the implementation of peace programs for 36 schools, an estimated 1,300 teachers and 44,000 students in Samangan, Kabul, and Kandahar Provinces.

Cultural Exchange Program – Students at Abdullah Bin-Omar (ABO) Middle School received a new exchange project from Westfield High School in New Jersey, one of their sister schools. ABO's exchange project has been completed and (at the printing of this newsletter), was being translated for the students at Westfield High.

New HTAC Kabul Office and Staff Officers – HTAC moved into its new Kabul Offices and is proud to announce the appointment of two new Staff Officers: *Engineer Mohammad Sharif (Office Manager) and Mr. Osman Hemat (Communication Officer and Project Manager for HTAC's teacher training program in Farah Province).*

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- \$25 Provides a month of essential school supplies to 5 students.
- \$100 Pays for planting a school garden (students will help maintain).
- \$500 Helps support a school's Peace Room activities for one year.
- \$1000 Pays for a school's cultural exchange program for one year.
- Other \$ _____ General operations support

- Become an outreach volunteer
- Help sponsor a school or educational program

WAYS TO GIVE:

On Line: www.htac.org/donate

By Mail: **Help the Afghan Children**
3900 Jermantown Road, Suite 300, Fairfax, VA 22030, USA

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