

## HTAC Recognized by APEX Foundation

Help the Afghan Children was recognized in July by the APEX Foundation, a philanthropic branch of Apex CoVantage (with headquarters in Herndon, Virginia), for our work in promoting empowerment and self-reliance of Afghan children through education. HTAC received a small initial grant award for our performance, and most-importantly, a future invitation to partner with APEX in identifying specific initiatives the foundation would be interested in supporting.

HTAC's Executive Director, Suraya Sadeed, had the opportunity to talk with APEX officials and employees about the challenges Afghan children face in gaining an education and what we are doing to help make their dreams a reality.

## HTAC Meets Charity Accountability Standards

The Better Business Bureau's (BBB) Wise Giving Alliance recently completed its extensive evaluation of Help the Afghan Children's organizational structure and practices and have once again, awarded HTAC is coveted national charity seal, signifying that we have successfully met all 20 rigorous standards of charity accountability.

These standards are designed to assess: *how we govern our organization, how we spend the money we receive from donations and grants, the truthfulness of our representations, and our willingness to disclose basic information to the public.*

Many non-profit organizations who provide valuable services fail to meet BBB's 20 standards and therefore, are not permitted to display the BBB charity seal on their website and other literature. That's why this year, as in previous years, HTAC is especially proud to receive BBB's Wise Giving Alliance approval rating in 2008. What that means to you, our donors and prospective donors, is that you can donate with confidence and that HTAC is an organization you can trust.

### ♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥ You Can Make a Difference ♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

\$25	Provides a month of essential school supplies to 5 students.
\$50	Purchase desks and chairs for one student.
\$75	Pays for one teacher's monthly stipend.
\$100	Pays for planting a school garden (students will help maintain).
\$250	Pays for printing & distribution of 15 bi-lingual storybooks.
\$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
- Help your community middle & high schools learn about Afghanistan

**WAYS TO GIVE:**

On Line: [www.htac.org/donate](http://www.htac.org/donate)

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

A non-profit organization, 501-C-3, Tax ID: 54-1695838



# The Voice of Innocence

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF HELP THE AFGHAN CHILDREN (HTAC)  
A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION, 501-C-3, TAX ID: 54-1695838, ESTABLISHED IN 1993

Volume XII Issue 3 September 2008

## New Landmine Education Program

**"It is ever courageous, never sleeps, never misses"**  
(UNICEF: *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, 2008)

Landmines, the silent killers, are everywhere-- on weedy footpaths, near irrigation ditches, and under bridges, scattered among the rubble of old military trucks, in the middle of dormant, once rich fields-- in over 70 countries, over 50 million strong. For days or for decades they lay, non-discriminating, waiting to be triggered -- by a curious toddler as he bends to touch the glint of light on the fat button-like canister at his feet, a farmer's plow as the man struggles to open up contaminated land his hungry family needs to cultivate, or a scavenging teenager hunting for scrap metal to sell in exchange for food or clothes.

Almost 50 per cent of the time, a child is the victim. In a flash, an innocent life is doomed to death, blindness, or disability, always in a place, a village, a city where the struggle for rudimentary existence—to eat, to have shelter, to work-- already challenges human efforts.

Afghanistan, together with Cambodia and Angola, has suffered 85 percent of the world's land mine casualties (UNICEF), with 70,000 estimated casualties there between 1980 and 2000. Yet the scourge remains, with some 50 to 60 Afghan adults and children still suffering death or maiming each month from landmines and unexploded ammunitions. Over one million mines still lay buried over an area of 872 million square miles, affecting 4 million Afghans in more than 2,500 communities and every province. Despite 20 years of aggressive de-mining operations (UN Mine Action Program), with the recent upsurge in Taliban and Al-Qaida attacks, and Allied operations, 2007 saw a 13.2 per cent increase over 2006 in the number of civilian victims.

Since its inception, HTAC has championed the need to rehabilitate Afghan children who have been landmine victims, as well as spearheading its current highly successful schools and educational programs across five provinces. Now, in partnership with the Marshall Legacy Institute, HTAC will bring MLI's CHAMPS (Children Against Mines Program) International Program to Afghanistan. The program will educate Afghan children about land mines, provide prosthetics and rehabilitative care to two landmine survivors, and expand HTAC's already successful cultural exchange and computer programs. In a pilot program in Roshan High School in Mehtarlam (Laghman Province), 350 kilometers east of Kabul, HTAC's project manager will set up a land mine action club in this school of 2569 students, and identify a young Afghan landmine survivor. Roshan High School will be paired with a "sister" American school, who will do fundraising to assist the rehabilitation of the Afghan survivor, as well as spread awareness of landmine dangers. Through an internet connection, also to be installed by HTAC, Roshan students will "talk" monthly with their American counterparts. At the cutting edge of such child-to-child approaches, which work at school and at the community level to utilize role-playing and survivors as educators, the CHAMPS International program will reach at-risk children and increase their awareness of these potent killers.

CHAMPS is a program of the Marshall Legacy Institute (MLI) an organization committed to expanding the vision and legacy of Nobel Peace Laureate George C. Marshall to restore hope and stability to war-torn countries. MLI's major initiatives are the K9 Demining Corps Campaign, which donate s landmine-sniffing dogs to mine-affected countries; CHAMPS and CHAMPS International, which foster global citizenship, educate American youth about the presence of landmines in other countries, and provide the means for them to get involved in the solution. Whether it's by sponsoring their own mine detection dog (to date, 15 MDDs have been donated by children through CHAMPS campaigns in Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont and Virginia) or linking American schools with schools in mine-affected countries to sponsor young landmine survivors, MLI is committed to providing children with opportunities to become a part of something bigger than themselves.



HTAC becomes a proud partner in a program that enables and connects children across continents and cultures, and models computer skills, fundraising, and compassionate assistance. CHAMPS International - Afghanistan will develop young advocates to spread the word about the man-made epidemic of landmine deaths and disabilities, save and bring hope to vulnerable lives, and nurture a generation with global commitments to affect change.

## Internet Coming to Rokhshana High School

For the past two years, HTAC has conducted its highly successful computer education program at **Rokhshana High School**, a predominantly girls school (population 4,087), in Kabul, Afghanistan, not far from HTAC's main office. Later this month, Rokhshana will have a new distinction – the first of HTAC's schools to be equipped with **access to the internet**.



For the students, teachers, and administration of Rokhshana, this development is nothing less than ground-breaking. Using the internet will immediately open the door to multiple opportunities for learning and communication exchanges a half a world away. In some cases, it will most likely change the very nature of how Afghan students will learn.



HTAC's **computer education program** will and use the internet; a critical skill that will improve their chances of securing computer-rapidly-expanding information technology where approximately 90% of computer jobs Rokhshana students will have more complete more desirable to employ by companies and of the economy as well as the government.

Consider just a few of these amazing new opportunities. Students enrolled in now learn how to access help graduating 12<sup>th</sup> graders related jobs in Kabul's marketplace. In a country go to non-Afghans, computer skills and be organizations in all sectors

A second exciting opportunity for Rokhshana students and teachers will be utilizing the internet to communicate directly with 'sister schools' in the West in **cultural exchange projects**. In the past, exchange projects developed by our Afghan schools had to be physically picked up by HTAC's education team, then taken to our office, translated and entered onto the computer, and finally sent (electronically) to our USA office where we sent it along to the participating Western school. Similarly, exchange projects sent by Western schools had to be physically delivered to the participating school in Afghanistan. Having access to the internet will not only provide the rapid exchange of completed projects, but give students the unique opportunity to communicate with one another *during the project itself*, enriching the exchange experience as Afghan and Western students learn to get more comfortable communicating and learning from one another.

A third emerging opportunity for English-speaking students will be the chance to enroll in certified ESL (English as a second language), **e-classes** that will provide new courses, increase students' overall learning capacities, and (for many), prepare them for enrollment at a college or university.

For a devastated country that has been struggling so hard to regain its footing in a rapidly changing world, and for millions of Afghan children who still don't have access to basic schools and education, HTAC is both excited and proud to be offering the students at Rokhshana this learning tool that will open doors to a new world, change the dynamics of learning, and better prepare them for productive lives as young adults.

## HTAC Establishes New Schools

### Istalif High School

Thanks to a generous 3-year grant from the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Help the Afghan Children will be establishing Istalif Boys School as its 13<sup>th</sup> (and newest) model school since we began the model school program in 2002.

Located about 30 miles north of the of Kabul in a rural district of Parwan Province, this area was once a significant battleground site of fighting between the Taliban (who were defending the greater Kabul area) and Northern Alliance forces in the fall of 2001. Today, the community around Istalif is relatively safe and secure and there is a huge demand for quality schools and good teachers.



HTAC's educational team selected Istalif for a variety of reasons. The school facility itself is relatively new (built by a Canadian non-governmental organization in 2003) and structurally sound. Secondly, the area is very accessible with well-maintained roads. Most importantly, the area is home to many former refugees who returned from neighboring countries and re-settled here and the great majority of these families want not only a good education for their boys, but girls as well.

Right now, Istalif (which accommodates grades 1 through 12) enrolls only about 800 students (53% capacity) with 19 teachers employed; most of them never having received much training. The school has also lacked the resources to hire more teachers, including a sufficient number of females who (because of Afghan culture), are necessary in order to have the kind of environment where girls feel safe in attending. Once we have equipped Istalif with the necessary resources, training and programs necessary to meet our standards for a model school, one of our top priorities will be to recruit more female teachers and make it comfortable for parents to send their daughters to school.

Like all of our model schools, Istalif will have a fully-operational computer laboratory, peace room and green room (for our peace and environmental education programs), a literacy program, cultural exchange projects and rigorous teacher training. HTAC is extremely thankful to the MCC for supporting this important effort in another underserved area of the country.

### Roshan High School

The school is located in the City of Mehtarlam in Laghman Province, approximately 150 miles from the capital city of Kabul with 2,569 students. In addition to the Landmine Awareness Program that is funded by Champ International, HTAC will fund and implement our cultural exchange and computer education programs in this school. Computer skills are rapidly becoming an important, yet missing element of education for most Afghan children. In the last several years, there has been virtually an explosion of job opportunities for skilled computer operators in Afghanistan, especially in the urban areas.

