



## Families of Suicide Victims Find Hope Through US-Canadian Donor Project and HTAC

The children had gathered at the gate to sing and present flowers to the delegations of Parliamentarians arriving for the dedication of the new sugar factory in Baghlan Province, Afghanistan last November 7<sup>th</sup> when a suicide attacker detonated a bomb. In the carnage that followed, 59 young boys and girls from the neighboring school lay dead and another 115 injured.



As shock and disheartenment circled the world at this senseless violence, Afghans in the United States and Canada looked for ways to help the victims' families, many of whom had lost more than one child. One group in Los Angeles, the Afghanistan Prenatal Relief Project, sponsored by the TV station *Payam-e-Afghan*, collected \$85,100 for this effort. Knowing our close connections to people and programs in Afghanistan and our competence in getting funds into the right hands, HTAC was asked to deliver their gift.

Braving -36 degree temperatures, flight delays out of Kabul, electricity blackouts, blocked roads, and increasingly severe security threats, HTAC director Suraya Sadeed traveled to Baghlan to distribute \$700 per family those who had lost a child and \$395 per family to those who had suffered injuries. Additional funds were given to the school where the young victims were studying. While no money can compensate for a human life, this generous investment in the community will serve to build stability and possibly deflect the chance of future terrorist attacks.

Upon her return to the U.S., Ms. Sadeed traveled to Los Angeles and appeared on *Payam-e-Afghan* television, thanking Afghans throughout the United States and Canada for their generosity and letting them know their gift to these families was delivered.

### HTAC to Pilot New Child Financial Education Program

HTAC has been accepted into the Aflatoun (Plato) International Child Savings network and this year will initiate a ground-breaking program that teaches children the principles of saving money and its related financial and ethical responsibilities. This much-lauded program targets children ages 6 to 14 and utilizes eight consecutive learning and application standards in its curriculum.

Help the Afghan Children will target one of its model schools for this pilot program. 100 boys and girls will enter the program in 2008 with plans to expand to 400 students the following year and 800 students by 2010.

In a country reeling from decades of war and violence; where citizens are caught in the labyrinthine of borrowing and debt, where financial corruption and waste is widespread and where continued poverty robs children from a productive livelihood, HTAC believes that teaching children at a young age the importance and responsibilities of financial planning at a level they can understand, providing them with practical tools, and involving school, parental, and local community support, this program has the potential to teach and prepare a new generation of Afghans financially empowered citizens.

## Novel Computer Education Program Targets Afghan Girls

When the new school year starts on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, several thousand 12<sup>th</sup> grade girls at selected Kabul high schools will participate in a major computer education program aimed at providing computer technical and application skills so these young women can gain future employment and financial independence or pursue higher education.

Funded by a grant from Oprah's Angel Network (one of two Oprah Winfrey foundations that have supported our work in the past), this special program will provide girls high quality computer instruction, coaching, and preparation (upon graduation) to successfully obtain the many new computer-related jobs that have been created by the information technology explosion in all major sectors of Kabul.

A feature of this program will allow many of these girls the opportunity to apply their computer skills by participating in educational and cultural exchanges with selected 'sister' schools in the United States. Under HTAC's direction, selected classes will be given projects to develop (using the computer) and with the help of our translators, send their finished projects to fellow female students in the United States.

To put a 'human side' to this remarkable program, HTAC plans to identify and follow the progress of several girls during the year, highlighting the impact computer education has had on their lives.

### Afghan women call for peace, equality

More than 1,000 Afghan women gathered in Kandahar to celebrate International Women's Day, calling for peace and equality for women around the world.

It was an emotional day for many. War widows spoke about losing their families to violence. One woman talked about losing her husband to a suicide attack, and many of those around her broke down in tears. The women attending the larger of two separate rallies in secure compounds in Kandahar wore white scarves for solidarity. Security was tight as a planned march had to be cancelled over security concerns. The women were frisked as they entered the secure compounds.



In Kabul, President Karzai called on all religious leaders to advise all the people to stop violence against women, and end to child marriage and forced marriages. He said: "*Afghan women need the freedom to pursue more education and should not be forced into marriage*". Karzai also urged Afghan families to stop using young women as currency. Family disputes in Afghanistan – particularly in the more conservative countryside – are sometimes solved by one family giving a daughter to another family.

The legacy of the Taliban's repressive regime hovered over the rallies, but a young woman said there is reason for hope. She noted her generation will have better lives than their mothers and grandmothers.

In the 1996-2001 period, the then-ruling Taliban passed laws saying that Afghan women could not leave the house without a male relative and banned women from attending school.

## Afghan Girls Still Short-Shifted in Education

The notion of newly-opened girls' schools in post-Taliban Afghanistan continues to excite the Western world, yet the vast majority of Afghan girls continue to be left out of a crippled education system. Despite the influx of education-focused efforts by international donors and media attention, the future of girls' education remains imperiled.

In a January 12, 2008 *Time* article, less than 30% of eligible girls are enrolled in schools. Only 28% of Afghan teachers are female and fewer than one in ten has completed high school or teacher training, which carries significant cultural implications because for many Afghan families, girls should not be taught by male teachers or to sit in open, public places. Adding to this problem, girls' schools, female and male teachers, as well as girls and their families have been the special targets for extremists in a number of regions of the country.



As HTAC has advocated for decades, the greatest hope for Afghanistan and the proven deterrent to more generations of violence and extremism is to educate its children; especially its girls. Girls education has a positive multiplier effect well beyond its immediate investments and outcomes, including improved health, governance and economic development for its citizens. Further, the children of educated mothers are less likely to engage in terror or to succumb to extreme religious doctrines or memberships.

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

\$25 Provides a month of essential school supplies to 5 students.

\$50 Purchase desks and chairs for 3 students.

\$100 Pays for planting a school garden (students will help maintain).

\$250 Pays for printing & distribution of 30 bi-lingual storybooks.

\$500 Helps pay for one school playground equipment (est. cost: \$4,000)

- Become an outreach volunteer
- Help sponsor a school or educational program
- Help your community middle & high schools learn about Afghanistan

Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_ General operations support

#### Ways to Give:

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By Phone:

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[www.htac.org/Donate](http://www.htac.org/Donate)

1-888-403-0407

Help the Afghan Children

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