

ACHIEVEMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN

RAWCS PROJECT 55/2012-13: Womens' Academic & Cultural Development in the Nangarhar (Kamah District/Jalalabad City) Afghanistan¹.

Over a period of nearly five years, the Rotary Club of Carlton has channelled funds from external sources together with a Rotary District Grant to our club to support our former member, Dr Noor Shah Kamawal, with four components of this project aimed at assisting the Academic and Cultural Development of the women of Afghanistan. They are as follows:

Girls Education Program: Female students 7-10 years of age were the feasibility target group to be educated with the long term objective of enabling them to proceed to higher education and to gain scholarships to study abroad. After one year of operation, the schools established by this project in mosques are continuing with Government support. A number of girls who are graduates of the Rotary High School in Jalalabad are now teaching in those schools. There is a deep interest in providing girls with education, particularly if it is community based. The schools were initially set up outdoors and later in mosques.



Development of a website for the Youth of Afghanistan: This has been an unparalleled success. With money donated from Rotary District 9800 to our club, we were able to have six computers made available to a girls' team and a boys' team to develop a website where young people could ask questions and share their knowledge. A Mullah who was sceptical was won over when he saw the computer laboratories full of young people interacting on the website about questions concerning their culture, their religion, politics, and personal concerns such as equality for women. He is now fully supportive of this initiative. You may care to view the site at <http://youthconnect.web44.net>.

Youth Workshops for Democracy: These workshops were conducted by Dr Noor Shah Kamawal and his team in Kabul to encourage young people to think about changing their cultural attitudes to create a democratic future where girls would have a better opportunity.

¹ with support from Rotary District 9800, the Rotary Club of Carlton and a number of private donors



These workshops generated considerable enthusiasm in those who were involved, with continuing ripple effects through their families, friends and contacts and meetings. It is not possible to measure the impact these workshops had on the outcome of the election, but The Wall Street Journal ran an article in April 2014 “Youth Hold Key to Election in Afghanistan” written by Margherita Stancati and Yaraslov Trofimov². After talking with Noor Shah they wrote “This generation is completely different. It is equipped with critical thinking, with innovation,” said Noorshah Kamawal, a 33-year old doctor in the eastern city of Jalalabad who recently organised workshops on democratic practices with support from Rotary International. “They are working with previous generations, with their parents, to change their behaviour and attitudes.” The result of the election was a tie, with the two candidates working together. This has not been satisfactory. But there is still hope that peace may be achieved with Pakistan which is supporting the Taliban. The influence of these workshops on the young people who attended will not be forgotten.

Workshop on Peace & Conflict Resolution in Kabul: This workshop targeted issues that are so central to the future of Afghanistan and the future of their women. It was an unqualified success, with an attendance of 1,515 people including large numbers of students from schools and Universities, together with senior political leaders from both the Parliament and Presidential Office of Afghanistan. It was a historic gathering which agreed to three significant resolutions. Firstly that similar workshops would be funded by the Government of Afghanistan throughout the country, and secondly, that The Afghan Educational and Research Association should be established to determine the root causes of insecurity and conflict in Afghanistan and to recommend alternate solutions focussed on education, anti-corruption programs and job creation. Thirdly, it was resolved that political leaders and the

² I can send you a copy of the article if you would like to read it.

community will join together to speak up for the support of the national security forces in other districts of Kabul and throughout the provinces of Afghanistan through social media.



The crowded auditorium at the Workshop for Peace & Conflict Resolution, Kabul, May 2016



Workshop Participants (Dr Noor Shah on the left foreground):



Mr. Janat Gul who spoke on behalf of youth

These initiatives by Dr Noor Shah Kamawal³ and Fary Moini⁴ have helped make an impact on the lives of the young people who have been involved. The long term effects on their lives will never be lost. If peace can be achieved, with stability they may raise their families in a free democratic country. This is the dream that Noor Shah and Fary are sharing with the young people of Afghanistan. It is the dream of the young people too.

We wish Afghanistan an ultimate peace as it strives for equality for both men and women in its society.

³ Noor Shah is a tireless worker for Afghan Youth with a focus on helping women. Dr Noor Shah Kamawal, MD, Master of Epidemiology was the Coordinator & Focal Point for Health System Strengthening with the Ministry of Public Health in Afghanistan. He has recently been promoted as the Executive Director for National Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority

⁴ Fary of the Golden Triangle Rotary Club, La Jolla, San Diego, CA, USA has worked in Afghanistan for 20 years to improve the future for girls.