



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 XIV Issue 3 September 2010

Peace Education is Working!

For several years, we've been telling our readers how HTAC's **peace education program** is fundamentally changing the attitudes and behaviors of Afghan children for the better; that children are rejecting violence and embracing the principles of peaceful everyday living. Well, now we have the numbers to prove it.

In the largest peace education study to date, via a grant from **The United States Institute of Peace (USIP)**, 2,800 boys and girls at seven schools in Samangan Province are being observed and tracked to determine just how effective our peace education program is making a difference and (so far), the results have been nothing less than dramatic.



A critical area we are tracking and measuring is **the number of observable conflicts (fighting, harassment, and bullying) between students per month** at the seven schools. Before the program began in mid-May, trained observers recorded 1,540 conflicts in one month with 63.6% of them initiated by boys. By mid-July the overall number had decreased to 739 (a 52% reduction) and the reduction among boys had decreased an amazing 58%.

An equally important yardstick to evaluate our program's effectiveness is **the number of potential conflicts resolved peacefully by students per month**, using non-violent conflict resolution techniques learned in the classroom. Prior to mid-May, observers recorded only 23 cases of successful resolutions out of a total of 1,563 incidents (or 1.5%). Two months later, the number of peaceful resolutions rose to 610 out of 1,349 incidents, a 45.2% increase.

A third performance area was determining **how many students were consistently modeling six key positive behaviors they had learned in the program**. These six behaviors are- asking for help when upset, listening respectfully to other points of view, saying 'thank you' when being helped, actively seeking a solution to a problem without being prompted by a teacher or adult, resolving potential conflicts non-violently, and doing positive things for others. In the beginning, of course, not one of the 2,800 students even knew what the six key behaviors were, let alone being able to understand why they were so important. Thanks to our skilled peace education teachers and a variety of well-planned class activities, an amazing 1,556 out of 2,800 students (55.6%), are being observed applying these principles not only in the classroom, but in the school yards.



A critical secret to these successes has been the program's focus on first addressing the behavior of the teachers. Sadly, too many teachers in Afghanistan are still using corporal punishment practices to control and motivate students. That's why HTAC invests significant up-front time in 1) helping teachers understand why such behavior is counter-productive to learning and children's general behavior and 2) training teachers to role model these same six positive behaviors in the classroom. This role modeling has had a profound impact on the students and many of them are even sharing these

behaviors with their parents and other family members. It is not an unusual sight to see students from these classes, encouraging their friends (outside of school), to act peacefully and respectfully in the community.

Computer Education Program is Changing Lives – One Student at a Time

Earlier this year, 10,171 boys and girls at 12 high schools enrolled in HTAC's successful computer education program and based on mid-year testing and evaluations, we're once again seeing an overwhelming majority of students (96.8%) successfully mastering all key computer skills in *Microsoft Windows, Word, Excel, Power Point*, and for our two schools with internet capabilities *Internet Navigation*.

As proud as we are with these statistics, we're even prouder when we learn that many of our graduating seniors go on to find meaningful employment in Afghanistan's growing information technology marketplace. **Sayed Nasir** has been recruited as a computer and English language assistant at Ahmad Shah Abdali Private High School. **Ahmad Fawad** was recently employed as a computer operator for television station VATAN. **Abdul Hafiz** has begun applying his computer skills for Fahim Azim Construction, and **Admad Mukhtar** is working with NAWAN Computer Services.

HTAC's focus on real world computer applications is giving our students the necessary skills and knowledge to compete for and secure these coveted positions. It is part of our overall commitment to help prepare Afghan children to become proud and productive citizens in helping to move their country forward. Here is one of our thousands of computer education success stories.

Ms. Sadaf Sahak

My name is Sadaf Sahak and, I am daughter of Mr. Mohammad Nadir living in out skirts of Kabul city in Ahmad Shah Baba Mena. I was born in 1988, and have passed the years of severe war between different warring factions including Taliban in the country. I was studying at Ayesha-e-Sediqa high school, and graduated from the mentioned school in 2007 and got the first position not only in my class, but in the school. During my school time HTAC has started a computer training program for school students, especially for girls, which was very useful for me. I was one of the computer program students, who were introduced by the headmasters of Ayesha-e-Sediqa high school. I actively participated in computer classes and learned basic computer skills. Since, I belonged to a poor family and could not complete expenses for my higher education, thus, I planned to get part time job for completion of my

higher education and fulfillment of other necessities at home. During last few years the ministry of education has given the permission for establishment of private schools, and as result of that hundreds of schools have been established in many parts of the country, especially in Kabul the capital of Afghanistan. This is worth to mention that along with other education/qualification one may have to know English and computer to get job in many organizations, because the trend has been changed in many institutions/organization paper works has been reduced. Hence, if a person applies for the position of a teacher in one of the private schools, she/he has to know/use computer, then may have chance for recruitment, because limited people, especially girls/female can use computer in Afghanistan. Currently, I am in second year of higher education in Science section of Sayed Jamaludin Afghani Teachers Institute. I have been selected for the interview by one of the private schools in our area (Ahmad Shah Baba Mena), because, along with other information, I have mentioned understanding and usage of computer and have working ability in English; thus, they call me for the interview. During the interview, I was asked about my computer skills and, I passed the practical exam of computer about basic options of computer. Finally the management team of Akbar Khan Safi private school has decided to recruit



me as teacher. This is my second year of my teaching at Akbar Khan high school. Indeed, I am quite happy that, I don't need to ask some else for my basic requirements/needs even in my family. Further, I help my smaller brothers and sisters and pay them small amount, which they need it for stationary and note books. Thank you , *Sadaf Sahak*

Thanks to our donors, thousands of girls and boys, just like Sadaf are learning computer skills that are changing their lives forever.

Afghan Children Learn Environmental Stewardship Skills

Rashid, an 11th grade student at Istalif High School in the Northern outskirts of Kabul, recently learned how to test for polluted water. A homework assignment for Rashid was to share his knowledge with his parents and other family members, testing the water they use in their own home for cooking. When the test came up 'negative', Rashid and his family expressed relief. The water they had been using was fine and there was little risk of family members catching any water-born diseases. For Rashid's parents, however, there was an added sense of pride, realizing their son is acquiring skills that will serve him well as he enters adulthood and joins the growing ranks of young productive citizens throughout the country.

While much of the Western world agonizes over the recent oil spill off America's Gulf Coast or contemplates the environmental effects of global warming, hundreds of Afghan children are taking small, but meaningful steps in learning how to care for their local environment. In a land that many experts consider having some of the world's worst environmental conditions, these (and other students) are part of a small, but growing vanguard of young people who will one day become the environmental stewards of a new Afghanistan.



In 2010, 600 boys and girls from six middle schools and high schools, have been enrolled in HTAC's **environmental education program**, which has evolved and grown over the years to encompass a variety of eco-projects and activities aimed at enhancing school compounds and bringing environmental lessons into the homes of students where they can be shared with parents and family members, like Rashid's.

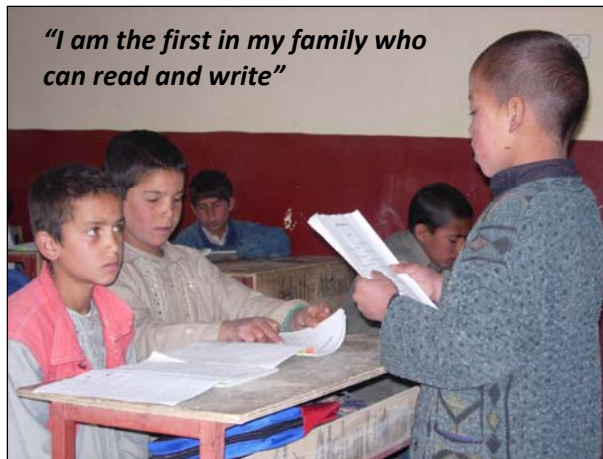
For such a struggling developing country like Afghanistan, many first-time visitors to our schools are amazed at what these children are learning to do. Virtually every HTAC school is kept clean and litter-free. Students learn the importance of sanitation, from personal hygiene to maintaining a clean classroom. Under the guidance of their teachers, students can be found planting or maintaining young trees, plants and flowers through proper watering and irrigation techniques, utilizing eco-friendly manure for fertilization, maintaining school gardens, or growing and cultivating grass in those sections of their compounds which oftentimes become dry, dusty and harmful to the eyes and mouth.

Perhaps most impressively is the pride these students take in caring for their schools and teaching younger children simple environmental lessons which they in turn begin to emulate. These small, encouraging steps are part of HTAC's long-term objective to educate tens of thousands of young people who will be able to influence environmental legislation in Afghanistan (as adults), that will help protect and restore the country's forests, wildlife, air, and waterways.



Faces of Hope

Whatever you hear out of Afghanistan these days, chances are it's not good. Yet there are tens of thousands of untold stories of hope and promise that never make the headlines, perhaps because they don't seem 'dramatic', but they are no less important. Here are just a few...



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

- \$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

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



bbb.org/charity