

3 November 2011

Marga Flader and Ingrid Fraser report from their trip to Afghanistan in October 2011

Dear Friends

This time it was not easy for us to make the decision to go and see the projects in Afghanistan or not because the unrest in September had worried our colleagues in Kabul, Mazar and Andkhoi very much. The prospects of talks with them and our students however, motivated us to fly and now we can look back on a successful visit. However, it was overshadowed by insecurity. Only visits which were absolutely necessary were made – no outings like those we still enjoyed last spring were possible. Instead we had many discussions in which our colleagues also talked about their worries. Not only regarding security but also the drought and the rising prices are worrying them. The crop this year in the Andkhoi area was a total loss. Meanwhile, we are glad that Misereor has granted us funds so that all school employees will get food aid in form of 50 kg flour, 20 kg rice and 5 l oil to help them through the winter. The World Food Program is supplying aid to other people in need in the province of Faryab.

In Mazar-e-Sharif we could move about quite freely, but of course always accompanied by our Afghan colleagues. However, during our workshop in Kabul quite close to our office a suicide attacker killed 19 people. The relatives of our colleagues called during our meeting to find out if their loved ones were ok.

In Mazar-e-Sharif:

We visited those schools for which we had constructed buildings during the recent years. For the girls of Nahr-e-Top we had brought letters from a school in Hamburg. Maqсадullah Shaheed, an excellent school, had built a laboratory without any help in which every day three or four classes conduct their lessons. With the financial help of our *Small Projects Scheme* they hope to pave the way from the entrance to the school building and the toilets so that the buildings can be kept clean. We aim to keep in touch with “our” schools and, therefore, give them the chance to obtain 100.000 Afghanis (equalling 2.000 USD) to implement their own projects if they contribute in about the same way. With the help of the *Small Projects Scheme*, the state schools constructed store rooms, classrooms, toilets and repairs have been carried out.

After a meeting with the head of education of the province of Balkh, we were also during this trip led to a school which would like us to construct a building for them. The children were sitting in the ruins of a small house in the basement, in the ground and upper floors without windows or doors; the back wall of one of the rooms on the upper floor had collapsed: it was completely gone! In the biggest room – long and narrow – two classes with 50 students each sitting on the floor were taught at the same time. On the day of our visit only about half of the students were present because of a bad sandstorm – the sky, the boundary walls and the ground – everything was the same sandy colour; the sand was especially irritating for the eyes. In this new district refugees and people are settling who are leaving their villages because of the drought and who are now in search of jobs. We did not see a single bit of green – no tree, no shrubs.

We met students from Andkhoi who study at different faculties of the University of Balkh. We support these young men financially by helping them pay the rent. Young women from Andkhoi who found a place to stay at a students' hostel also receive a small financial contribution from us. The accommodation was shockingly simple (one small room for five men in which they sleep, cook, eat and study – no kitchen, no bathroom). They hardly have any money for food; in the morning and at lunchtime they eat bread and in the evening maybe beans. If they are lucky enough, there is money to return home at the end of the semester.

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Samia, the daughter of our regional director who was murdered in February 2007, accompanied us from Kabul to Mazar. She had been to Germany this summer for medical treatment. While she was here, she joined one of our colleagues and gathered some experience in a nursery school. It is our aim to pass on some ideas to the teachers of the nursery school in the Khodja Abdullah Ansari School (Choghdkak). The teachers at the nursery school were very happy about what Samia showed them.

In Andkhoi:

We visited two of the three schools which were constructed this year. Qahar Khan, our construction manager in Andkhoi, likes to see our reaction when we look at the good work what he and his workers accomplished since our last visit. As always, it makes us very happy to see the boys and girls now in their beautiful new school building. The 10 projects which we carry out with the state schools in this region with funds from our Small Project Scheme are a great success; among others two schools were repaired and painted inside and out (all buildings and boundary walls).

In the district of Khancharbagh we were taken to another possible new project: In former stables without windows children are sitting on the floor or three or four in a bench meant for two. The owner of the land where the community would like to have a new building and the principal were happy to hear that we would try to raise the money needed. However, this would depend on a proposal which we would have to prepare being acceptable for a donor organisation. Furthermore, we would need to raise the required *own contribution* which we would have to finance from donations.

In our Education Centre (EC) we were happy to see the bright faces of the boys and girls who are really interested in studying. During the English lessons they had many questions for us. We met the girls in the beautiful newly constructed six-class-room building which was put up during the summer in the grounds of the Yuldoz Girls' High School. We were asked by the teachers of Yuldoz to start a nursery school (for which first a new building would be necessary). We included this request in our long list of future plans.

We had lively discussions with the teachers of our EC, the home courses and sewing courses as well as the team of the *Andkhoi Zeeba*-Magazine. We gathered important information for our future work and could also give some advice to young teachers. We were told that some of our previous home school students now have jobs as teachers themselves. Some of the older teachers who had studied during the communist period have now reached retirement-age – the Pashtu teacher is 82 years old. We have some very good young teachers in our EC; six of them have just attended a teacher training seminar organised by GIZ in Mazar-e-Sharif (we paid for the travel costs, accommodation and food). We hope to organize workshops in Andkhoi so that they can pass on what they have learned to their colleagues. With the teacher and the trainees of our electric workshop we talked about solar cookers and solar energy and hope that they will work on the new ideas. In our well equipped library we were happy to see so many boys and talk to them in English and and and

You can see that once again we can look back on a successful trip from which we have again brought many requests for future help. It would be great if we have been successful in convincing you to continue your support of our projects. We need your help especially for the *Small Projects Scheme* and the support of the students, both can be seen as „*help for self-help*“ which is our main aim. But we also need your support for financing the *own contribution* for the construction projects which is required for proposals to the Ministry of International Cooperation and Development. The positive changes in the field of education which started especially in 2002 have to be continued – the young generation of Afghanistan, their parents and teachers are setting their hopes in us. Please continue to help us. Thank you very much.

Best regards

Marga Fläder

Ingrid Fraser

PS: Our calendar 2012 is ready. We look forward to your orders.

PPS: Please let us know if you don't want to receive any mail from us anymore.