



4 December 2007

Verein zur Unterstützung von
Schulen in Afghanistan e.V.

Ursula Nölle and Marga Flader report from their trip to Afghanistan in November 2007

Dear Friends

Still thinking about Andkhoy and already about the forthcoming Christmas holidays in Germany, we are sitting in our cold Kabul office and now want to write down the impression of this trip which we do not find so easy.

Firstly the most important message: It was a good trip and we are glad that we managed to get to Andkhoy. We knew from our employees that our projects were running without any problems but we had the feeling that our visit was needed to encourage our friends. And this feeling was correct. We were expected and everyone was happy that we had made it, especially Ulla Noelle.

The past months after the murder of our much valued regional director Rahmanqul have been very difficult for everyone and now they wanted to show us that they still have the same aim and will continue "on Rahmanqul's way". They assured us that most of the other people in the region had the same aim and wanted education for their children. It was just a small minority which was against education and against foreign help.

This year three school buildings could be completed, including the new building for the boys of the Khancharbagh Primary School which has been using totally unsuitable rooms since the beginning of 2002. The girls of Yangitegerman were being taught in similarly bad rooms and now we could see that they were very happy about their nice new building. Furthermore, the two buildings damaged in the flood exactly one year ago were rebuilt – now 80 cm higher than before.

We did not just visit the construction projects which were completed this year but also the courses for older girls and women and our education centre. 55 girls who had attended home courses could be enrolled in grade 7 of the Yuldoz Lycee this year. In our sewing courses the teachers were happy about the electric sewing machines which we sent to Andkhoy in a container.

In the container were also computers, updated by SBB-gep, which we have installed in our computer centre. We gave some of the old, but still functioning computers to two high schools in Andkhoy. Teaching material as well as stacking tables and chairs we will keep for our education centre and those, which we do not need, we will give to the Yuldoz or Abu Muslim high schools.

While we were in Andkhoy a teacher training workshop took place in our education centre which the teachers found very useful. They asked if we can also provide such an opportunity again next year. The students of our education centre who have just completed 12th grade are now getting ready for the entry exam for the universities which will take place in January 2008. Last year 28 passed this examination. Four are now studying law resp. business administration in Mazar-i-Sharif and 24 attend the technical polytechnic in Shiberghan resp. the teacher training institute in Andkhoy. We hope that many of the students who will take part in the examination next January will succeed in getting one of the few places at university. Boys and girls have asked us to help them obtain a scholarship for a foreign country; especially the girls thought that they did not have a good chance in getting a place to study in Afghanistan.

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The first 10 trainees in our carpentry workshop have successfully concluded their training. One of them is now the assistant to our carpenter. Four others have opened their own workshops while the others are still looking for employment. All of them, however, can take up jobs because at the end of their training we gave them a start-up box of tools. Also for the new 10 trainees this education will give them a chance for a better future. They are between 18 and 26 years old; some of them worked as day labourers trying to earn money for the upkeep of their families, others were making carpets at home. All of them have to support a large family: From us they receive 50 USD per month.

We were not able to visit all schools and courses in the time available. However, we invited all our employees as well as all headmasters and heads of education for a meeting in our Education Centre. We asked the headmasters to pass on our greetings to all the teachers and students and explain that we would have liked to see all of them but that the time was too short. We hope that not too many were disappointed. Most important during this trip were the many discussions we had with our employees in Andkhoi, Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul. Some new arrangements have still to be made; however, jointly we have managed to continue our work despite our distress and many problems. We have received many requests for further help – the number of students at the schools supported by our committee has increased by 19 % this year to 12.336 girls and 21.095 boys. New schools have been set up which do not yet have a proper school building (they are based in unsuitable rented accommodation) and at least four schools need extensions to be built. Furthermore, we were asked for 2189 tables and 1381 benches as well as 62 heaters and teaching material. The people of the village Qipchok have given a plot of land for their new school and have already erected a small mud building and the boundary wall. It shows that in this region the people want to have schools even in the very remote villages.

There are no problems in the schools in Chooghdak/Mazar-i-Sharif or Mohmandan (both province Balkh). In Chooghdak we have set up a nursery for the children of teachers working in this neighbourhood.

We did not manage to travel to Aibak/Samangan, however, our employees report that construction for a school building has started; the work on the foundation has been completed and we expect that this school will be ready for inauguration next year.

We would also like to mention that the family of Rahmanqul now lives in Kabul; the girls go to school – the youngest is the best in her class. The son studies business administration and has achieved very good results in his exams so far. All are very grateful for the support they are receiving from Germany.

You can see from this report that there is not only bad news reaching us from Afghanistan. However, there is still a lot to do and we are ready to continue together with our friends in Afghanistan working for our aim which is enabling girls and boys to get a good education. Education is the only way towards the light. We hope that you will continue to help us also in the future.

With thanks and our best wishes for Christmas and the New Year
yours

Ursula Nölle and Marga Flader

PS: With the purchase of our calendar you would also support our projects!