

May 2007

ARO Spring 2007 Relief Trip Volunteers Make a Difference!

An ARO-US relief team traveled to Afghanistan in May 2007 to offer their assistance to the staff and volunteers with ARO-Kabul. The May – June 2007 group included Toubha Haider, Homira Koshan, Masoud Farand, Saboor Hamidzadah, Hassib Khalili and Nazi Etemadi.

Relief team member Homira Koshan reports, *“As we drove from the airport to our residence, the volunteers were stricken by the level of poverty in the country. At every street corner, we found beggars on the street pleading for whatever change people can provide them for their next meal. It was particularly difficult for the team to see a woman with her child sitting on the sidewalk, holding out her hand to each passerby. Images such as these—along with images of damaged buildings from the years of war, the dirt-paved roads, and the lack of women out on the streets—left us emotionally drained.”*

Relief volunteers were active with both ARO sponsored or assisted projects and relief distributions, and individual charitable efforts (known as *“khyirat”* to Muslims). Typically, khyirat donations are collected from those who cannot make the trip themselves, but wish some type of charitable effort to be made on their behalf. Khyirat projects included refugee camp assistance, literacy education outreach, and many extraordinary efforts of personal charity. ARO applauds the caring, dedication and endurance of the relief team.

As a special treat for the relief team, students at ARO-Kabul presented a special program called *“The Sports National Day”*. Events included girls’ karate, boys’ karate, boys’ soccer boys’ tae kwon doe, and Wushu. ARO staff gave speeches about student accomplishments since the school opened in 2003. Visits by US relief teams are an exciting occasion for ARO’s students and a chance for relief volunteers to show that many people care about their success.

Relief Distribution in Logar Province

In June, the ARO-Kabul relief team delivered two truck loads of basic relief supplies to the **Logar Province, Sorkh-Aweo District**. Relief supplies included clothing, hand-knit items from “afghans for Afghans” volunteers, shoes, socks, toys, infant care kits, and school supplies. Logar leadership helped the ARO team determine an equal distribution of relief supplies among the five tribal groups in the area.

Logar is located in the central eastern region of Afghanistan, two hours southeast of Kabul, and adjacent to the border of Pakistan. The main road to Logar from Kabul was completed in 2006, however, the approximately 300,000 residents have minimal infrastructure. Residents who have electricity receive it through diesel generators, and the Logar River or shallow wells are the primary source of drinking water.

Less than a week after ARO’s relief team visited Logar, Reuters news service reported gunmen riding on a motorbike fired at girls outside a school, killing two and wounding six. ARO acknowledges the effort and risk our relief volunteers take to bring aid and educational resources to Afghans.

ARO teachers visiting refugee camps

ARO instructors are now teaching free literacy classes at the **Afshar and Qambar refugee camps** outside Kabul. Two different teachers are provided for these camps, offering two-hour daily programs for children.

Most refugee camp children are without access to education. ARO’s chairman, Aboul Khalili, reports *“the children look very happy and there is a brightness sparkling in their faces like a star.”* ARO volunteer Salah Yaftali visited the camps again in September, distributing back packs filled with school supplies

Dental outreach in Kabul

In August, a free dental clinic was established at ARO-Kabul, with the help of **Colorado dentist Tom Grams, DDS**. The clinic provides free dental care for the 1200+ students and faculty at the ARO center, as well as to Afghans in the surrounding community. Oral hygiene instructions will be given along with free toothbrushes, restorative work, and extractions as needed. Patients are taught basic dental hygiene and learn about the causes of dental problems.

To support the program, an Afghan dentist was trained by Dr. Grams in the practices and techniques of American dentists, and will provide ongoing care. Health services such as this are not available to most Afghans, and no access to dental care or oral hygiene education, due to the prohibitive cost and the lack of skilled dental providers.

“I believe providing dental care is an effective route to establishing interpersonal and inter-societal bonds in a time when there is a great deal of misunderstanding and conflict,” said Dr. Grams, who is helping establish the clinic with personal funds. ARO also partnered with Dr. Grams to apply for a grant from the Fauchard Foundation, and was notified in November that a grant was awarded to help support the program.

With assistance from ARO, Dr. Grams extended his dental outreach to a girls’ school, *AID Afghanistan for Education*, in Kabul.

Dr. Grams plans to return twice yearly to monitor the progress of the Afghan dentists, the clinic, and to check on the improved periodontal health of students and staff.

Medical outreach to Jalalabad

In September, ARO *Introduction to Nursing* instructors—Doctors Azia, Rafi and Ghamarodin—provided **free medical examinations and medications** for Afghans in a rural area outside Jalalabad. ARO assisted with transportation costs and medical supplies were provided by ARO volunteer Saboor Hamidzadeh.

Jalalabad is the capital of Nangarhar Province in eastern Afghanistan, near the Khyber Pass. The countryside was historically an agricultural center for Afghanistan, with fruit growing, rice, and sugarcane.

Relief and education efforts continue throughout the year, with your support. Please donate today by using the donation page on this website.