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Pakistan and Afghanistan: Two Enduring (and Endearing) Places

Chris Herlinger | May 30, 2013



A girl in Afghanistan who participated in one of CWS's Afghanistan programs. Photo: Chris Herlinger/CWS

Those of us at CWS lucky enough to have spent time with our colleagues in Pakistan and Afghanistan know that theirs is a very special part of the world.

In the last decade, of course, since the events of 9/11, the region has taken on great geo-political significance.

And if you look at the [website of our Pakistan/Afghanistan program](#), you will see that very difficult and challenging problems are being addressed in our work and by our staff.

The headlines from that web site give a flavor of realities in that region: "Complex Emergency in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA." "Promoting Peace in Sindh." "Internally Displaced People from Tirah Valley are in Need of Help." "Earthquake Hits Afghanistan." "Earthquake Hits Pakistan-Iran Border."

Some of these problems stem from natural disasters, others from socio-political realities. But even the natural disasters have a political overlay – in a country with so many strands like Pakistan, for example, everything becomes political.

Yet it's a mistake to look at the region solely through the lens of politics or geo-politics. Humanitarian

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work can never be separated from the context of a place, and there is much to see and ponder in Pakistan and Afghanistan – rich and diverse places that are, yes, full of tragedy that can break your heart. But they are enduring (and endearing) countries where the miracle of life continues despite great obstacles. That's what we always try to celebrate.

A great place to start if you don't know the region is to take a photographic journey of sorts. Photographer Andrea Bruce saw Pakistan as a traveler, traversing the country by rail. Her journey, [chronicled in a slideshow recently published by The New York Times](#), gives a bit of a flavor of a part of the world that is, by turns, tough and vulnerable, hard and yet also astonishingly beautiful.

It's an area that is hard to forget, once you've been there. It's also a place where you can feel proud of the work your colleagues are doing.

Chris Herlinger, a writer with CWS.

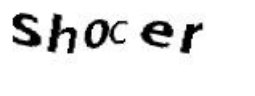
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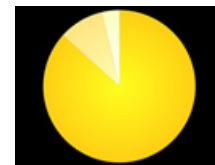
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