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Dear Friends and Partners of Shelter Now,

Pakistan is currently considered the most dangerous country in the world. Last year I wanted to visit the schools that Shelter Now has built in the earthquake zone in the north of the country, but it wasn't possible. The Pakistani army was in the process of flushing out insurgents, and there were numerous terrorist attacks.

But a few weeks ago, I was finally able to visit. And I was very impressed by the new schools. It was fun watching the children have their lessons.

Our dental clinic in Herat, Afghanistan, has meanwhile developed a good reputation due to its high standards both in hygiene and dental care. More about that in our new report.

Also in this report: helping others to help themselves – through drinking water projects in Herat province.

So, some encouraging news from countries that only normally make the headlines for all the wrong reasons...



Best regards
Udo Stolte



SHELTER Report



Knut

After returning from another visit to Afghanistan and Pakistan, there is once again lots to report. This time I was accompanied by my longstanding friend Knut. It was his first visit to both countries – here are some of his impressions:



The new schools



October 2005, 2 days after the earthquake



“Georg Taubmann actually asked me if I wanted to “come over” in 2001. But as so often happens, the years fly by, and I never got round to it. But then in April 2010, the time finally came. I spent just under 4 weeks with Udo in Afghanistan and Pakistan, visiting the Shelter team - despite the misgivings of some members of my family. Here in Germany, you only hear all the bad news from Afghanistan. But I was thrilled by what I experienced there. I’m already longing to go back. The warm welcome I received from the various Shelter teams, Afghanistan itself as a country, and the Afghan people hold an attraction that is difficult to resist. Looking just the part, (Afghan clothes and a grey beard), I was able to move round Kabul on my own, and get a little look behind the scenes of this pulsating, ethnically complex city. The military presence on the streets soon started to feel normal, but then I found myself confronted all the more intensively with the plight of the people and their need for help. I sometimes found myself thinking: if there was just one thing I could change in this world...

But I was also impressed by the many, very well organized projects which Shelter has been running for years. I only need to pull out today’s edition of the Spiegel current affairs magazine here in Germany (which is running an article about the problem of corruption and the ongoing plight of many Afghans despite billions of dollars in aid from the West) to appreciate how important, valuable and effective Shelter’s work really is. Whether it’s the 20 newly built earthquake-proof schools in Pakistan, or water projects around Kabul and Herat, the dental clinic, fruit plantations, care for widows, the primary school, the deaf center or bridge building projects in Nuristan, one senses the heart of the teams there and the competent management of the projects.

And you know that the donations that are given reach the destination and purpose for which they were intended.

My tip: take your heart in your hands and fly over there for yourself. But watch out: you could end up leaving your heart behind.

Earthquake-proof schools in northern Pakistan

Our journey took us to Pakistan’s mountainous northern regions. As we traveled through the villages that were badly hit by the devastating earthquake in 2005, old memories returned – and they weren’t happy ones. The images of destruction came rushing back into my mind: people sitting on piles of rubble where their houses once stood, staring hopelessly into space, others trying desperately to dig out their children buried under the rubble – and everywhere the smell of decay. Back in 2005, we were among the first to visit the region around the epicenter of the quake. We immediately set up aid projects, help was needed quickly, winter was just around the corner - and in the mountains of northern Pakistan, winter temperatures drop well below freezing.

Altogether, we were able to help over 100,000 people – first with tents, blankets, stoves – a survival set for the winter – and then later with materials for temporary housing: wooden beams, corrugated sheeting

for roofs etc. - all financed through private donations. We then began building new primary schools. The 20th school is just ready to open now. I was able to visit some of the schools and was very impressed by the quality. They can withstand an earthquake with a magnitude of up to 8.5 on the Richter scale. The teachers and students are delighted that they no longer have to have their classes in tents or out in the open.

Dental clinic in Herat



Word has soon got around that our dental clinic offers high-quality care. Distinguished visitors have included the former governor of Herat province, Ismail Khan. He asked Azar, the head of the clinic, to come to see him. After examining his teeth, she told him he would have to come to the clinic for treatment. A few days later, he arrived with an escort of multiple vehicles and Azar was then

able to treat him. But most of the patients at the clinic are “normal” Afghans. Those who have a little more money, pay for their treatment, while the poor only have to pay a token sum.

Hygiene standards at the clinic are at least as high as those generally found at dental surgeries in Germany. Plastic overshoes even have to be worn when entering the treatment room. Our dentist Azar doesn't only treat patients, she is also training Afghan dentists and dental assistants. In the next step of the project, the plan is to set up a dental laboratory. And later, Azar would like to do regular school visits to examine the students and teach on oral hygiene.

Drinking water

After leaving Herat, we travelled north to a village not far from the border of Turkmenistan. Back in the days of the Taliban regime, the local residents fled to Iran. When they returned, they found that their village had been largely destroyed. They have since rebuilt quite a lot, but now they need assistance. They have dug a well 60 metres deep, but they still need a reservoir for drinking water and a pump. We would like to help them – keeping strictly to the principle of helping others to help themselves. The project foresees that the men of the village undertake all the work themselves, while Shelter Now provides the materials. Altogether these will cost around 8,800 US dollars. If you would like to contribute, the project number is 6401.

One region where very little work has been done until now is Nuristan. The name means “land of light”. It is an



extremely remote and dangerous region, where many insurgents are hiding out. Here too, we have begun projects to provide drinking water.

Here in the West, we are used to having water on tap at any time of the day or night. And no one has to worry that they will get ill if they drink the water. In Afghanistan that is not the case – not yet. But we’re working on it. And this is where we need your help. I recently received a phone call from a man back in Germany. He’d come up with a good idea: he said he’d like to dedicate one well to each of his three children. He asked me how much it costs to set up one well. I said that on average it’s about 1100 dollars. So he donated the money on behalf of his three daughters. Each well will have a sign put up next to it with the name of the daughter and the daughter will receive a certificate with the photo of the well. A wonderful birthday present. For many that would no doubt be too expensive. But small sums of money can also help to ease the shortage of drinking water.

Saffron

The “Shelter Saffron” has arrived! “Our” saffron farmers have produced a high-quality product. We are now busy packing it up. One gram goes a long way and costs 9.50 euro (about 12 US dollars). Discounts on bulk orders are available. The saffron comes with recipe suggestions. So why not give it try!

We would like to thank all our readers for your interest in our work. We are particularly grateful for all financial contributions to our projects and pass on thanks not least from all the Afghans and Pakistanis who so appreciate the help they receive.

Best regards
Udo Stolte and the Shelter Team



Shelter saffron packed and ready for sale

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