

**An Evaluation
of**

The Healthy Afghan Girl Program
Psychosocial Training for Afghan Girls

PARSA
Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Services for Afghanistan

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Description of the Program

The “Healthy Afghan Girl Program,” a psychosocial training program for girls, was developed in 2008 by PARSA (Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Services for Afghanistan). PARSA began its work in Afghanistan in the 1990’s with a focus on physiotherapy services for the disabled, but soon grew to include literacy programs for women and economic programs for widows when the Taliban made education and regular employment for women illegal. Today, PARSA is headquartered on the Kabul site of an old Marastoon, an Afghan term meaning, “The Place that Gives Help.” Services are provided there for the physically and mentally disabled, orphaned children, widows, and the impoverished. Two other regional offices are located in Bamyan and Chagcharan, supporting education and orphanage projects. Early childhood development programs and accelerated learning programs for girls in 21 villages have recently been completed.

In 2007, PARSA initiated advocacy campaigns in the national orphanages as well as at Marastoon of the Afghan Red crescent Society, addressing human rights abuses in these social protection programs. These efforts resulted in significant changes in policy and personnel at both agencies. The “Healthy Afghan Child Program” (HACP) was developed to provide better care for children in orphanages and it was from this model that the “Healthy Afghan Girl Program” was developed.¹

The Social Environment of Afghan Girls

Afghan girls in formal school settings have very stressful learning environments. Although Afghanistan has taken great strides in supporting Afghan girls’ civil rights, such as their right to an education, legal systems are not strong enough yet to enforce these rights. Afghan society does not yet consistently support fundamental rights for girls. Additionally, because of disadvantages experienced, many girls in school have gaps in their education and have to catch up to succeed in school. The Afghan school system and methods of classroom instruction are still very rudimentary and outdated. Further, teachers do not see students as individuals with unique abilities, learning styles and personalities. Discipline methods include corporal punishment, not just for misbehavior, but for when a child cannot grasp a lesson being taught. Girls in urban settings walk through the streets and Afghan boys harass them and call them names, suggesting that they are immoral because they go to school. Girls are often taken out of school by their parents at the onset of puberty to prepare for marriage. These current conditions make succeeding in a public school setting difficult for Afghan girls.²

¹ “The Healthy Afghan Girl Program,” Proposal for Asia Foundation, PARSA Staff, 2008, p. 2.

² Proposal, p. 3.

The Mental and Emotional Issues with which Afghan Girls Cope

The last seven years of progress in education have supported some Afghan girls in necessary ways. But for the most part, the trauma of war has not been addressed yet in Afghan society, much less in the lives of the girls now in school. Violence against women and girls in families is epidemic. Afghan girls are trying to deal with living in a segregated society that severely discriminates against them and are often taught at the family level that they are of no value. They are beginning to have some freedoms, but families and society do not necessarily support these freedoms yet. They are beginning to dream of a future and a career with no sense of how to accomplish these goals. The international community has focused resources and programs on teaching girls their civil rights and making education available to them, but without the support of family and Afghan society, pressure is placed on girls that they do not have the maturity or experience to handle.³

The Healthy Afghan Girl Program

Seeking to address some of these difficult issues in Afghan girls' lives, PARSA developed a psychosocial training module to fit into the formal school setting. This is called "The Healthy Afghan Girl Program" and was created to promote healthy ways of living that support the development of an Afghan girl while also addressing psychosocial issues. This has enabled PARSA staff to navigate through cultural stigma against psychosocial problems and mental illness.

The training is built upon a mentoring model and enlists female Afghan teachers to serve in the role of mentors. Each teacher is assigned ten girls. The teachers are trained in a social work model of case management, where they learn to assess each child individually and then work with the child to develop a personalized training program. This program is then carried out as the teacher meets with her group of ten girls for an hour and a half after each school day.

For the 6 month pilot program, PARSA established programs in the following Kabul based institutions:

Alluhoddin Orphanage: 5 teachers and 60 girls

Ghazi Ayoub Khan School: 10 teachers and 100 girls

Amir Sher Ali Khan School: 5 teachers and 50 girls

At the Alluhoddin Orphanage, the program is known "The Good Mother/Good Father Program" since the teachers are seen as helping to fill the role of missing parents. In the schools, it is called "The Good Mentor Program."⁴

³ Proposal, pp. 3,4.

⁴ Proposal, p. 4.

After a successful completion of the initial 6 month pilot program in 2008, a six month extension of the program began in March 2009.

Description of the Challenges

Afghan society as a whole faces huge challenges due to 25 years of war which destroyed much of the nation's infrastructure and fragmented families through death and flight. In addition, an increasingly strong insurgency by the Taliban, has again elevated security concerns for Afghan families. Though the years since the Taliban's overthrow in 2001 have brought increased development and freedoms, change has not happened as rapidly as most Afghans would have liked. Corruption has also become rampant, adding to the deep frustrations of many ordinary Afghans. All of these societal and educational system difficulties impact Afghan children, in general and Afghan girls, in particular, making the fulfillment of their dreams of a just and satisfying future even more challenging.

Infrastructure Challenges

Due to long years of war and neglect, public school properties were in shambles when the Taliban left in 2001. The nation and the world rightly pressed for schools to be re-opened for girls and boys, and soon scores of white-scarved, black-uniformed girls poured into the streets to join boys on their way to school. But in this impoverished land, finances were limited, and while some larger schools received donor money to rebuild and repair their properties, most schools had to make do with what little they had. The physical facilities of Amir Sher Ali Khan School and Ghazi Ayoub Khan School where the "Healthy Afghan Girl Program" was instituted are both in extremely poor condition. They host 2,290 and 2,583 students respectively in three shifts running from 6 AM until 5 PM, in less than 4000 square feet of decrepit space. They are both housed in small compounds with one two-story building and rooms or sheds along the edges of the walls, housing classrooms. The children are packed into small classrooms with insufficient numbers of tables and chairs. Many students must either stand or sit on the mud floors. There are large holes in some of the classroom walls and little or no electricity available to brighten dark rooms. There are very small, dirt or gravel yards at both schools and simply no room for physical activities of any kind. The Ghazi Ayoub Khan School has a small library with 4 bookshelves of books. At the Amir Sher Ali Khan School, stacks of books from the Ministry of Education sit on the floor among piles of dirt in a dark unused room, slowly deteriorating from leaking water and mice, since no funds are available for book shelves. Four filthy toilets serve the entire school at Amir Sher Ali Khan School and a malfunctioning water pump provides scarce water for the students for the students' hygiene and physical needs.

In these circumstances, finding space for the after-school Healthy Afghan Girl groups to meet is very difficult. Most of the groups meet outside, sitting on the ground or on a mat. Consequently, when the weather is bad, groups sometimes cannot meet. At best they may try to squeeze into a hallway or a space such as the small library at Ghazi Ayoub Khan School. These concerns were uppermost among the comments of the teachers involved in the program.

Inadequate Teacher Training

The Afghan public schools system is still very rudimentary and outdated.⁵ Teachers tend to teach using a rote system where students memorize material from their texts. Success is determined by the students' ability to accurately voice or write the material back to the teacher. This is how most of today's Afghan teachers were taught and this is how they continue to teach. The level of education among the teachers varies, with some having university training, many having completed the two year teacher's certificate, and some having simply graduated from high school. The Taliban ruled for five years from 1996 until 2001. During that time all girls' schools were closed and no females were allowed to work. This idled all of Afghanistan's female teachers and kept girls from progressing in their education. For this reason, there is a notable gap in the age of the teachers, with many teachers being middle-aged to older women. Only now are some younger women graduates beginning to enter the workforce as teachers.

For most Afghan teachers, any training they might have received was long ago. They have had little access to any continuing education or exposure to new and different teaching methods. Even creating a lesson plan to work from is not a familiar practice for them.

However, this does not mean that teachers are resistant to training and change. Most of the teachers involved with the program seemed genuinely eager to receive training. The PARSA training for the Healthy Afghan Girl Program was met with real enthusiasm and appreciation by teachers and school administrators alike. Even those teachers not involved in the program spoke highly of the training and indicated they would like to participate in the future.

Finally, teachers in government schools have low salaries, and payment of salaries is sometimes delayed. As a result teachers' families face economic pressures common to many in Afghan society today. As women, they must continue to shoulder the responsibility of caring for their extended families and households, even as they work daily. As a result, absenteeism for various reasons is a common problem.

Cultural Challenges

Though most Afghans will agree that many people in their country suffer from some sort of trauma due to the long years of war, death, destruction, flight and ongoing poverty, few will speak openly of personal issues. There is deep fear and suspicion that the admission of personal struggles will not be held in confidence, but will be spread around social circles and used against them in some way. This distrust pervades Afghan society and makes the addressing of psychosocial problems very difficult.

Afghan teachers tend to relate to their students as classes or groups rather than as individuals with specific needs. It is commonly assumed that it is the student's responsibility to adjust and keep up with the class and the teacher. If a student cannot do

⁵ Proposal, p. 3.

that, she is considered lazy and a failure and will often be physically punished with a stick. As a result, the Healthy Afghan Girl Program, with its focus upon understanding individual needs and responding to them in a compassionate manner, radically challenges the cultural idea of what a teacher's responsibilities are.⁶

Similarly, orphanage workers assigned to the care of the children in institutions do not see their roles as substitute mothers and fathers. Rather, they view their work as just a job with no real obligations to understand or meet the needs of the children, outside of a few specific duties. The Good Mother, Good Father Program being instituted in orphanages challenges these assumptions and behaviors.

Evaluation Strategy

To perform an evaluation of the Healthy Afghan Girl Program, the author spent time studying the program proposal and interviewed PARSA staff members to understand the history and motivations behind this program. Questions were developed to ask of the various participants of the program. (See Appendix) Interviews were then carried out with the principals and administrators at the Alluhoddin Orphanage, the Amir Shah Ali Khan school, and the Ghazi Ayoub Khan School. Over the next weeks, repeated visits were made to these three institutions to interview participating teachers, non-participating teachers, and girls in the program. A total of 4 school and orphanage administrators, 17 teachers and 25 children were interviewed. In addition 7 groups were observed as they met. The six Afghan PARSA staff members involved with this program were also interviewed. The author then used the information gathered to assess the program design, structure, and outcomes. Finally some recommendations for the continuing program were made.

Evaluation of the Program Design

Designing a program to effectively address sensitive psychosocial and cultural issues is never an easy task. It requires a willingness to research, listen, and learn from the people themselves. There is also the need to acknowledge past mistakes and seek to make adjustments based upon them. All of this requires longevity in a place that few organizations can claim in present day Afghanistan. PARSA is one that can make such a claim to commitment and legitimacy, having been formed during the Taliban era, and having faithfully worked among some of Afghanistan's most needy people through a variety of projects. The design of the Healthy Afghan Girl Project demonstrates careful thought and research.

Cultural Appropriateness

One of the lessons PARSA has learned through its years of service is that in order for a program to become sustainable, the rationale for its existence must be woven into the existing values of the Afghan people. It must become "theirs" in such a way that even when the foreigners and their money are gone, it will persist because it is reinforced by

⁶ Proposal, p. 4.

their own cultural stories or ideals. This understanding is clearly evident in the design of the Healthy Afghan Girl Program.

Cultural Connection: A familiar concept in Afghan culture is that of the “Paadar-i-Manawee” or “Maadar-i-Manawee.” This is an adult of the same sex as the child, other than the mother or father, who takes a special interest in the child and serves as a mentor, helper, and guide for the child. It may be an aunt, an uncle or an unrelated trusted adult. Sometimes a beloved and respected teacher takes on the role of a “Paadar-i-Manawee.”

PARSA has built the Healthy Afghan Girl Program upon this theme from Afghan culture, working to train female Afghan teachers to take on the “Maadar-i-Manawee” role with ten girls, spending an hour and a half each day after school working with these children. They are encouraged to learn about each girl as an individual and develop a personalized training program to meet their psychosocial needs.

“Yesterday an older girl in my group came to me saying that she had only recently begun school since she had not been able to attend school during the Taliban era. She was struggling with her studies and had been spoken to cruelly by some of her teachers. I went to the principal of her behalf and he spoke to the girl’s teachers, explaining her circumstances and urging them to be more understanding.”

Mariam, Teacher at the Amir Shah Ali Khan School and HAGP group leader.

Trusted Role Models: Making use of the large pool of female teachers to implement this program is also wise culturally, since teachers are already seen as respected and trusted role models in Afghan society. This eliminates the suspicions which would arise if relatively new and unfamiliar professionals such as social workers or psychological counselors be used as the mentors. Most Afghan parents feel very comfortable with female teachers working with their daughters. In the orphanage, too, the female teachers are already recognized as important role models for the children and extending that role to after school involvement and care is acceptable to orphanage administrators.

Focusing: Another cultural understanding exhibited by this program relates to how psychosocial issues are addressed in the groups. Sharing one’s problems and struggles with others is not something done among Afghans. Rather, such issues are carefully guarded for fear of others finding out and using that knowledge against those having the problems. There is a high level of suspicion even among friends and close acquaintances. Rather than seeking to counter this strong cultural tendency, PARSA has adopted a method of dealing with painful emotions and feelings which does not require participants to share their stories. This method, called Focusing, has proven to be effective in the Afghan context and its use in the Healthy Afghan Girl Program offers a culturally viable way for girls and their teachers to begin to address psychosocial issues in their lives.

Evaluation of Program Structure

The structural design of the Healthy Afghan Girl Project has been done in a reasoned and culturally sensitive manner. Provisions have been made to ensure accountability and sustainability within the Afghan setting.

Program Administration: The program is set up to work within current Afghan institutions—schools and orphanages. From the start, the administrators of these institutions are involved, giving them a sense of ownership over the program. School principals and orphanage administrators select the teachers to be involved with the program. Girls are then selected by the teachers, who best know their students. They are encouraged to select those girls who are struggling academically or emotionally. Records on the program are kept by the school administrators. There seemed to be real mutual respect between school administrators and the Afghan PARSA staff. For this program to reach its goals, the selection of the teachers to serve as mentors is important. This responsibility has been given to the school administrators. Due to the financial incentives and the appeal of receiving training, most teachers are eager to participate. It was not clear, however, that the principals were selecting teachers based upon their skills to serve as mentors. As the program extension began this year, the principals asked that new teachers be trained since others wanted an opportunity to participate. While it is beneficial to the school to have as many teachers as possible trained by PARSA, especially in these initial phases of the project, principals should be trained in how to select the best possible teachers to serve as mentors by identifying key traits needed, including teachability, sensitivity, adaptability, and flexibility in attitudes and teaching style.

Likewise, the selection of girls to participate in the program is crucial. Observations of several groups at the schools raised questions as to whether these children were truly the most needy children or were rather those with whom the teacher decided she would like to work. This concern was also shared by the Afghan PARSA staff. Collaboration between the PARSA staff, the principal and the teacher in selecting girls for the program would help to make this a more transparent process.

The situation at the orphanage was different than the schools. All the resident girls are involved in the program and there is a shortage of staff to take on the role of mentors. Therefore, the orphanage groups are larger, usually 12 to 14 girls, and the administrators do not have the luxury of choosing teachers to participate.

Teacher Training: PARSA provides training for the teachers serving as mentors for the program. They are given 5 full days of training prior to the start of the program and then continuing training as the program runs. The initial training introduces the concepts of worldviews, the meaning of psychosocial needs, child development issues, results of war and trauma on children, seeing situations from the child's perspective, maintaining discipline without using corporal punishment, and learning to address the individual needs of vulnerable children. In addition teachers are supplied with daily planning sheets which suggest how the 90 minutes of each group meeting might be divided. These sheets

are meant to serve as logs for recording activities done in the groups. In addition, suggestions of activities for developing life skills are also provided to the teachers.

The training given the teachers is at the heart of this program. Not only does it prepare them to serve as mentors, but it assists them in their own lives and enables them to be better teachers in their normal classrooms. All of the teachers interviewed for this evaluation expressed appreciation for the training and a desire for more training.

“I was amazed to see the positive effects that the Healthy Afghan Girl Program teacher training had on one of my teachers who was very quiet and withdrawn due to huge problems in her life. After the training, she began to come out of herself and have a much more positive outlook on life and the future.”

Saaed Jamaluddin, Principal of the Amir Shah Ali Khan School

Observation of some of the groups in action at the two schools, however, revealed that additional teacher training is needed. Teachers seem lacking in even the basics of how to plan for and manage a group meeting. They tend to fall back into running their small groups like they do their classrooms, with lectures and then recitation from the students on areas of their schoolwork that they are finding difficult. Part of this is due to the outdated methods of teaching they were given when they received their teacher training. The Afghan PARSA staff give teaching tips informally as they observe the groups and the teachers seem receptive to this kind of help. Specific training in how to plan for a group meeting, followed by modeling of mentor/student interactions would be very beneficial for the teachers to understand and experience what an effective group meeting might look like. This whole concept of focusing on individuals and working to meet individual needs is so new and so counter-cultural that it will take repeated training and modeling for them to feel comfortable in this new role and be able to manage their groups in ways that will allow psychosocial needs to be met. But as teachers see the benefits of these practices, there is real enthusiasm on their part, which, in turn, creates a momentum for increased use of these newly learned methods.

Observation of groups at the orphanage revealed that these groups tended to be more informal and less school-like, perhaps because they met in the orphanage living quarters and children sat on the floor or on beds. Though the group leaders in the orphanage tended to be less educated than the school teachers, they seemed to understand their role less as teachers and more as mothers or advocates for the girls. As a result, these groups more resembled family gatherings. However, when the activity was a learning activity such as English or computer training, the groups became much more like Afghan school classrooms with the lecture/recitation mode of learning. Additional training and modeling for the orphanage group leaders would be very beneficial in helping them learn to manage their groups more effectively.

Monitoring and Evaluation: An important motivational aspect of the program is the payment of a small stipend to participating teachers. This, however, is tied to their

performance as mentors in the program. Each month, each participating teacher is monitored, using a checklist of 14 desired behaviors, including such traits as punctuality, good relationships with fellow teachers, respect for the children, keeping of records, creativity, and following instructions. Currently, Afghan PARSA staff visit the schools and orphanage frequently and monitor the performance of the teachers. When it is time to pay the stipends, each teacher is counseled about her performance and signs a sheet acknowledging her understanding. If there are deficiencies in her performance, the teacher is counseled that month and if the performance does not improve, the stipend is lowered the next month. All of this produces an accountability that would be lost if the program were not carefully monitored.

Regular visits by the Afghan PARSA staff to the schools and orphanage provide accountability for the teachers and principals involved. Visits to the girls' groups are opportunities for guidance and direction for the teachers as they mentor their groups of girls. This element is vital as the program gets going and teachers learn their new roles as mentors.

PARSA staff member Zargoona was meeting with each participating teacher and counseling them prior to paying them their monthly stipend. One older teacher, a deputy to the principal, strongly objected when Zargoona pointed out some deficiencies in her performance. Zargoona held her ground and calmly explained the requirements of the program and that all the teachers were held to the same standard. The situation was a good lesson in accountability for all the teachers.

PARSA staff members mentioned that eventually the school principals should take over the monitoring and evaluation of this program. This is a good goal for the sustainability of the Healthy Afghan Girl Program, but for the initial years of the program, continued PARSA supervision and careful monitoring will be essential. During this time principals and administrators need to be trained so that the new practices of record keeping, teacher evaluation, and individual case management can become permanent.

Case Management: Each girl involved in the Healthy Afghan Girl Program has a file, including a comprehensive child evaluation form. This form includes information on the child's family, education level, psychosocial status, social skills, life skills, and health. These files are kept by the teachers as well as by the school and orphanage administrators. Teachers are encouraged to record observations and keep notes on difficulties as well as achievements in the child's life.

The Comprehensive Child Evaluation Forms provide a good basis for understanding each child involved in the program. Teachers and administrators need to receive training in keeping these files up to date by making regular entries and notes of issues and progress. Such practices require time but are essential if individuals are to be followed and progress monitored. Perhaps one day a month, the normal group meetings could be canceled and PARSA staff members could sit with each teacher and discuss each girl in her group: her academic progress, psychosocial progress, health, and family status, showing how notes

can be written up for the file. This would reinforce for the teachers and administrators the importance of record keeping for monitoring the progress of individual girls.

PARSA staff member, Nahid, was observing a girls' group in action. The teacher was reviewing various principles from a religious studies book with a group of five 2nd grade girls. One little girl of the Hazara Shia ethnic group gave an answer that the teacher said was wrong according to the Sunni textbook. Nahid asked the teacher if she could speak to the children. She quickly demonstrated how to explain differences in beliefs without saying a minority belief was wrong. Nahid skillfully drew the children into the discussion, preventing any sense of exclusion of the minority child.

Evaluation of Program Outcomes

The original proposal describing the plans for “The Healthy Afghan Girl Program” listed a number of learning goals for both teachers and girls. While not all of these goals have been attained, significant progress is being made by teachers and girls in these areas.

Teachers' Goals: The goals for the teachers were to:

- **Develop activities and plan curriculum for psychosocial development.** There is still a need for training and modeling in this area. Creative planning seems to be foreign to teachers who have always “gone by the book” in their classrooms. Their groups often resemble tutoring sessions on school subjects. But they are receptive to training and help in this area.
- **Identify abnormal behavior and advocate for support for a child demonstrating symptoms of mental illness.** Teachers did not mention any findings of mental illness, though they did make reference to noticing physical illness and seeking to help girls receive needed treatment. Continued training and encouragement to be willing to address these culturally sensitive issues is needed.
- **Address misbehavior in a compassionate manner.** Teachers repeatedly said they had no discipline problems. Their interactions with the girls seemed compassionate while observers were there. Modeling by a PARSA staff member of a compassionate way to deal with “wrong” answer was observed. The teacher was receptive to this input.
- **Discipline children without using corporal punishment.** No evidence of corporal punishment was seen in the girls' groups, but this is something that must continue to be emphasized with the teachers since it is so ingrained in the Afghan culture.

- **Address her own psychosocial needs to insure she is able to provide a positive experience for the children in her care.** Teachers indicated that the training they had received from PARSA was helpful in their own lives. One principal spoke of one of his teachers whose outlook and demeanor completely changed after taking the training. Continued training will reinforce those gains for the participating teachers.
- **Work with children who appear to have learning disabilities.** Though they lack specific training in teaching children with learning disabilities, the teachers are working with children who are struggling and demonstrating patience and understanding as they meet day by day.
- **Assist the children in setting up productive “peer counseling” groups.** A number of the girls interviewed stated that they felt like the other girls in their group were like sisters to them and that they had become good friends. This was particularly true in the orphanage where they are with each other all day long. Though no such groups seemed to be in action as yet, these relationships set the stage for the introduction of “peer counseling” groups.
- **Support Afghan girls to grow in the changing Afghan social environment.** The additional daily time with their leader is no doubt a support to the girls in the program as they struggle to survive and grow in what can be such a hostile environment. Just having as a role model a woman who is using her education and working outside the home is an unspoken support to their own efforts and aspirations.
- **Advocate for the girl with her family.** Several teachers mentioned going to a girl’s family to discuss an issue such as habitual lateness or lack of school supplies. They were able to speak with the parents and resolve these problems, sometimes using their own resources to help.
- **Advocate for a girl in the education system and health system.** Teachers seem to be filling this role. One teacher mentioned that she had gone to a teacher who had publicly berated one of the girls in her group and explained the girl’s situation to her, asking her to show her more understanding. Another teacher mentioned that a girl in her group came to school very sick. Since the family was unable to help, the teacher personally went with the girl to the clinic to see a doctor and get the needed medication.
- **Have a basic understanding of severe mental illness such as clinical depression, post traumatic stress syndrome, symptoms of physical abuse and sexual abuse, and how to identify behavior that leads to suicide.** This will require additional intensive training for the teachers. While they may have a surface awareness of such issues, being able to identify and properly respond to such issues in their groups will require ongoing exposure and modeling. There is

a great reticence among both teachers, administrators, and girls to speak of specific examples of mental health issues, trauma, or abuse.

- **Have a basic understanding of neurological development problems such as learning disabilities.** This, too, will require continuing education. Perhaps intensive training in this area could be offered during the winter break when schools are closed for several months and teachers have additional time to attend training.

“I have been in the orphanage for five years and I am in the 5th grade. I enjoy learning English, Dari, and Math. I like the activities our group does together, but would like to get out of the orphanage and go for a picnic sometime. I haven’t left for over a year.”

Lila. Age 10. at the Alluhoddin Orphanage

Girls’ Goals: The learning goals for the girls were to:

- **Be resilient in the face of adversity.** All Afghan girls face adversity. The additional support of one and a half hours a day in a small group with an attentive teacher is bound to be an added resource to these girls.
- **Develop a plan for their future.** When asked what they would like to do with their lives, all of the girls had an idea—many wanted to be teachers or doctors. One 15 year old girl in the orphanage wanted to be an interpreter and had worked hard to learn a significant amount of English. However, she didn’t know how she would get there. This is an area where input may be required beyond that which the teachers can provide. But teachers should be aware of their students’ aspirations and give them support in looking for ways to fulfill them.
- **Speak out for themselves in a culturally appropriate way.** Teachers seem to be modeling this skill by advocating for the girls with their families, the school, and the health system. Girls learn to stand up for themselves by watching a trusted adult stand up for them.
- **Handle negative emotions such as anger, fear, despair, and depression.** Several teachers at the orphanage mentioned that they had used the practice of focusing in their groups and that it had had a calming effect upon the girls. This skill should be re-emphasized to the teachers in future training so that it can become a regular practice in their own lives and in their groups.
- **Participate in group “peer counseling” and facilitated “women’s listening groups” that address civil rights issues in Afghanistan.** This does not appear to be happening as yet in the groups except in an informal sense as groups, particularly the older girls’ groups, listen to one another.

- **Develop a program of self-care that includes exercise, friendship, and self-reflective practices such as focusing.** There was some evidence that this might be happening at the orphanage where groups are living together and there is more time for developing such practices. Friendship seems to be growing in all the groups, but teachers do not seem to be to the point yet of helping the girls develop self-care plans.
- **Integrate their understanding of their civil rights into their lives so they can protect themselves from socially condoned abuse.** This goal does not seem to be fulfilled as yet, but would be fitting for teachers to introduce into the older girls' groups.
- **To learn the basics of critical thinking about social issues as they relate to girls' development in Afghan society.** Critical thinking skills are not traditionally taught in Afghan schools. To develop and teach critical thinking skills to their girls' groups would necessitate training for the teachers in these skills. Perhaps one way to address this issue would be to discuss some of the courageous women speaking out currently in Afghanistan and to analyze their messages.

Projected Outcomes of the Six Month Extension Program

This evaluation was carried out in April 2009, just as the six month extension of the original Healthy Afghan Girl Project was getting under way. The stated goals and expected outcomes for this extension are very close to the recommendations resulting from this evaluation. The projected outcomes as stated in the Healthy Afghan Girl Program Proposal are as follows:

- **To increase the school performance of the girls participating in the healthy Afghan Girl Program**
- **To increase capacity for participating girls to participate in social activities and achieve a higher quality of satisfaction in life**
- **To improve the training capacity of the teachers participating in the program so that they demonstrate the ability to assess vulnerable children and to develop effective interventions**
- **To create a replicable program training model⁷**

⁷ Proposal, pp. 6,7.

Recommendations

Below are recommendations which have come from the evaluation of the Healthy Afghan Girl Program at the conclusion of its first 6 months and just as it enters its six month extension.

Teacher Training: The key to the success of “The Healthy Afghan Girl Program” is having well trained teachers to serve as group leaders. PARSA has established a 5 day training program for teachers before the start of the school year in addition to continuing training throughout the year. This training must continue since there are so many important concepts critical to this program that are unknown to the average Afghan teacher. Regular training will also reinforce principles that have been taught previously. Topics to be covered in continuing training for the teachers should include the following:

- **Planning Lessons for Group Meetings**
- **Drawing Out Students and Encouraging Student Participation**
- **Recognizing and Helping those with Learning Disabilities**
- **Recognizing the Symptoms of Severe Mental Illness, Clinical Depression, Abuse, Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome, and Suicidal Tendencies and Strategies for Actions to be Taken**
- **Developing Creative Activities to Teach Psychosocial Skills**
- **Monitoring and Keeping Records of Individual Students’ Progress**

Some of this training is involved enough to warrant additional weeks or months of continuing education. Perhaps this could be scheduled during the 3 month winter break.

Master Teacher-Trainer: In order to facilitate ongoing training and reinforcement in the school or orphanage setting, it might prove helpful to select one teacher at each institution to receive additional intensive training. This individual could then serve as the master teacher-trainer for that institution. She could work on a daily basis with the teachers, observing their groups, modeling good group leadership skills, and assisting with problems that arise in the course of each day.

Selection of Girls to Participate: Under the current structure, in the schools, girls are selected to participate in the program by teachers who have been instructed to choose children who are struggling. Observation of the groups led to questions as to whether the most needy students were actually being selected. A more transparent and better process might be for the principal, PARSA staff members, and the teachers to discuss and jointly select the most needy children.

Physical and Material Concerns: The most frequent concern expressed by the teachers and principals of the two schools was the lack of space. The schools are extremely cramped with classes already in every hallway and spilling out of all the rooms. The Healthy Afghan Girl groups must often meet outside and sit on the ground. It is difficult to see a way to rectify this situation outside of the schools being renovated and enlarged, something which is beyond the scope of this project. The most frequently voiced concern

among teachers at the orphanage was the lack of supplies to carry out the suggested cooking, sewing, and sports activities. While there is ample space for these activities, they seemed frustrated by lack of the needed supplies. Recognizing the fact that many donated items tend to disappear, perhaps a way could be found to provide minimal supplies to the teachers on the days that they plan to do the activities.

“I believe this program is very good for students with disabilities since it allows them to receive individual attention. One child in my group is paralyzed on her right side and cannot speak. I have been working with her to help her learn to write with her left hand.”

Nadia, Teacher at Ghazi Ayoub Khan School and HAGP Group Leader

Conclusion

“The Healthy Afghan Girl Program” has been successfully launched with a sound educational and social structure in place. Twenty teachers are leading around 210 needy and vulnerable girls after-school groups, for an hour and a half, five days a week, assisting them with academic, social, family, and health problems. The program rewards teachers for attention given to the weakest students, a philosophy that runs counter to a culture that often rewards the best and the brightest, but shames the weak and disabled. The teachers and their groups are regularly monitored by PARSA staff who provide counseling, group leadership tips, and modeling for the teachers. While all the goals for the program have not yet been reached, continued training of the teachers will enable more of the goals to be achieved. If comprehensive training modules for teachers can be created and perfected, this program could be replicated in other schools and orphanages with tremendous potential to positively shape the lives of both girls and teachers in Afghanistan.

Appendix

Sample Interview Records

**Interview with PARSA Staff re: the Healthy Afghan Girl Project
April 9, 2009
(Moisin, Nahid, Zargoona, and Salia)**

What is the Dari name for this program? Program-i- Paadar-i-Manawee or Maadar-i-Manawee

How long has the program been running? 6 month pilot project last year and now we are one month into a 6 month extension of that project.

How were the schools and orphanage selected to be involved in this program? PARSA had already started a “Good Mother-Good Father” program at the orphanage and decided to build the Healthy Afghan Girl project onto that effort there. In addition a number of schools were suggested by the Ministry of Education and these two schools were selected in Karte Parwan, in part because of their proximity to PARSA.

How were teachers selected to participate in the program? The principal of each school has selected the teachers. They were asked to select active, enthusiastic teachers who had had more than a year or two of experience. For the extension, the school principals asked if they could give other teachers the opportunity to participate so there are some new teachers involved now.

How were students selected to participate in the program? Each teacher selects students from her classes who she knows to be needy.

What training did the teachers receive prior to being involved in this program?
Could I see an outline of the training? The teachers received 5 full days of training prior to the program and will be receiving 5 additional days of training during the course of the program. (I was given an outline of their training)

What curriculum/ideas have been given to the teachers to use in this program?
Could I see an outline of the curriculum? An outline of 12 ideas for group activities was provided to the teachers. From this teachers were encouraged to develop activities relevant to their groups’ needs. In addition a daily planning sheet was provided that gave suggestions for how each part of the daily hour and a half could be spent.

How was this program monitored while it is running? The teachers keep a record of what they do each group meeting. They are also monitored against a checklist of 14 standards and given a score of 0 – 3. Low scores result in counseling by PARSA staff when it comes time for paying the monthly bonus. If improvements are not made, the next month, the bonus can be docked. PARSA staff visit regularly to assess teacher and group progress.

Are all of the children at Alluhoddin participating in this project? All of the 58 girls at the orphanage are participating in the Healthy Afghan Girl project.

Have the teachers received any other teacher training before? No, most have not received training after their completion of their formal education.

In Afghan schools, what usually happens to those students who cannot keep up or who have some kind of learning disability? They are usually given two or three years opportunity to pass a grade level, staying back if they fail the mid and final exams.

Do students ever speak to teachers about war trauma or other disturbing experiences they have had? This does not happen quickly but if a relationship of trust can be built, then the student may feel able to share hurtful experiences she has had over time.

Program Evaluation Questions

For the Principals:

- What do you understand to be the objectives of this program?
- How has the program been effective in achieving these objectives in your school?
- What good results have you noticed?
- What problems have you encountered with this program?
- Have any of your teachers been especially good in carrying out this project?
- How could this program be improved?

For Teachers:

- Do you think the program has been successful? Why?
- What positive things have happened in your group?
- What difficulties have you encountered?
- Have the girls in your group improved in their school work? How do you know?
- What are some activities your group has done?
- What are some of the problems faced by girls in your group?
- How do you handle discipline problems in your group?
- What are you doing to help those children who have learning disabilities?
- How do you think the program could be improved?
- If this program were to continue, would you like to be involved again?

For Non-participating Teachers:

- Do you understand what the objectives of this program are?
- How do you think these objectives are being achieved through the program here?
- How do you handle discipline problems in your classroom?
- How do you help children with learning disabilities in your classroom?
- How do you think this program could be improved?
- Is this a program with which you would like to be involved?

For Groups of Students:

- Do you enjoy being a part of this program?
- What activities do you like best?
- What do you like about having a teacher/mentor?
- What are some difficulties you face in your lives?
- How has this program helped you with those difficulties?

For Individual students:

- What things do you enjoy about this program?
- What things do you not enjoy?
- How does this program help you with difficulties you face in your life?
- How has your teacher/mentor helped you?
- How do your friends in the group help you with difficulties in your life?
- What does your family think of this program?
- What do you do when you feel angry or sad?
- What plans do you have for your life?

Interview with Amir Shah Ali Khan School Principal: Saaed Jamaluddin

He spoke with real enthusiasm and gratitude for the “Program Dochteran Saalim Afghan.” He sees the program as excellent for both teachers and students. The training given by PARSA personnel was helpful for the teachers and even he spoke of benefiting from the training. He has seen teachers grow in their understanding of individual student’s needs and be able to address some of those needs, helping students solve problems in their lives. He mentioned that he has seen the training especially benefit one of his teachers, who previously was very withdrawn and quiet due to huge problems in her life. He saw that after the training and as she worked with the students, she began to come out of herself and have a much more positive outlook on life and the future. When asked about suggestions for improving the program, he felt that this training would be very beneficial for boys as well. Training them in psychosocial skills may help alleviate some of the problems they cause in girls’ lives, he felt. I was impressed that despite a very inadequate school facility (classes were meeting in hallways and under shelters in the yard due to leaking ceilings) no mention was made of a need for more supplies. As we left, a teacher not involved in the program, came and told us how much she wanted to be involved in the future. There was real affection demonstrated for the PARSA trainers who accompanied me.

Interview with Deputy Principal of Ghazi Ayoub Khan School: Khalil Khan

He was very enthusiastic about the “Program Dochteran Saalim Afghan,” and seemed to have a good understanding of its goals. He would like all the teachers to be able to receive the training. He mentioned that their students come with many problems, especially family problems. This program encourages teachers to react with sympathy and understanding to their students. Teachers now have the understanding of how to address students’ problems and be advocates for them with their families and the community. He mentioned a student who came to school sick and in need of special medical care. Her family was unwilling or unable to help, but her teacher was able to take the student and arrange for the care she needed at a Clinic. This school was in very cramped quarters. The deputy principal mentioned that this was the greatest difficulty in running the program. There are three shifts of students coming from 6 AM until 5 PM. Finding a room or space for an “after school” program is often a real challenge. This need is exacerbated when there is inclement weather, as there was the day of the interview.

Interview with Alluhoddin Orphanage Deputy Director: Jamila

We were kept waiting for quite a while as the people we wanted to see were in a meeting. Finally we were taken to the clinic where we met the Orphanage Director and Deputy Director. The Deputy Director agreed to answer our questions, but I sensed some resistance from the Director. He soon left the room and we asked our questions of the Deputy Director. She is happy with the program, “Program Dochteran Saalim Afghan,” and feels it is a very good thing for the teachers and the children involved. All the participating teachers did well, except for one who became ill and could not carry out her responsibilities for a while. She values highly the training given by the PARSA personnel. Her biggest complaint was a lack of necessary tools to do the suggested activities. Examples she gave were supplies needed to learn to wash clothes, supplies and tools for learning cooking, sports equipment, and sports uniforms. She was especially appreciative of the help with English and computer training, but wished there could be more help with math.

**Teacher Interviews at Ghazi Ayoub Khan School
(Grades 1 – 12)
2500 students in 3 shifts (6 AM – 5:15 PM)**

Notes about visit: I accompanied the PARSA staff to this school as they were giving the teachers their monthly pay for successfully participating in the program. Each teacher is marked according to 14 standards on a scale of 0 – 3. 0 is absent and 3 is excellent. The teachers with lower scores are counseled and advised that if they do not improve, their next month's pay will be lowered. Several teachers were thus counseled and one became quite heated about the situation. However Zargoona of the PARSA staff kept calm and reasonably explained that she was still getting her full pay this month, but firmly insisted the situation needed to improve next month. This school was housed in a house that was a bit more modern than the Amir Sher Ali Khan School. It still was very cramped with students in hallways and outside enclosures and a having a muddy yard.

1. Name: Nadia

Answers: Nadia has taught for 20 years, Grades 7 and 8. She feels this program is very good for students with learning difficulties since it enables them to receive individual attention and be able to improve enough to again participate with their classmates. The students here cannot afford to go to private schools and this program enables them to get the help they need right here in the public school. She works with the children in her group individually and seeks to help each overcome their difficulty. One of her students has paralysis on her right side and cannot speak. Nadia has been working with her to help her to learn to write using her left hand. Some of her students are too poor to afford the notebooks and pencils needed for their schoolwork. She has provided the money for them to buy those supplies.

2. Name: Lila

Answers: Lila has taught for 18 years, Grades 5 – 8. She feels this is an excellent program for weak students. She has had students who could not speak in class or read and write. As a result of this program and the individual attention these students are receiving, they are improving in their abilities. Her group of 10 students has both physical problems and problems related to poverty. She speaks to the girls each day to hear about problems and then works with them to try and solve them. She sometimes visits the families to discuss the students' problems. One little girl was very poor and struggling in her studies. She couldn't read or write. Now, after being in the group and receiving extra help, she can read and is participating in class. Her mother is very happy about this. Lila said the teacher training has been extremely helpful. Now she knows how to teach better and recognize the problems her students might have.

3. Name: Shafika

Answers: Shafika has taught for 9 years, Grade 2. She feels this is an excellent program for students, especially those with special needs. The ten young girls in her class do not have physical or emotional problems, but just struggle with reading and writing. She gives them individual help and sees the students improving in their abilities. There were two children with disabilities originally assigned to her group, but their parents did not agree to them participating since it would mean they stayed longer at school. But most of the families who have agreed to have their children participate see the benefits of this project. She had one little girl who was extremely poor. Shafika bought her a notebook and school supplies and also some biscuits for a treat. She said that since there is a shortage of rooms, her little group usually meets outside. She thought it would be nice if PARSA supplied notebooks and pencils with “PARSA” inscribed on them.

Amir Sher Ali Khan School Teacher Interviews (Grades 1 – 9) 2000 students in three shifts/day

Notes on Visit: I accompanied the PARSA staff, who today were paying the teachers their salaries for completing another month of this program. Each teacher had a record and was marked on 14 various standards of performance, by the PARSA staff. They were given a mark from 0 – 3 for each standard, with 3 being excellent, and 0 being absent. Teachers’ scores are discussed with them and those with low scores were counseled and told that if there is no improvement, their salary will be lowered the next month. I observed several teachers being so counseled and the others gratefully received their pay and signed for it. After interviewing the teachers, I was shown around the school and noted the very poor facilities, with a number of 3 walled enclosures with leaking corrugated tin roofs held up by wooden slats that were not anchored properly. There were not enough tables and chairs, which resulted in many students standing the whole time since the floors were dirt and in the rain were muddy. There was a “library” in a dirty storage room. There were stacks of books on the floor, but no book shelves to store the books on. As a result, they are water damaged and have also been ruined by mice.

4. Name: Esposzhman

Answers: 6 years teaching Grades 3 and 6

Esposzhman works with girls 6 and 7 years old. She thinks the Healthy Afghan girl program is excellent both for the teachers and the students. She has students with various difficulties, some physical, some psychological, and some related to poverty. She meets with her group every morning from 9:30 till 11:00. One student she helped was a young girl with a good mind, but no confidence. She always sat in the last row and would never speak up in class. Her mentor worked with her, giving her small tasks to do such as cleaning the board. She also spoke to her about how the other classmates should be like sisters to her and encouraged her not to be afraid. This young girl now has come out of her shell and is participating more in class and doing

well in her studies. Esposzhman cannot think of ways the program could be improved, but promised to write suggestions and give them to Zargoona of the PARSA staff if she had any ideas.

5. Name: Shekiba

Answers: 8 years of teaching Grade 6

Shekiba thinks the program is excellent and should be continued. The students appreciate the program so much that they come half an hour early. She works with 10 girls with various difficulties and obstacles in life. She tried to find out their problems and then work with the girls to solve them. One student was coming late all the time. Shekiba went to visit the student's family to find out why she was always late. She found that the girl's mother had no legs and the child was assisting at home and unable to get to school on time. The mentor discussed this issue with the mother and things were worked out so that she could arrive at school on time. Shekiba noted a desperate need for additional chairs and tables. She said that while there is a room for her to meet, the children have to sit on the dirt floor which is cold and muddy when it is raining (as it was the day of the interview). I was shown the meeting rooms and this was true. She also said it would be wonderful to have colorful story books, additional notebooks, and colored pencils to use in group activities.

6. Name: Sima

Answers: She has taught for 18 years, teaches 4th grade now. She thinks this program is excellent especially for students that have weaknesses or are poor. Some of her students have learning disabilities and feel shame in class since they cannot keep up with their classmates. Many have very poor parents who work on the street and have no education themselves to be able to study with their children. Several have physical difficulties such as cleft lips and speech problems. In her group, she works individually with students and has the students work on their schoolwork. She tries to teach them study skills so that they can study at home. The PARSA training she received helps her to know how to work with children who have special needs. She had a 5th grade student who could not read and write. In shame, this girl finally quit school. Sima went to her home and spoke with her parents and encouraged the girl to come back. She is now improving with her mentor's help and encouragement. Another student was very weak in her studies and was often derided in class by her teachers who called her "lazy." Sima worked with the girl personally to give her the help she needed and urged the teachers to be more gentle with her.

7. Name: Mariam

Answers: She has taught 7 years in Grades 4 and 6. She feels this is an excellent program. When she meets with her group, she asks about any problems they have. The children often respond with tears, sharing their stories and problems. She then works with the students to try and solve their problems. Many are struggling with their studies. An older girl approached Mariam yesterday, explaining that since she was young during the Taleban period, she had not received an education. Now as an older girl she had come back to school but was struggling and was spoken to cruelly

by her teachers. Mariam went to the principal on this girl's behalf and he spoke to the teachers, explaining her circumstances and urging them to be more understanding. Mariam also mentioned the need for additional tables and chairs and more storybooks, notebooks, pencils, and pens.

5. Name: Habiba

Answers: Habiba has taught for 8 years, Grade 5. She says this is an excellent program and that there are many more students that need help than groups available. She said 60% of the children come to school hungry and many are poorly clothed. She says there are psychological problems and also problems related to poverty. She tries to find out the sources of the problems and address those. For example, one girl was always arriving late at school. She went to the family to address this problem and worked out a solution so that now the girl arrives on time. She gives her special help with her studies since her parents are unable to study with her at home. Habiba feels this program should definitely continue and be made permanent.

6. Name: Attifa (Non participating teacher)

Answers: Attifa has been teaching 4th grade for 3 years. She speaks excellent English and is continuing her education and for that reason cannot participate in the program now. She feels it is an excellent program for the development of students with difficulties. She would like to participate later when she has finished her education.

7. Name: Salmia (Non-participating teacher)

Answers: Salmia has taught for 3 years, Grade 4. She feels that the Healthy Afghan Girl Project is excellent and is a help to both teachers and students. She would love to be involved in the future.

Alluhodddin Teacher Interviews

8. Name: Shukria

Answers: She has 10-14 girls in her group. She works with the children each day, providing support, and giving instructions in cooking, washing, and other practical skills. She says there is a problem with a lack of materials to do these various tasks so they just explain how to do them. She said boredom is a real problem, especially for those children who have no relatives to come and take them out. She wondered if it would be possible to organize field trips to take the children out at times or have picnics, sightseeing, etc.

9. Name: Candy

Answers: She has 14 students in her group. She follows the curriculum of suggested activities prepared by PARSA and thinks the training is excellent. She helps the children with practical skills like sewing on buttons or repairing their clothes. She asks them each one by one how they are doing. She gives hygiene training which she thinks is very important—hand washing, etc. She mentioned that the “focusing”

training is very helpful to the children, helping them calm down and even helping in practical ways such as remembering where lost items are.

10. Name: Lila

Answers: She has 14 in her group and enjoys teaching them practical skills such as cooking and sewing. The children also like the sports activities. There is a problem with a lack of supplies to carry out the various activities. Children come to her with various problems, such as when they feel sick or have fevers. She mentioned a rash of sore throats, but said the doctor at their clinic feels they need operations to cure the sore throats.

11. Name: Safiullah, Principal of the Alluhoddin Boys School

Answers: He is very positive about the training he and the teachers are receiving and about the groups for the children. He said the information is very helpful and he believes the children will benefit greatly from these groups. He says he knows the boys especially enjoy sports and English training and also look forward to computer training.

12. Name: Bilquis

Answers: She has about 15 in her group and said the children are of varied ages—some little and some in their teens. She said the group is like a family with the older girls helping the younger ones. Her group gathers everyday, usually around 4 or 5 in the afternoon, after the children's other activities are completed. She follows the curriculum, but also offers help with their homework and with solving any problems they may have. She mentioned a need for more clothes for the children and especially under clothes and supplies for the older girls.

13. Name: Safia

Answers: Safia is a new young teacher who has just recently taken a group. She has 12 girls in her group. She says she has no discipline problems and is following through with the curriculum from PARSA as a guide for the activities in her group. Her group gathers about 5 PM.

14. Name: Malia

Answers: Malia, a very motherly figure, was very positive about the program. She also highly values the training she is receiving in learning how better to relate to the children. The children bring her problems of all kinds, from a lack of hot water, to health problems. She tries to work with them to find solutions to their problems. She feels focusing activities are very helpful and foster good health.

Group Observations at Ghazi Ayoub Khan School:

Teacher: Shafika

Number in Group Five 2nd grade girls (5 were absent due to bad weather) The group normally meets outside, sitting on a mat, since no extra rooms are available, but today was meeting in the school library since it was pouring rain outside. The 5 girls sat around a table and were going over a religious studies lesson. Shafika was asking questions and writing key ideas regarding the Islamic morning prayer routine on the white board. The PARSA staff person, Nahid, complimented teacher on her class, then asked her permission to interact with the girls. She demonstrated the use of much more student interaction, asking the students to give their views and encouraging participation by all. She then showed the teacher how with preparation she could plan visual aides to make the class more interesting. One little girl was Shia and the other four were Sunni. A question came up where there were different answers for these different groups. At first the teacher said the Shia view was wrong. The PARSA staff member, Nahid, then interrupted and illustrated how the teacher could use this point to show the importance of acknowledging and accepting of different views. She demonstrated how to draw each student out with gentleness and humor. Nahid's interactions with the group and the teacher were an example of an effective modeling of good teacher behavior. Several of the little girls in this group seemed very sharp. Nahid said the teachers select the students to participate since they can identify needy students, but she wondered if this process needs to be examined to make sure the truly needy students are being selected.

Teacher: Manijeh

Number in Group: Six 6th grade girls (Some were absent due to bad weather) This group of girls was waiting and the teacher had not shown up. Finally she came late, apologizing that she had been held up, by an emergency at home. Nahid, the PARSA staff person, lectured her on the need to come on time since the girls were just waiting outside in the rain for her. Nahid indicated that teacher irresponsibility is a problem in the schools and also in this program.

Teacher:

Number in the group: Eight 11th grade students (2 have dropped out due to their families not giving them permission to stay after school) to participate. Nahid counseled this teacher to select 2 more students to participate. Nahid went with the teacher to an 11th grade Chemistry class and spoke to the girls about the advantages to being a part of a program such as this. She asked for volunteers who would like extra help. One girl raised her hand and said she would ask her parents' permission to participate.

Teacher: Shokira

Number in Class: Nine 6th graders. Shokira, the deputy director of the school and a teacher for nearly 30 years, spent the first 15 minutes reviewing the girls' homework. Nahid was not pleased that she just checked to see that it was done, but was not thorough in correcting mistakes. Shokira did not seem to have a plan for the group gathering, but continued just going over the book, asking questions and having the girls stand to answer.

Here again it was clear that there is a need for more teacher training and encouragement to plan lessons and learn how to draw out the individual students.

Group Observations at Alluhoddin:

Teacher: Bilquis

Number in Group: Twelve 1st and 2nd grade boys. The children were sitting on the floor in one of the bedrooms playing. Bilquis gathered them together and had them sit in a row, along the beds which lined the edges of the large room. She had them all show their hands and bare feet to see if they were clean. She then instructed them about manners in greeting strangers and in eating. She asked them questions about these topics. Then she had them get their homework out and work on that.

Teacher: Lila

Number in Group: Fourteen 3rd and 4th grade boys. Lila was working with the boys on an English lesson with a whiteboard. They were seated on the floor of another large bedroom with beds around the edges. She was writing on the board and having the boys copy the English words into their notebooks. Nahid, of the PARSA staff, encouraged her to check the boys hands and feet as a mother would. Nahid, then modeled a more interactive English lesson, making some English letter cards out of white paper and asking the boys to take turns writing various English letters on the board. The children perked up with this extra attention, responding well to Nahid's enthusiasm.

Teacher: Sarina

Number in Group: Ten 8th grade girls. Sarina leads an English class as part of PARSA's program for girls. The class was meeting in a classroom in the Alluhoddin School on the orphanage's property. The classroom was quite chilly and the door to the outside did not properly close. Sarina had written a test on the board, which the students were filling out at their desks. Nahid asked to see the book they were using, but the teacher had failed to bring the book. Nahid explained to her the need to be more attentive to her duties and to make plans for each class. She also moved the students around so that they could see the board more clearly.

Student Interviews at Alluhoddin

1. Name: Rafia, Age 12, 6th grade

Answers: Rafia has been at the orphanage for 6 years. She likes the group because she can speak to the leaders about any problems she has. Especially enjoys cooking lessons but wishes they had materials to make real meals. She wants to be a doctor when she grows up.

2. Name: Rana, 13 years old

Answers: Rana has been at the orphanage for 4 years. She likes the group and enjoys cooking. When asked what she does if she is sad, she responded that she is always happy.

3. Name: Zaina, 15 years old

Answers: Zaina speaks excellent English. She has learned it while at the orphanage and through participating in several classes. She wants to be an English teacher or a translator. She thinks the groups are good and has especially enjoyed the focusing training as it makes her feel peaceful. She says the group is like a group of sisters. She says she will not be anxious to leave the orphanage because she has nowhere to go and she feels safe here.

4. Name: Arazo, 16 years old.

Answers: Arazo has been in the orphanage for 7 years. Her favorite activity is sports and she is a good football player. Once the night “mother”, Malia, took her to the hospital when she was very sick. She can go to her leader with any problems she has.

5. Name: Nadia 16 years old

Answers: Nadia has been in the orphanage for 7 years. She loves to read books from the library. She says the group leader never reads aloud to the children, but the girls read books themselves. The leaders take time to listen and help the girls. She thinks the groups are very good.

6. Name: Gul Pair 16 years of age

Answers: Gul Pair has been in the orphanage 8 years. She thinks the group is good and enjoys cooking and learning to sew and repair her clothes. She also likes English and computer lessons.

7. Name: Malalai 13 years old

Answers: Malalai has been in the orphanage for 5 years. She likes the group and the support she gets from the leader and the other girls. She enjoys the activities like cooking and sewing and learning how to run a home, which the leaders are showing her.

8. Name: Azna, 12 years old

Answers: Azna has been in the orphanage 9 years. She likes learning about how girls at home should behave and some domestic skills like cooking and sewing. She speaks to her leader if she has a problem or need and the leader helps her with that.

9. Name: Lila, 13 years old

Answers: Lila enjoys cooking and sports. She feels free to speak to her leaders about problems she faces. She likes the group and the leaders.

10. Name: Faria, 12 years old

Answers: Faria has been in the orphanage 7 years. She likes being a part of the group and the activities the group does together. She likes to learn about what girls do in real homes.

11. Name: Walila, 14 years old

Answers: Walila likes to be outside and enjoys playing sports, but says they need a sports teacher for the girls. When she was sick, she spoke to the leader of her group and that woman got her the medicine she needed.

12. Name: Nooria, 15 years old

Answers: Nooria has been in the orphanage for 5 years. She enjoys computer and English lessons and enjoys learning domestic skills like cooking, sewing, and mending clothes.

13. Name: Fiozan, 16 years old

Answers: Fiozan has been in the orphanage 9 years and appears to have untreated scoliosis. She enjoys the group and the activities provided. She likes being with the other girls and learning new skills. One time she got some new cloth and her teacher/leader went with her to a tailor to have some new clothes made. She says she is happy.

14. Name: Farzana, 15 years old

Answers: She has been in the orphanage 9 years. She has no parents but several brothers and sisters who are also in the orphanage. She likes the cooking activities, but says they have a teacher and a kitchen, but no supplies for cooking. Once she needed soap and shampoo, and the teacher got those things for her.

15. Name: Lila, 10 years old

Answers: Lila has been in the orphanage for 5 years and is in the 5th grade. She likes English, Dari, and Math. She enjoys the group and the activities they do together. However, she would love to get out of the orphanage sometimes. She was last out a year ago when a relative took her to Paghman. She often feels bored having to stay in the same place all the time.