

روان افغان



Afghan Spirit

# PARSA *Discovering the True Afghan Spirit*

## August 2006 Newsletter

### ***Dear Friends of PARSA:***

In our work around Kabul this month, my husband Norm and I have noticed for the first time what seems to be a reduction in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and in services. A remarkable vocational training for deaf people, CONTRAK, closed its doors after 4 years. Many Afghan NGOs are struggling to fund their organizations, often laying-off staff in between projects and operating from month-to-month without knowing if the next month will be funded.

### **We wondered about the cause for the reduction of services:**

- Are the donors tired of struggling to support the seemingly endless process of reconstruction?
- Is it the increased risk in security?
- Or are the NGOs just tired of trying to function in an expensive city that has perpetual power outages, snarled traffic and a sometimes hostile government bureaucracy?

### **What I do know is that PARSA has survived for a decade through the generous support of many small donors.**

As we are going through the transitions that include training our Afghan directors to run PARSA, similar transitions are happening throughout Afghanistan. The novelty of the political change has worn off, life is still difficult for most Afghans and I think that now is when the real work of this country begins. As the international community focuses on supporting the emerging Afghan leadership to develop a democratic nation more changes will occur.

*A sentiment that is still often expressed by the people I meet in the streets is, "Thank you for leaving your country to come to ours...please do not leave us..." For those of you at home who are so much a part of our effort, thank you for making it possible to do our work here.*

**Your efforts are what allow us to continue! I am deeply appreciative of your support and encouragement as we make the transition from Mary Macmakin's legacy into this new era.**

*Our best to all of you,*

***Marnie Gustavson, Executive Director***

## Volunteer Update:

We had very special volunteers visit us this month and their activities have allowed us to move forward significantly in new projects.

**Susan Moodie**, from the **International Yoga College**, ([www.internationalyogacollege.org](http://www.internationalyogacollege.org)), has worked with our staff, the women at the Widows Garden, and the orphans at **Allahoddin Orphanage**.

Viewed as an interesting exercise program, Susan has won over our physiotherapists and the staff at the orphanage by providing sessions of deep relaxation, deep breathing exercises and stretching.



**Susan Showing Widows  
How to Bend to Sweep**

**Dawn Erickson** is organizing our finances and administration, a project I am personally grateful for as our work is all on a cash basis here and “good books” are incredibly to us important at all levels of viability. She is also working on keeping the new PARSA Web site updated.

**Rosemary Jeffcott**, a return volunteer and former teacher here at AISK in the ‘70’s, traveled to the Hazarajat, to visit families that Mary has been working with. She distributed cooking pots and implements to very poor families, knitting wool as well as school supplies all collected by the women of **Zonta International**, [www.zonta.org](http://www.zonta.org), **Geelong Branch in Australia**.



**Van at Work  
and friend Kabir a new  
student at the American  
University of Afghanistan**

**Guru Sewak Khalsa**, a social worker who specializes in working with abused children, has joined our staff working at **Allahoddin Orphanage** to start working with 20 children selected by the orphanage staff as troubled children.

**Van Auburn**, completed data bases for the Physical Therapy Clinic and continues to help work on the new PARSA Web site from New Mexico.

Finally, a special thanks to **Marc Gold** of “**100 Friends Project**”, [www.100friendsproject.org](http://www.100friendsproject.org) who donated money on behalf of his supporters to the **Allahoddin Orphanage** for supplies for the children, and additional staffing and also to two widows who are struggling to earn money through their gardening.

**Our volunteers are contributing to our web journal that at: [www.parsakabul.blogspot.com](http://www.parsakabul.blogspot.com)**

*August 2006 Newsletter pictures were contributed by Guru Sewak Khalsa and Dawn Erickson.*

## **PARSA Project Updates:**

### **Allahoddin Orphanage Project:**

With a generous start up donation from Betty Tisdale and the HALO foundation, PARSA has started a program of support for Allahoddin orphanage. Under **Yasin's** direction our physiotherapists and psychosocial workers have been conducting assessments of the orphans, and have started working with some of the children.

Conditions at the orphanage are difficult, staff members are only paid \$40 a month. Many of the staff have worked there for close to 30 years. When the orphans are not in class, one staff person supervises 250 boys and one staff person supervises 200 girls. After school, there are no scheduled activities. If the children are not in class they are in their rooms, often sleeping because there is nothing else to do. The staff discourages field trips because they are afraid the children will run away.



**Atikula and Sair Physical Therapy**

Our immediate effort has focused on getting badly needed medical attention to about 20 of the children including taking them out to see the eye doctor. Yasin took two of the children to ICRC to get them fitted for prosthetics. Guru Sewak is focusing on developing activities that the supervisory staff can manage without the kids getting out of control. We are as yet not allowed to work with the girls. We have encountered other organizations that are attempting to get support to the orphans but it tends to be erratic.



**Boys at the Orphanage**

For me, this level of care for these children in the fourth year of the reconstruction effort is hard to understand as the international community usually gives so generously to efforts that benefits children. We will be exploring channels of support and funding that can be found in Kabul for this project.

Marc Gold donated money for us to hire staff to support the supervising orphanage staff who is responsible for bathing, and putting to bed over 200 kids.



**Yoga Class at the Orphanage**



**Zarguna helps the Orphans Study**

In an effort to reduce the level of violence that exists by virtue of the inability of the staff to supervise so many children at once, Yasin and his staff will be working full time to develop programs that give as much attention to the children as possible. In addition, the psychosocial trainers as well as the emotional issues the children have as a result of whatever circumstances landed them in the orphanage.

### **Hazarajat:**

Yasin accompanied Rosemary to Panjab in the Hazarajat to assess the current program and to develop a proposal for a comprehensive physiotherapy clinic/literacy/economic program to serve the area. This program model is an integration of PARSA services designed to create dynamic projects which teach the people in our programs ways to sustain and improve their lives when the programs finish.

The Hazarajat is an area populated by the Hazaras who are an ethnic minority, traditionally persecuted, that are underserved by reconstruction efforts.



**Susan and Rosemary Sort Wool for Panjab**

Rosemary's comment when she returned was that the depth of need is just hard to comprehend. Working off of the foundation that Mary has created we hope to establish our program there by the end of this year.

We are hoping to get at least a year of this program funded when the directors go to the states for their fundraiser in Arizona this fall.

### **More PARSA Project Updates:**

By Dawn Erickson, MPA, SPHR

PARSA Volunteer and Organizational Consultant

Since arriving in June, life at PARSA has been a general jumble of working on projects, finance, administration and the new Web site. Everyday is full of experiences that transcend the 105 degree heat despite the lack of air conditioning and electricity.

Short trips outside of Kabul to Istalif to see the potters and to ride a horse by the river have filled our days off.

### **Gift Shop:**

The PARSA Gift Shop is open for business and currently employs 14 women to make crafts and clothes. Currently we are looking into exporting PARSA merchandise to the United States and elsewhere, as well as, starting an economic and literacy program for the women.



**Lila Weaving**



**Thread for Weaving**

The PARSA Gift Shop in Karte Se is open everyday except Friday for sales of clothes and crafts.

### **Widows Garden:**

The Widow's Garden Project run by Director of Women's Economic Programs Zarguna Hashimi is continuing to serve 20 widows in Kabul's District 6 whose husbands were killed in the many wars that have plagued this country since 1980.

Eventually, PARSA hopes to expand this program to other areas of Kabul and the provinces.



**Zeba Gul and Lunch**



**Master Gardener**

Three of the widows are now making money to help support their families. Zeba Gul makes lunch that for the local bazaar that is taken by the Master Gardener on a Karachi cart to the market. Matawb Gul and her friend make chutney to sell to the bazaar.



**Zeba Gul in the Garden**



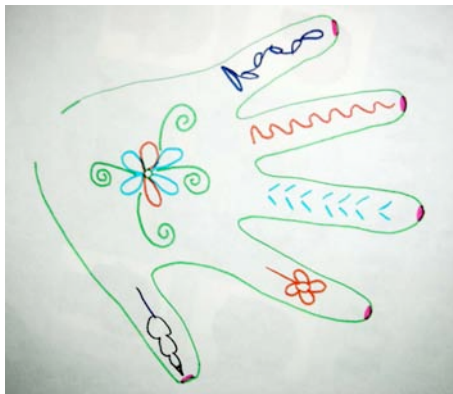
**Matawb Gul Making Chutney**



**Homaira 14 years old**

The other widows are hoping to learn to make money through their efforts soon. Daughter's help their mother's to make money by watering the garden and doing embroidery.

The Los Angeles Times visited the Widow's Garden in July and plans to publish a story about it sometime in the next few months.



**An Afghan Widow's Hand for Peace**

One of the activities that Susan Moodie did with the women in the Widow's Garden project in August was Hands for Peace.

Sending you peace,

Dawn

Please remember to check the new PARSA Web site at [www.afghanistan-parsa.org](http://www.afghanistan-parsa.org) for updates.

### **PARSA Wish List:**

- Air mileage donated to cover a segment of Mary MacMakin's next trip to Afghanistan or to help sponsor PARSA volunteers
- \$1,000 for a generator, ours is 8 years old and we are fixing it every week
- A school that will agree to do a pen pal exchange with the orphans in our project at Allahoddin Orphanage
- A computer printer with scanner
- \$500 to match Marc Gold's \$500 for Allahoddin Orphanage project, which will go to hire support staff (PARSA will train and manage) for the orphanage