



Direct Aid International

End of the Year Report

January 25, 2024

Hey folks,

Last year's trip was a very successful one. DAI made great progress in its efforts to continue building schools in Afghanistan. I met with representatives in the IEA Government in Bamiyan and Ghazni Provinces. On both occasions I was encouraged to continue my work with local village elders to construct schools in their villages. I will give you a rundown on the progress made in the two villages we chose to work with in 2023.

Jalmish Village

Bamiyan Province, Shibar District
Four-room school for Grades 1-3 USD 9,000.

38 girls

44 boys

Upon arriving in Kabul, we departed for Bamiyan in the central highlands for our first stop. Before traveling to Jalmish we met with Governor Abdullah Sarhadi. This was our second meeting in as many years. We discussed the progress of our project in Jalmish and were encouraged to continue our work in Bamiyan. The Mantra "we have many schools to build" was echoing in my head.

The road construction on the way to Jalmish was abruptly stopped with the change of governments in 2021. I was informed that the World Bank had just released the funding to restart the improvements to this main thoroughfare to Kabul. It's a good thing too. I estimate that the 1½ hour drive would easily be cut to 30 minutes once pavement is laid down. When we arrived, a small delegation of village elders was on hand to greet us outside the local mosque. Inside was a small room that was set aside for education. Walking into the dark and musty room were the students from the three local villages who would walk to school each day. They were a bit apprehensive as to what was going on and who was this Firangi carrying cameras and a smile from ear to ear talking in a strange language? After visiting with the children for a few minutes and taking a few photos, the villagers and I went outside to view the possible locations for a Four -room school. My colleague Sardar Amiri from ECOA had already determined that this would be a good area and village to work in. All everyone needed was my final blessing which, thankfully, was easy to confirm while I was there.

Update 1-25-2024

Jalmish Village was able to construct the 4-room school in less than six months from start to finish. The classrooms have ample space for this population and from the photos are a big improvement from what they had before DAI's arrival.



Once we arrived in Ghazni City we stopped by for a meeting with the Deputy Governor. He was new to the position and felt uncomfortable meeting with me, and asked the General Directorate of Intelligence (G.D.I.) to interview me. This was understandable seeing as it is rare for an American to travel around the country wanting to build schools. After six hours of conversation, they arranged accommodation for me at a local hotel until the following morning. Upon my arrival back at GDI headquarters the Director of Intelligence for Ghazni Province met with me and said the magic words: "You Are Our Guest!" He also assured me that it was safe for me to travel anywhere and that he and his staff would do their best to accommodate my needs. I asked him if he could assist me with introductions to leaders in the Waghaz District in my effort to locate a village that needed a primary school for both boys and girls. I was on

Zamarai Village
 Ghazni Province, Waghaz District
 Six-room primary school for Grades 1-6 USD 10,000
 90 girls
 295 boys



the road to Waghaz within the hour and sitting with the Governor of Waghaz District soon after.

Update 1-25-2024

The Village was able to complete the foundation and walls for a six-room primary school before winter weather put a stop to the work. Construction will resume in spring with the warmer weather. Considering the fact that Jalmish Village in Bamiyan Province had a six-month head start making plans and a design for the school, I am quite pleased with the progress Zamarai made since early June.

2024 PROJECTS



We visited a village in Waghaz last summer that was identified as the next location for school Number 57. We also have two more requests for Six-room schools. I would have to visit the locations to approve the disbursement of funds. Now all we must do is raise the funds necessary to start the projects. In addition, I hope our construction plans can take advantage of what we have learned about building safety and longevity: ideally we would use steel beams instead of poplar and metal roofs instead mud and cement. While this would initially cost more, I know the investment is worth it.

In 2025, our plan includes not only continuing our school construction projects but also expanding our initiatives to reach more communities. We aspire to create an atmosphere of self-reliance and sustainability, addressing the essential needs of education and agriculture.



FUNDRAISING

DAI needs to bring in over \$50,000 USD by the end of May to meet our annual goal of initiating construction of two schools. This is a lofty goal but one I am confident can be met. To be honest, the past few years have been a struggle on the fundraising part of the process. In the twenty-five years that I have been volunteering my time in war torn countries, I have not asked for this before, but if you could, would you consider helping me build the individual donor profile? Would you be willing to send an email, which would include the DAI website address and your encouragement to donate to your friends and family networks? Please feel free to share this newsletter. Our website <https://www.directaidinternational.org/> has a donation page which uses PayPal. We also check the PO Box 394 Northfield, Vermont 05663 mailbox on a regular basis for checks and correspondence. For those who are considering donating large amounts in the tens of thousands of dollars, (yes, we do receive these amounts yearly), I would encourage them to contact me personally to hear about how they could expect their donation to be utilized. My contact information is listed at the bottom of this newsletter and on the webpage as well. Currently DAI's reserve fund is at the lowest in over a decade and we still have commitments that need to be financed. At the height of the change in governance in Afghanistan, we responded to our many Afghan friends and colleagues who were in a state of crisis. We worked tirelessly in concert with others who shared our mission to provide the funds and the coordination needed to support so many who had become trusted friends of DAI. This winter, it still remains hard to say no to a request from a family in need when I am warm, dry, and well fed on a subzero evening.

CHARLIE WILSON'S WAR

Sometimes I feel I am like Tom Hanks in the last two minutes of the movie "Charlie Wilson's War", asking fellow congressman for a million dollars for building schools in Afghanistan. There are a number of legitimate needs globally that some may consider more important than building schools in Afghanistan. I understand that. DAI's numbers speak for itself, after 25 years and 56 schools, it is safe to say that this is what I have become good at. Since 2002, when we built our first 3-room school for girls in Yakhshi, DAI and Afghanistan's Ministry of Education conservatively estimate that no fewer than 175,000 young boys and girls have walked into our schools to begin their educations. I know that this effort is just as important a contribution to global humanitarian needs as many other efforts. The individual and foundation funding and support that DAI has used to build schools and goodwill among local village people in rural Afghanistan have been critical to the mission. I trust that the benefits will resonate for generations and contribute to a more peaceful world. I continue to believe from an investment viewpoint that DAI's school construction projects are one of the best ways to contribute to developing a more equitable global society in the long-term.

As always, I appreciate the support I have received over the years from our dedicated and supportive group of donors and volunteers. Without all of these DAI would not exist. Whether you contribute as an individual, or as a foundation representative, I hope you choose to invest or reinvest now in this work. Your contribution, no matter the size, can make a significant difference. I look forward to returning to Afghanistan in late May or early June to flesh out plans for School Number 57 and 58.

I hope you can be part of the team that makes this happen.

Warmly,

Jonathan

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Direct Aid International is a 501(c)3 tax deductible, charitable foundation, dedicated to bringing a sense of normalcy to crisis situations. Our focus is on education and agriculture within the context of direct aid without regard to race, ethnicity, political or religious affiliation, or gender.