

Founder's Trip to Afghanistan: *Summer 2011*

Dear IEAW Supporters,

I have just returned from my fifth trip to Afghanistan. These journeys seem to get more productive and heartfelt with each visit. I take pride in being the ambassador of the good news from Afghanistan. My trips to Kabul are filled with sincere good feeling and hope, shared with, and by, our students and their families.

The media has its way of painting a negative picture of Afghanistan, even though there has been true marked progress since the fall of the Taliban. Now there are fewer street children and modern orphanages have become more plentiful. Paved streets and improved street lighting is helping enforce security measures. Electricity is available regularly for most residents of Kabul, as well as consistent running water. There has been replanting of civic areas, increased number and variety of restaurants, improved medical facilities, safer and more available ground and air transportation, and less visible discrimination amongst tribes, apparently due to increased education and awareness. The work week is now more commonly five days instead of six, so families have more time to be together. Families continue to be the backbone of Afghan culture and society.

Our graduates are thriving. There are job opportunities in Kabul and the salaries are respectable. Graduates are living more modern lives, with their excellent education, good jobs, and more open-minded husbands, they are able to thrive and bring incremental and palpable change to their communities. I learned that our graduates are now also interested in saving for their future, which is always a good sign.

One of our graduates and her husband, both in their mid to late 20's, are now able to build their dream home with seven bedrooms. They will reside in this beautiful home with his parents, sisters, their husbands and children. The home is located in a new safer area of the city. There is even room for me to stay on my next visit! This student and her husband are originally from very poor families.

I interviewed about seventy candidates for our program, after receiving hundreds of applications this year. We qualified twenty plus women. Our candidates this year are the most remarkable to date. Many women are finding out about the IEAW through our website, and the candidates interviewed will fit into our US colleges in a seamless manor. They are so bright, have excellent work experience, and are dedicated to returning home to add high level women to the current work force.

Our "mission" is to educate future female leaders for Afghanistan. I am thankful to all of our donors who understand the need to have educated women join Afghan society as leaders both in business and politics. Graduates tell me that they are now planting the seeds for their political futures. During this recent visit I started the welcomed dialogue to develop an interest amongst local Afghan leaders and business people to give direct support for our work, as these citizens become more aware of the positive impact our students are bringing to their country.

With our dedicated, hard working board, and all of you, we can improve the lives of numerous people in Afghanistan. One woman has the ability to change the lives of many. Thank you all.

Sincerely,



Paula