



Shelter Now Germany e.V.
Waisenhausdamm 4 38100 Braunschweig



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Waisenhausdamm 4
38100 Braunschweig

fon + 49 (0) 531 88 53 95 7
fax + 49 (0) 531 88 53 95 9
info@shelter.de
www.shelter.de

Dear Friends and Partners of Shelter Now

Afghans are a resilient people. I am reminded of this whenever I hear stories about individuals in Afghanistan and their personal struggle to survive. Many of us in the West are often very spoiled and might well have long since given up. Long suffering Afghans, however, always seem to pluck up new courage in the face of adversity. In the report you can read about the fortunes of the women involved in the "Garden for Women Project" over the last six months.

Our approach at Shelter Now is not top down but rather to work at the grass roots level. In this report you can find out about a small episode related to corruption and character change. There is also a report on an exemplary activity with a children's Sunday school class in Braunschweig.

Udo Stolte
and the Shelter team



**„The Trick is
to get
up once again
when you are
knocked
down“**

Winston Churchill



Hope for Afghanistan and Pakistan



SHELTER-Report

The summer report from staff member Ewald Göttler on the agricultural cooperative “Saodat” with the “Garden for Women Project” sounds more sobering than encouraging. Read it for yourself:

A start in spite of adversity

It was springtime in Afghanistan and in mid-March the women of our agricultural cooperative were busy sowing their first vegetable seeds; planting a bit of hope into desert soil that had never been farmed before. Their hope was for sufficient food for their own families and maybe some additional income from the sale of any surplus. After a few days the seeds had germinated and the appearance of the first tiny spots of green was a cause for joyful confidence. Moreover, the irrigation plant that had been installed with the help of funding from our supporters was in operation, raising hopes of a good harvest a few weeks from then. A few days later, however, our agricultural engineer, Nadir Shah, walked into our office with the sad news that within just a few minutes a swarm of locusts had destroyed any hope of a harvest. This year they had come earlier than expected and in unusually large numbers. These young plants might have survived in a garden with a lot of additional greenery, but here in the desert where there is nothing apart from a few thorn bushes there was absolutely no chance of survival: The result was total loss!

Sometimes a small s
avala

A second go

After 30 years of war and disaster Afghans have gotten used to setbacks. A few days after the devastation came the next try. The sowing went well, spots of green began to appear and then the locusts invaded as before and ended all hope. After one more attempt and the transplanting of several purchased plants it became so hot that any further sowing was futile. The women of the “Garden for Women Project” will now have to wait till late summer when the temperatures are more tolerable for the plants. By mid-summer the locusts will have moved on and laid their eggs – tons of them unfortunately – close to the roots of thorn bushes.



Our women and men can do other things as well... Being faithful in little...

In the meantime the women have been making products from fruit, vegetables and herbs bought at the market, which they in turn are able to sell at the local market. After a few failed attempts, the men of the cooperative have succeeded in bringing soya beans and mungo beans to bud. Here too the locusts had destroyed the first crop in the fields. Everyone is now hoping for a good harvest and a good price for these popular beans. This is vital because the wheat harvest will be very poor this year as a result of widespread drought, and the saffron harvest is still a few months away.

Stone has triggered an avalanche!

The women are looking forward to the next sowing with the prospect of still being able to enjoy some fruit from their work in the first year of "Garden for Women" before the onset

of winter. We are all going to prepare for the coming year, for a new round of planted hope but also to be ready for the locusts that will be around again. In the meantime we and the farmers of the cooperative will be gathering old and new information about this age-old cause of fear and devastation, and equip ourselves accordingly with protective hedging around the borders, netting to cover the crops etc. We are grateful to all of those who have contributed in any way to this project so as to ensure that the hope in Saodat does not die, and that endurance and commitment will finally lead to a successful outcome.

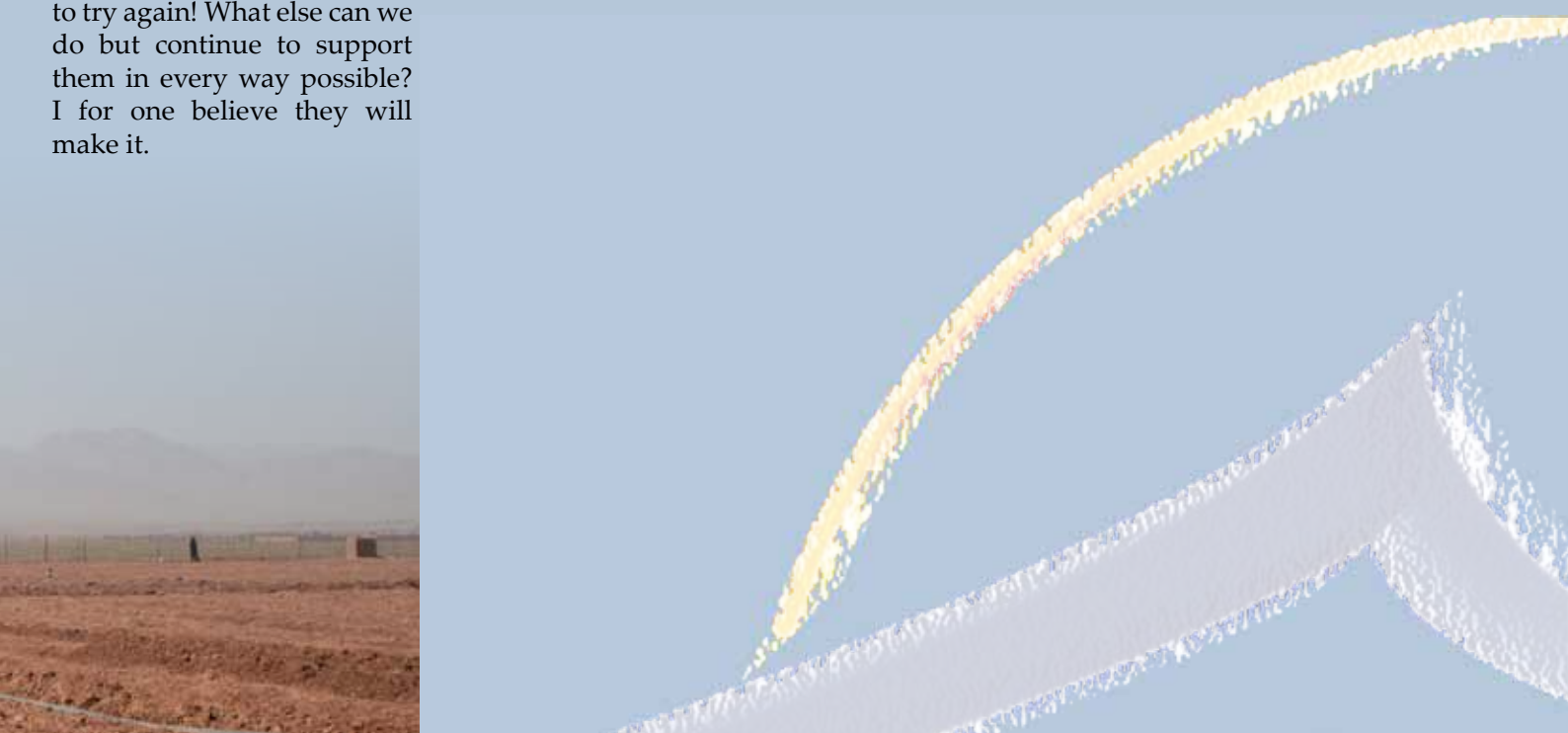
That is the report.

As I read it my feelings fluctuated between frustration, sympathy and admiration for these Afghans. They have experienced decades of war and displacement. Now they are making a new beginning in their homeland with great hopes – and then to face these discouragements and setbacks as they get started. And yet, despite everything, they want to try again! What else can we do but continue to support them in every way possible? I for one believe they will make it.

A few days ago an Afghan member of staff related to me the following experience he had had with a mullah (Islamic priest):

This mullah was responsible for the project funds for a Kareez (irrigation plant). He had received 14,000 afghanis (about \$270) from Shelter Now which he was to pay the workers for their dangerous work underground. However, he only gave them 12,000 afghanis. Yesterday morning he came to me and told me a dream he had had the night before. He saw two bridges over a river, one was on fire but the other was passable. The land on the other side led to a beautiful garden. The mullah interpreted the bridge on fire as the way to hell and the other as following God's way. Then he asked me if I followed God. I told him that I did. Then he departed but returned a few hours later in tears. I was very confused when I saw the mullah crying and asked him what the trouble was. He explained that he had misappropriated 2000 afghanis from the funds. He then handed me this amount. This experience brought us into a deeper friendship with each other.

The sum involved was not even \$40! What is the significance then? What I find remarkable about this small episode is the following: whenever Afghanistan is mentioned the term corruption is usually mentioned in the same breath. A mullah has a bad conscience due to a minor misappropriation of funds. He owns up to his misdoing (which in his culture means a huge loss of face) and then proceeds to put things right. If our work can bring about such a change of character even in such small matters then I see hope. Of course, given the massive cases of corruption in this country it may just be a small stone. But sometimes a small stone has triggered an avalanche.



An activity with a children's Sunday school class

The Lutheran church in Wenden (near Braunschweig) organized their second children's weekend a few weeks ago. Udo Stolte reports:

On Saturday afternoon the children went on a 'journey' to Afghanistan. The team of helpers had kindly refashioned the church hall into an Afghan nomad's tent. There was tschai (tea) to drink as well as snacks commonly eaten in Afghanistan. I also had the opportunity to talk about Afghan culture and life in Afghanistan. There were both sad and amusing things to share. The children were very attentive. They



were thrilled to bits when they were then allowed to make kites and then to prepare and eat an Afghan meal. They spent the night together and then helped organize the Sunday morning service during which they proudly and joyfully presented us with a check. For more than two years they had been pooling their regular offerings and were able to donate almost 2,000 euros (\$2,700). At their request the money will be made available to our new center for the blind in Kabul. We wish to warmly thank the team of helpers and the children.

We would like to thank all of you for your interest in our work. We are especially thankful for all moral and financial support we have received. Without you we would not be able to do this work.

Best regards
Udo Stolte
and the Shelter Team



Spendenkonto Schweiz Shelter Now Germany e.V. Postfinance Bank Kto. 60-798660-9
BIC (SWIFT): POFICHBEXXX IBAN: CH61 0900 0000 6079 8660 9

European account details Shelter Now Germany e.V. NORD / LB Hannover Kto. 25 23 058
SWIFT: NOLADE2H IBAN: D65 2505 0000 0002 5230 58

