

Methodist University, Fayetteville North Carolina
Developing Rural Education Quality in Bamyan, Afghanistan
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Background

This project is designed to promote education quality in rural Afghanistan by constructing a well and establishing a library at Ahangaran Elementary Public School that is located in rural Bamyan Province, almost 200 km from the capital, Kabul. It is home to the Hazaras, a minority group systematically discriminated against and the victims of numerous massacres over the last centuries (Naim, 2015). The Hazaras constitute 10% of the total Afghan population and live in the Hazarjat, central Afghanistan. The national government poorly funds this area. The Ahangaran region of Hazarjat and the main school is a notable example of this neglect. Although the school is only 15 km away from central Bamyan, it is still one of the most under-equipped schools. During the Afghan Civil War and the resulting Taliban government, the school served as a military base. In the summers of 2018 and 2019, I participated in a high school project that refurbished seven classrooms of the school to include carpeting, doors, windows and a gate.

According to numerous international organizations such as UNICEF, USAID, and the NGO, Samuel Hall, more than 43 % of Afghan children, 3.7 million of the population, between the ages of seven and seventeen, do not receive a formal education (Mellen, 2019). Considering the education of the young generation is the key factor for a sustainable future. This project of building a well and refurbishing a derelict part of the school into a library will serve as a starting point for achieving peace and a sustainable future for the Afghan community.

Project Objectives

Students attending the school have to walk several hours from the surrounding area and are required to carry water for the day. Thus, a well that provides clean drinking water will greatly enhance the educational experience at the school. In discussions with school officials, refurbishing a library and providing a safe water source are prime needs of the school. There are three phases to the project. During Phase 1, a borehole well will be drilled. This well will not only serve the children at the school but will serve 70 households in the area. I have contacted a local well-digging company that has agreed to drill the well. Once the well is completed, it will provide safe water during Phase 2 of the project, refurbishing two rooms at the school into a library. The school is a single-story building currently consisting of seven classrooms, an office and the two derelict rooms. Once Phase 2 is completed, during Phase 3, the new library areas will be stocked with 1500 books, 2 computers, 2 printers, bookshelves, tables, chairs, carpet, and other related furnishings. Considering limited access to electricity and lack of internet in Bamyan, the computers will only be used for registering, signing in, and signing out the books. All the resources purchased will serve several grade levels and the needs of students and teachers. This project will serve 120 students, 7 teachers, and 5 staff members of Ahangaran School.

Sustainability

To ensure the sustainability of the library once stocked with materials, the project manager is partnering with the Peshgam Institute, a private English language and Computer Program Center to provide training for the school staff and students. The Peshgam Institute will provide three days of information sessions for the faculty and students regarding the safety of library resources and the regeneration of new ones.

Additionally, a colleague at the IT department of Aga Khan Education Service, Afghanistan (AKES, A); will assist in developing a database to track the use of books and how to access online books. The school staff will receive instruction on how to utilize the data management system. Additionally, the staff will receive training on local fundraisings such as placing charity boxes in the library and local mosques to maintain its finances. In addition, I am working with Smile Please, a Japanese charity organization to seek additional contributions to the Ahangaran School and other public schools in the region.

Implementation:

Prior to arriving in Bamyan, I will finalize plans for the construction of the well and the refurbishing of the two library rooms. The entire project is expected to take a maximum of two months. Below is the timeline of events.

- **Week One:** Purchase the needed construction materials from Kabul and ship them to Bamyan.
- **Weeks Two and Three:** Construction of the well.
- **Week Four, Five, and Six:** Refurbishing of the library space to include installation of a new roof. In summer of 2018, I participated in the initial reconstruction of the seven classrooms and office space. During that project, students and community volunteers assisted with the work. These same individuals have pledged to assist with the refurbishing of the Library. This project was part of my high school's Creativity Action Service (CAS) project.
- **Week Seven:** Books and other required furnishings transported and placed in the library.
- **Week 8:** the Peshgam Institute staff will conduct information sessions for the students and school staff.

Funding for the project will be deposited in the First Micro Finance Bank (FMFB) branch in Kabul and withdrawn at FMFB branch in Bamyan.

Project Manager's Background: I have been a part-time English language teacher at one of the AKES centres and then a part-time volunteer teacher at a kindergarten in my community before joining the UWC ISAK family in 2017. In grade 11, I initiated a CAS project through which I was introduced with five public rural schools including Ahangaran in rural Bamyan, in the summer of 2018. In 12th grade, I wrote my Extended Essay (EE) regarding the poor quality of school education in Bamyan and continued my CAS project afterwards. The last time I visited the school in the summer of 2019 and noticed the need for further contributions to my CAS project, Education for Everyone (E4E) and this Davis Peace Project.

References:

- Naim, N. (2015, November 12). What the Afghan protests are really about. Retrieved January 29, 2021, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2015/11/12/what-the-afghan-protests-are-really-about>
- Mellen, R. (2019, April 06). More than 40 percent of Afghan kids aren't in school, report says. Retrieved January 29, 2021, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/06/05/more-than-40-percent-of-afghan-kids-arent-in-school-report-says/>