

## **Progress report of Utran Killi Project**

December 2010



### *Summary report:*

*In March 2010, as a result of two Young Global Leaders Christian Wenk (Switzerland) and Orzala Ashraf Nemat (Afghanistan) an initiative was taken to build a school for 400 girls and boys in a far and remote part of Afghanistan's eastern province Nangarhar. According to the plan agreed among both, Christain have organized fund raining programs while Orzala managed the process of speaking to local people, getting their agreements and managing the construction of the school. The school construction is 90% completed at this stage, some of the heavy raining during the year and also the breaking of mountain have delayed the completion slightly. However, according to the plan, the school is ready to be inaugurated in 22<sup>nd</sup> of March as the Afghan academic year begins. The funds received so far from Christain is Euros 39928.23. This is the cost for completion of the school construction. The initiative will continue to sponsor the school costs for the first year, while by second year, it will be formally handed over to the provincial department of Ministry of education for further continuation.*

In the very last days of 2010, taking the advantage of Season Holidays, I travelled to visit the project sight by myself. When in August I left Kabul, I was completely advised against it, because it was election time and violence, not necessarily in Dara-e-Noor district, but on the way reaching there got dramatically increased. However, now things in general did not sound any complicated, though

surprising events keep happening, but my one day visit to the area went without any major incident or security trend.

As usual, we hired a car from Jalalabad city(capital for Nangarhar province) to reach to the area. It turned to be a rainy and foggy day! However, despite the fact that the raining resulted into our car breaking on the way, it made the area scenes even more beautiful in a winter day! We found local villagers on our way very helpful who replaced our car with a local one and we have made our way to reach not too late. Normally it takes you only 40-50 minutes to reach there.

Once reached to Utran Valley, there is a 10-15 minutes walk between the valley and the roads. The walk is partly on riverbed and partly actually hiking up the valley. We have filmed some parts of our walk, so that you can get an image of how will it look like. As I was walking, we receive a few men village coming to welcome us. As a younger boy who was with us, made it to the village much faster than we did!! The villagers very highly welcoming. We made our way to the school sight.

It was a dream coming true. I visited this place exactly a year ago, the spot we discussed at that time as a potential area for school was heavily rocked mountain, yet today I found that replaced with a building which will surely bring a new life and far better one for children of this area! I had to stop for a few seconds and think.... A childhood time story flashed back into my mind: it was about an old man who wanted to find a short cut to connect to the city from his village in a mountainous valley, but in front of their village, there was this heavy mountain. One day he tells villagers he want to remove the mountains!! All villagers burst into laughter and make fun of him. Next day, his sons found him breaking the mountain. First they discourage him, but then they found their father pretty dedicated, hence they join their father to do this, later the villagers follow...in a few years the mountain is broken and the village finds its way to the city. I could not simply stop sharing this flashback reflection... to me it was a story then, now I see it right in front of my eyes! It happens, the school is there, it was not there just a year ago! Thanks to the dedication of local villagers many of whom shown me their hands with smile on their face entirely becoming thick dealing with stones: 'it hurts, but we did it for such a good/important cause that we are so proud of'. The school is there thanks to the dedication of Christian Wenk, my YGL friend, who made his promise come true, right on time and for a cause which from that village all the way to global level it matters/means a lot to him, to myself and to all of us! And thanks to Liz Strick who dedicated 50% of her full year Afghan Series of paintings to this cause. We find out that our joint efforts can definitely make a huge difference in the lives of those in need and can provide girls and boys at Utran Killy with opportunities to learn and have a different future. We also thank all our friends, I mean my (Orzala's), Christian's friends and Liz's friends and our families for joining us in this great cause.



A few practicalities on update:

At this stage 90% of the work of the school is completed. The winter days and some raining by end of December, slowed down the work a little bit. However, the works are still struggling to complete the job soon.

**The only remaining work so fare are:**

- Covering of the ceiling, filling of the room and outside yard, completion of windows and door installation, Plastering the room from inside, filling of the outside part. The outside, most probably will remain with natural color(as they are). Only the last part, i.e. plastering might be delayed until spring due to raining and cold weather. The rest is expected to be completed by early February.
- During my visit, some of the village elders suggested that if we arrange a half meter wall surround the building's yard, to avoid strangers and animals getting into the building that will be great. Although it has not been part of the plan, but I think we can discuss this further perhaps later.
- The register of school with the ministry of education is on the agenda of the local council, they ensured me that by March 22<sup>nd</sup> which is the beginning of the new academic year, this work will be completed.

**Here are the next phase plan for the school:**



- The academic year begins in March 22<sup>nd</sup>, so sometime during spring, we will plan a formal inauguration of the school in which we can invite a few guests inaugurate the school.
- In terms of providing support, by March, the current headmaster of the school is asked to provide us with complete list of students and his staff, so we can arrange a plan for preparing the uniforms and stationeries for the students over the next academic year.
- The water source for student's access to drinking water is a key, although this has not been part of our earlier plan, but we need to find a way to arrange this.
- Tree and flower planting. A gardener in the community agreed that over the completion of the terrace work, he will start working on tree planting and flower/greenery rising in the yard space.

