# Rotary's Projects in Afghanistan

# 2002-2012

Reach Within to Embrace Humanity

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# Rotary activities in Jalalabad, Afghanistan

By Stephen R. Brown

Shortly after the incidents of Sept. 11, 2001, Rotarian Fary Moini, a relatively new Rotarian in our La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary club, asked me if I could help her work with Afghan refugees. She spent two months in refugee camps near Peshawar, Pakistan. Upon her return, she suggested our club build a school in Afghanistan. I was skeptical but with encouragement from some Pakistan**i** Rotarians and a grant from the William H.Donner Foundation to help pay for the building of a school, Fary and I traveled to Jalalabad in November of 2002 to explore this idea. This turned out to be the first of 12 trips I have taken to Afghanistan in the last 10 years and was the beginning of a chain of events I could never have imagined.

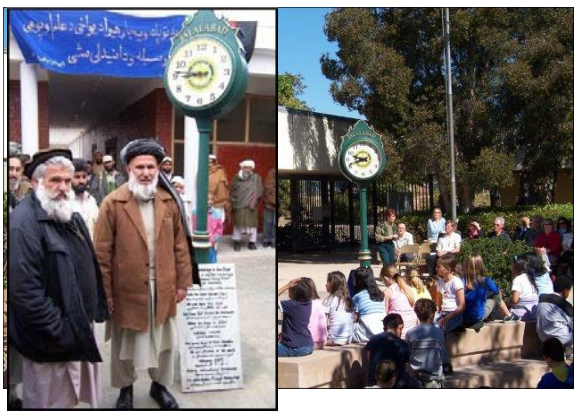
Upon arrival, we met with the Governor of Nangarhar Province in Jalalabad just on the Afghan side of the Khyber Pass which we had traveled through with some Rotarians from Pakistan. The Governor advised there would soon be many Afghan refugees returning to the Jalalabad area and he would set aside a site for us to build a school. We went to the site and found two UNICEF tents where boys studied under one tent and girls under the other. We were sufficiently encouraged that we contracted with an Afghan NGO to oversee the work and held a groundbreaking ceremony.

We returned in early 2004 for the dedication of the school. It was built in two phases and, with its 20 classrooms, was designed for 1,000 students. It presently has about 6,000 students running in three shifts with some classrooms outside under tents and some classrooms just in the shade of its wall.

Pictured above is opening day at the school.

We have been in touch with a gentleman by the name of Gopa from the country of Oman regarding this school. When he learned about the need for more classrooms, he was able to raise $92,000 from colleagues and businesses in Oman which was sufficient to add six classrooms. Gopa is not a Rotarian nor is there a Rotary Club in Oman. Yet, Gopa advised that when prospective donors learned that Rotary was involved, they expressed confidence that the money would be properly handled and utilized.

We have learned it is easier to build a school than it is to assure the quality of the education provided therein. For example, this girl could find California and Afghanistan on the world maps we provided to each classroom but her teacher could not. The typical primary school teacher may have at best only a high school education let alone instruction on how to teach. We also learned that girls were not going to go to school after the sixth grade for lack of female teachers. We asked how many would attend if we could supply female teachers and all raised their hands. For the cost of $600 teacher per year we were able to hire eight female teachers, and in 2012-we will have the first graduating class of females who have completed grade 12. In 2010 the first class of boys graduated. We also sent 12,000 English dictionaries for classrooms in Afghanistan.



Our club's centennial project provided a clock at the Afghan Rotary School and one at a sister school in San Diego. On one side of each clock is the time in San Diego and on the other side the time in Jalalabad.

My wife, Susan traveled with Fary and me in March of 2008 to meet the Afghan friends we have developed and experience the warm welcome we always receive. We also make a point to meet with the elders while there to be certain they are comfortable with what we are doing to support education and our other endeavors.

While working with the local Afghans, they became curious about this Rotary organization. The idea that we were unpaid volunteers who kept returning to help them was a bit mystifying. However, they expressed an interest in becoming involved in Rotary so during our trip of January, 2005 we chartered the Rotary Club of Jalalabad.

We have since brought two Afghan Group Study Exchange teams to San Diego. The first in May of 2005 was made up of college professors, three from the medical school, two English professors and one agriculture professor. The second team came in the summer of 2009 made up of three English teachers and a Rotarian team leader who is a neurosurgeon.

During our first trip in 2002, I was surprised to see the Rotary logo on this sign in Kabul. As I looked more closely, I saw that this billboard was promoting the polio eradication efforts in Afghanistan. Since that time, we have assisted in having Jalalabad Rotarian Dr. Pardis, become Rotary's representative for polio eradication in Afghanistan. He has been Director of

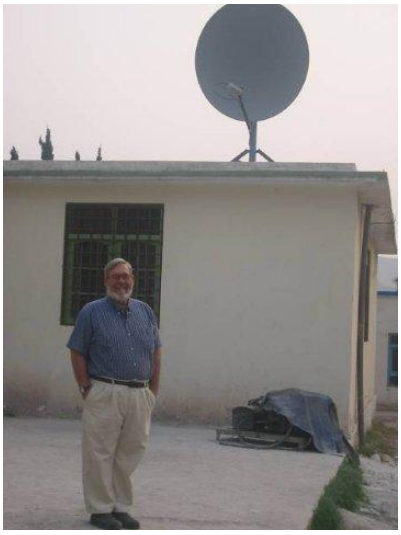
Public Health in Nangarhar Province and we brought him to San Diego for one month in early 2009.

During one of our trips, Dr. Pardis arranged a meeting of the mullahs to have a discussion about the importance of supporting the immunization efforts. The gentleman in the middle of this picture is Abdul Wakil, a local moderate Taliban leader. He talked eloquently about how, under Islam, adults have an obligation to protect children and thus the message must be provided through the mosques regarding the importance of supporting the polio immunization efforts.

Dr. Pardis has assisted in the setting up of a vaccination station at the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan-pictured above. It is estimated that approximately 4,000 children of an appropriate age for immunization pass through this border daily and they are taken aside for immunizations. When they have NIDs in Afghanistan, over 55,000 local individuals are mobilized to support these efforts.

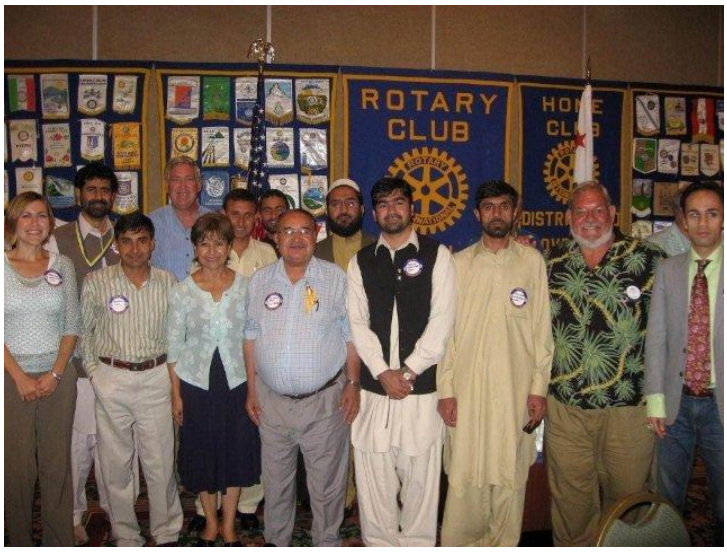
Rotary Club of Jalalabad and students in our Global Connection and Exchange Program raised $1000 which was donated to the Rotary Foundation for eradication of Polio. As volunteers, they went into the community to raise funds and educate the public about the importance of polio drops after two days of training.

On our first trip to Jalalabad back in 2002 we asked if there was a local university. We were advised that Nangarhar University is one of the top universities in Afghanistan and our hosts arranged a visit. We met with the Chancellor and the various department heads. We were advised the university had 4,000 students, 250 faculty. Only a few held advance degrees. They did not have a relationship with any other university; they did not have a single computer and no useable textbooks. The professors taught from 20 and 30 year old lecture notes. They asked if we could help. We made no promises nor raised expectations.



When we returned in March of 2004 for the dedication ceremony for the Rotary School, we also had a dedication ceremony for a computer lab at Nangarhar University. Fary Moini, the Rotarian I mentioned earlier from my club, spent two months in Jalalabad in advance of this visit to help oversee the work needed to be done to complete the Rotary school and set up the computer lab at the university. For this trip we also brought Steve Spencer, a professor from San Diego State University who oversees some distance learning programs in the Pacific. At the dedication ceremony for the computer lab he provided a lecture about the internet and later helped set up some of the professors with e-mail accounts. Steve Spencer brought a projector with him, did a web search, and displayed the Quran on the wall of the lab. Later, the head of the Veterinary Medicine Faculty advised that he could bring some tetracycline to help with the computer virus problems professor Spencer had discussed. Six months later I received an e-mail from that same professor advising that through the use of the internet and e-mail communications, he had obtained a $300,000 grant for his Veterinary Medicine Faculty.

A few months after that trip, Steve Weber, President of San Diego State University, learned about our activities in Jalalabad. When we met with him he advised he would like his university to become involved. Fary and I met with a representative of World Bank which organization had just launched a program to fund partnerships between universities in Afghanistan and universities in other countries. We were able to facilitate putting together a partnership between the Nangarhar University and San Diego State University to build an English language program at Nangarhar University. World Bank provided about $2,000,000 in funding for that partnership and we were able to follow that with a second partnership between the two universities to build a civil engineering department at Nangarhar University again with about $2,000,000 in funding from World Bank. Related to this, we were able to assist in obtaining Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarships for four Afghan professors. Two of these have been funded by the Rotary Foundation through Rotary Districts in Michigan--




Mohibullah Israr and Fazal Rabani – both English professors, and two more have been funded by the Rotary Foundation's Scholarship Fund Pool for Low Income Countries-Rafi Sayad an English professor and Ishaq Hassan who received a Master's Degree from the University of San Diego's School for Peace and Justice. From time to time we have had a collection of Afghans visit our club under these various programs. Also, 2 engineering professors received their MA at SDSU and 6 engineering professors went to Cracow University and completed their MA in March 2012 through the SDSU/World Bank funding.

We have also constructed some buildings at Nangarhar University and furnished them with Rotary Foundation matching grants. One is a guest house for visiting professors—pictured right.

Additionally, we designed and built a facility named the Stephen R. Brown International Learning Center at Nangarhar University with a technology rich environment. It has been used for live video conferencing between the professors at SDSU and NU among other things.

These buildings were designed by Rick Clark, acting as a volunteer who is an architect and member of La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club.

In 2009, again with partial financial assistance from the William H.Donner Foundation, we constructed a dormitory for up to 72 females on the main NU campus and furnished the same with a grant from the Rotary Foundation. Very few females attend the university since, in that culture, females are often not comfortable walking or being transported without a male relative. This dormitory now allows for more female enrollment and eventually will assist in better qualified females as English teachers, engineers, lawyers and in other fields.

The La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club Foundation has been able to enter into a variety of partnerships that have resulted in overlapping programs. Some of these partnerships are with the U.S. Department of State, NATO, USAID and Washington State University. A common theme for all of these partnerships is to use technology to enhance learning in education and to enhance relationship building. Different partners provide funding for different aspects of these programs.

For example, the U.S. Department of State provided funding for us to set up computer labs to serve high school students in Jalalabad. In addition to providing basic computer training, the programs we have underway are used to have students in Jalalabad communicate through technology using social media with students in the U.S. The students take an English exam to participate in this program. We also use Skype for live video conferencing with the students. Judith McHale, U.S. Undersecretary of State participated in one of these conferences.

We have also been able to obtain funding for some small grants programs at the Jalalabad high schools. Some of the funding came from the San Diego~Jalalabad Sister Cities Foundation. The Sister Cities relationship was established through Rotarians in both cities. Examples of small grants projects include a program put on by Afghan female high school students talking about violence against women. The audience included male and female high school and college students.

Other projects included clean up and vegetation planting at a high school. Another example was to build a water cistern at the school. The students need to raise additional funds in the community and obtained in-kind donations from vendors for these projects. Students initially involved in these projects have since initiated follow up projects. The idea is quite new to take on social responsibility for their own schools. We have funding from USAID to pay for internet connectivity at the high schools and to add additional computer labs at other high schools

Rotarians in Canada have partnered with Canadian International Development Agency to undertake a project in Afghanistan. Because of our involvement in Afghanistan we were asked to help find and oversee a project. Fary and I met with the Nangarhar Director of Education and he recommended building a school at the Nasrat II School site. There were about 4,000 students attending classes mostly by sitting under trees. The school construction was completed in 2010 and the second phase of building a hall for community meetings and 3 more class rooms is underway. Teacher training is another project which is supported by Canadian Rotarians. Also, as a result of a request by female teachers, a small nursery was established for the children of the female teachers.

The Nasrat II School is pictured below.

A 6000 square foot computer training facility & auditorium was constructed at NU's Faculty of Education and named the Faculty of Education Learning Center. The FELC was opened in Dec., 2011 and contains 2 classrooms teaching English through technology and providing computer training. The ground floor auditorium seats 250. A large hall for the community meetings, conferences and our high school GCE Program operates upstairs. Also, in Nov. 2011, through a Smart Technology donation, we received 2 Smart Boards which are installed in this center. We believe these boards are the first Smart Boards used in public education in Afghanistan. Through our Rotary Club Foundation we provide for all the training taking place in the FELC.

With funding from Washington State University, we set up a computer lab at the NU medical school. Also, with USAID funds we have brought the internet to a medical clinic where we have set up a telemedicine network involving use of the internet to distribute imagery to a network of physicians in San Diego. Additionally, a computer lab was established at the university's computer science department.

NATO has arranged to provide internet connectivity to six universities in Afghanistan but NATO does not provide directly for setting up the IT system to manage and distribute the internet signal. We obtained a grant from NATO where we finished wiring fiber optic to sixteen buildings on the Nangarhar University main campus (pictured left) and now are in the process of relaying that signal to four remote NU campus locations. At these remote locations we have ongoing programs that are internet based. These include the medical school, education faculty, teaching hospital and computer science department all affiliated with Nangarhar University. We have set up computer labs at these locations, are providing ongoing instruction and have worked out a short term solution for NATO to bring the internet to those locations until the longer term relay is in place.

Through the combined funding of US Dept. of State, USAID, Washington State University, and NATO, we have provided computer labs, internet connections and training at the facilities in Jalalabad listed on the right.

**La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club Foundation is supporting programs at the following schools/sites:**

1. Nangarhar University College of Education Training Center
2. Rotary boys & girls High School
3. Bi Bi Zainab Girls High School
4. Wazeer Mohammed Gul Khan boys & Girls High School
5. Bi Bi Aisha Girls High School
6. Abdul Wakil boys High School
7. Bi Bi Mariam Girls High School
8. Professional Institute of Agricultural
9. Professional Institute of Technical
10. Mia Omer High School
11. Nangarhar University Medical School
12. Nangarhar University Teaching Hospital
13. Nangarhar University Computer Science Department
14. International Orphan Care School
15. Midwifery lab- Nangarhar Public Hospital
16. Nursing lab-Nangarhar Public hospital
17. Bi Bi Hawa Girls High School
18. Naazoo Anna Girls High School
19. Tajrobavie Girls High School
20. Chicknoawri Boys High School
21. Tajrobavie Boys High School
22. Shaheed Mohammad Arif Boys High School
23. NU Education Faculty female Students
24. NU Education Faculty Male Students

We obtained a grant from the US Embassy for a program known as Teen Teach. Through this program, Afghan high school students who participate in our GCEP program taught English to 1,800 grade school students in the summer of 2012. This program was administered by former Rotary Scholars Israr and Sayad.

During our trip to Afghanistan in April of 2012, Kalyan Banerjee, President of Rotary International (from India), traveled with us for two days in Kabul. We had several meetings relating to the ongoing polio eradication efforts in Afghanistan. Meetings included representatives of World Health Organization and UNICEF which organizations oversee the immunization efforts and receive funds from various organizations for polio immunizations. (Rotary has contributed more than One billion US dollars towards this effort worldwide and continues to contribute millions of dollars to the efforts in Afghanistan.)

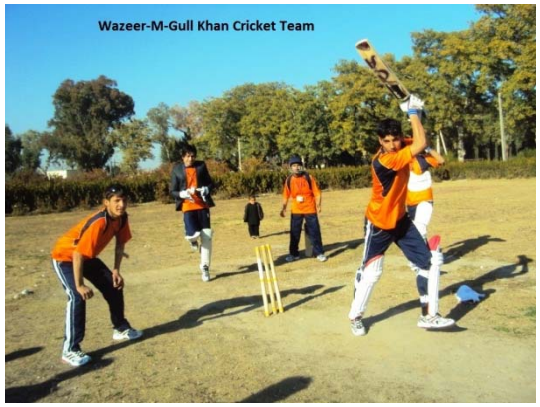
We also met with the doctors working for the Afghan Ministry of Public Health directly responsible for the immunization efforts in Afghanistan. Public Health Minister Suraya Dalil (pictured second from right) met with us in her office and confirmed that polio eradication is one of her highest priorities. (Rotary International President Banerjee is towards the center in the gray suit.)

These meetings in Kabul were setup by US Ambassador to Afghanistan, Ryan Crocker, and we were able to meet with Ambassador Crocker at the US Embassy. (The Ambassador is pictured second from the right.)

The highlight of the two days of meetings was meeting with Afghan President Karzai who has been a strong supporter of the polio eradication initiative throughout his presidency. He re-affirmed his commitment and asked "what more can I do." He offered to work more closely with religious leaders to advance communications regarding the importance of the vaccinations. Rotary International President Banerjee provides Medal of Appreciation to Afghan President Karzai below right.

Fary and I also met with representatives of donors to the eradication efforts from Canadian International Development Agency, USAID, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to discuss further coordination with Rotary's efforts in this initiative.

The US Embassy has provided funding for a female sports program in Jalalabad and the Rotary Club of Woodland Hills has provided funding for male sports. Presently 11 schools are participating in these programs.




One of Rotary's Presidential Themes was: the *Future of Rotary is in Our Hands.* I think this holds true as we are working in partnerships with other organizations. That has worked for us in Afghanistan as set forth below.

1. World Bank $4,000,000
2. USAID $851,000
3. Rotary Foundation $452,000
4. NATO $395,000
5. U. S. Department of State $800,000
6. Canadian International Development Agency $250,000
7. Companies in Country of Oman $92,000
8. William H. Donner Foundation $90,000
9. Washington State University $50,000
10. Hansen Foundation $50,000
11. San Diego~Jalalabad Sister Cities Foundation $$$
12. Individuals-Rotarians and Non-Rotarians $$$$$

# We look forward to continued work in Afghanistan as stated in Rotary's Theme for 2010-11 set forth below:

Submitted by,

Stephen R. Brown
May 19, 2012
StephenRBrown@att.net
www.SteveBrownRotary.com
For video presentation go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEn4rh8t3DE
Or YouTube site and type: Rotary in Afghanistan LJGT 1

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