



**CREATING**  
HOPE INTERNATIONAL

December 2012  
Newsletter



## *Achieving Peace Through Love and Forgiveness*

### Message from Toc Dunlap, CHI Executive Director

When Sakena Yacoobi, the founder of the Afghan Institute of Learning, traveled back to the Afghan refugee camps of Pakistan after finishing her studies in the U.S., she was shocked and saddened by the plight of her people. These were not the Afghans she had known as a child. There were numb, despondent, unhealthy and dependent on others for their survival. Sakena resolved to change that and to offer programs that would transform her people into prosperous, happy, healthy, educated, self-reliant, peaceful women, men and children.

At the time, her dream seemed impossible. Afghanistan was at war, having been invaded by the Soviet Union. Half of the Afghan population was refugees, dependent on the generosity of others. Afghans had the lowest literacy rate in the world and the highest infant and maternal mortality rate. Sakena's goals for her people seemed to be a dream that was impossible to achieve.

But, if you know Sakena....and, if you know Afghans...you will know that nothing is impossible. Sakena knew that her vision for her people would not happen overnight; but she did, and does, believe that with the proper education and training, her vision could be achieved by Afghans.

Because you have been supporting the vision of AIL and Sakena, you know that they began working at the grassroots with the basics—quality education and training and health. Because AIL and Sakena wanted Afghans to reassert their self-reliance, they required community contribution for every project. They also knew that Afghans, like many of us, do not want to be told what they “should” do, so AIL and Sakena offered only those programs which people requested.



Afghan Girls at an AIL peace workshop

Over the years many of you have seen the results. 10 million Afghans, 70% of them females, have benefited from AIL's programs. AIL beneficiaries are educated and healthier; they have learned the skills that they needed to become economically self-reliant. Along the way, AIL has developed some of the most innovative programs in Afghanistan in order to offer the programs that Afghans were requesting. AIL trained teachers in student-



**Dr. Sakena Yacoobi**

Afghan Institute of Learning  
Executive Director

Creating Hope International  
Vice President

centered techniques, so that students could learn critical thinking. When the Taliban closed girls' schools, AIL supported 80 underground home schools for girls in Afghanistan. When women wanted to know more about their rights, AIL was the first to offer human rights and leadership workshops. AIL has opened learning centers for women and children who have no other place to study. In this last year, AIL has reached out with programs for expectant mothers and health education for women, dramatically reducing the infant and maternal mortality in the areas where AIL works. AIL introduced an

*I personally believe that children are a gift to us and we are responsible for educating, protecting, nurturing and giving them a safe and sound environment to grow and gain knowledge so that they can be a part of bringing peace to our nation. Because so many of our children have suffered, are hopeless and have not yet learned how to protect themselves, I strongly believe that this is something that I, as a leader, must do to complete my duty as a citizen of this world.*

*Sakena Yacoobi, AIL Executive Director*



accelerated literacy program for young, illiterate women whereby they texted and wrote messages in Dari. After 5 months, most of the students tested out at the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

But the education and training programs are just the building blocks. Transformation comes when Afghans start using their building blocks to transform their lives. We have seen individuals and some communities begin that transformation over the last 10 years.

This year, AIL and Afghans took a giant step forward towards bringing peace to Afghanistan. In April 2012, to remind Afghans of their core values, AIL held a two-day conference on peace, love and forgiveness in Herat using the poetry of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Afghan poet, Mawlana Jelaludin Rumi. We did not hear much about this conference in the U.S., but Afghans did. The conference was reported by all of the major Afghan TV and radio stations, and Afghans around the country began to write and talk about it. AIL has been deluged with requests for similar conferences in other parts of the country. AIL has already held 7 workshops and conferences for high school and university students to further explore the messages of Rumi's poetry.

Sakena's dream for her people is beginning to be realized.

Thank you to all of you who have supported AIL for these many years for helping Afghans to transform themselves and their country!!



*Happiness has taken over the entire town,  
even the sky and the earth are in bliss.  
Only sorrow is complaining  
Because You have freed  
everyone from it*

*Rumi poem*



## *Tibetan Project*

CHI continues to support the essential oils project and the education, food and housing of Bon refugee children at the Yungdrung Bon Monastic Centre (YBMC) in Dolanji, India. This year CHI helped to support 38 of the children, most of whom come from poor mountainous regions of Nepal bordering on Tibet. CHI also helped to purchase needed oils for the essential oils project of YBMC.

## *We Continue to Need Your Support*

Our work is not yet done. We still need your support so that AIL can educate and train more women and children; so that more women and children can learn how to stay healthy; so that more women can learn skills to support their families; and, so that AIL can hold more peace conferences. The Bon children at the YBMC also need your support. We ask you to continue your support for AIL and the Bon children as they study and learn to transform their lives. To support our work is to help bring peace to Afghanistan and the world.

Tax deductible donations made payable to Creating Hope International are greatly appreciated. Mail to:

Creating Hope International  
P.O. Box 1058  
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Or, you can now donate by credit card at:  
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