Dear Friends,

Creating Hope International (CHI) is excited to share with you some of the amazing work accomplished in 2015 through the Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL), the Tibetan Project and other private programs.

In this newsletter you will learn about the prestigious recognition awarded to AIL’s founder, Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, for her extraordinary work in educating and empowering the Afghan people. You will read about AIL’s Love and Forgiveness Conferences and the Women’s Legal Center. You will hear how Dr. Yacoobi’s radio station is affecting Afghan life. And, you will find an update on the Tibetan project.

To support these projects, CHI manages an annual budget of $1.3 million, funded through grants, contributions from the communities we serve and through individuals like you who believe in our mission to empower grassroots community development through support for quality education, health, social and economic programming.

Our plans for the coming year are many and their scope broad enough to reach thousands more with the message of hope and the promise of a peaceful and prosperous life. Your generous tax-deductible donations are vital to the success of this important work. Please mail your check made payable to Creating Hope International today. Or, donate online by credit card at creatinghope.org or afghaninstitute-oflearning.org.

On behalf of all those we serve, we offer our sincere gratitude for your continued financial support.

Creating Hope International
P.O. Box 1058, Dearborn, MI 48121
chi@creatinghope.org
www.creatinghope.org

Annual Update 2015

Dr. Sakena Yacoobi named 2015 WISE Prize Laureate

Honors

We are pleased and proud to share the good news that Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, CEO, Afghan Institute of Learning, was named the 2015 WISE Prize for Education Laureate.

The prestigious award was presented by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), during the Opening Plenary Session of the seventh World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) in Doha, Qatar on November 4, 2015.

“Our WISE Prize for Education Laureates embody the spirit of WISE. They are tireless advocates for the right to education. This year’s Laureate is distinguished by her determination to bring education to her fellow citizens in the most adverse conditions of war and occupation,” said HH Sheikha Moza. “From refugee camps to secret night schools, and often at great personal risk, she established a network of organizations that provide general education as well as public health education. While her work focuses on girls and women, it also benefits boys and men. Millions have benefited from her optimism.”

The WISE Prize for Education was established in 2011 by HH Sheikha Moza to recognize outstanding, world-class contributions to education. Candidates are nominated by individuals and institutions with a demonstrable commitment to education and are screened by the WISE Prize for Education Committee. Final selection is made by an international jury of distinguished individuals. The WISE Prize for Education Laureate receives a gold medal and $500,000.

Dr. Yacoobi received the award before some 2,000 members of the WISE community from diverse fields and over 150 countries.

“I feel honored and blessed to be chosen as this year’s WISE Prize for Education Laureate. It is particularly meaningful because this is such a crucial time in Afghanistan. My people live in terror and poverty. They are suffering and feeling hopeless,” she said.

“Yet, at this moment a light has appeared. With this Prize, we know that we can continue to educate more and more Afghans, giving them hope and encouraging them to go forward no matter what they are facing. It is such a great gift to me, and I dedicate the Prize to the Afghan Institute of Learning and all of the women, men and children we are educating.”

Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser presents Dr. Sakena Yacoobi with the 2015 WISE Prize for Education Laureate in Doha, Qatar in November.

©Creating Hope International, November 2015
A long-held dream of AIL's founder, Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, came to life last May when Radio Meraj began broadcasting to millions of Afghans in eight districts of Herat City.

Now airing 16 hours a day from AIL's offices, the private radio station offers a variety of scientific, social and cultural programming, along with news and music.

Many families listen in and participate regularly through call-ins to talk shows targeted to teens, housewives and men and women of all ages on topics such as trending social issues, health matters, family success models, human rights, poetry, music and much more.

Listener feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, as the programming resonates with the Afghans' desire for peaceful and prosperous lives.

“I have decided to study harder and to pass the college entrance exam. I have started buying new books and studying with my classmates. I thank Radio Meraj for waking me up,” she wrote.

One of the broadcasts made a big difference for a remote village in Herat. A government official was tuned in when Haji Mir, a radio audience listener, called in to express his frustration about the village's lack of drinking water. The official took action and solved the problem.

“We now have enough drinking water in our area,” Mir said. “Radio Meraj changed the lives of thousands of people in this far distant village.”

Dr. Yacoobi is grateful to those who have made the station possible.

“I am so happy to have the station broadcasting and to see its impact already. It's amazing,” she said. “As the security situation in Afghanistan continues to worsen, the station is giving us an important tool to reach people, especially women, who cannot travel to AIL workshops or Learning Centers.”
Dr. Yacoobi calls for more involvement from beneficiaries of humanitarian efforts

Call to Action

Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, was among a handful of honored guests on the panel “Humanitarian Action in 2025: A Forward-Looking Agenda” at the Global Consultation (GloCon) held in Geneva in September.

Glo-Con was the last of a series of meetings held over the past 18 months bringing together some 23,000 stakeholders from more than 151 countries as a lead-up to the United Nation’s World Humanitarian Summit scheduled in 2016.

Dr. Yacoobi’s panel addressed the questions of how to better place people at the heart of humanitarian action, how to best build people’s resilience to crises and how to better manage future risk.

In her impassioned reply, Dr. Yacoobi said: “We need to have nations, regions and international organizations at every level of the process to commit to having at least 50 percent of the planners and implementers from the most vulnerable beneficiaries of aid. And of the total number of people involved, 50 percent must be women and 10 percent youth.”

To illustrate her point, Dr. Yacoobi explained what she did when members of an Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan asked her for education.

“I took the time to listen to the people’s concerns, so I was able to identify the silos and find a solution to the problem,” she said. “A year later, 15,000 girls were being educated by AIL-trained teachers. If each person is treated with respect and listened to, you will be amazed at the results.”

Transformational

The theme that gets to the heart of those who participate in AIL’s Love and Forgiveness conferences is this: The world is a better place when people choose love over hate and anger. And, where there is love extended one to another, there is the hope of peace.

Thirteen hundred Afghans, including 740 women, heard this simple, yet profound, message at the 10 Love and Forgiveness conferences held since 2012, and it is shaping the way Afghans see themselves and how they relate to one another.

Participants report being more trusting and positive and less negative toward others. They have established more harmonious relations with their families, neighbors and colleagues. One conference participant was encouraged by the discussion on mutual respect.

“I had not been able to control my anger in my classroom, and I could not give love and forgiveness to my classmates,” she said. “But my mind has changed now. I know I need to consider mutual respect if I want to enjoy living in my community.”

Other participants said they recognized their responsibility in promoting love and forgiveness and were empowered to become leaders who advocate, by example, for an end to hate and fear in Afghan society. Many said they are now more hopeful that Afghanistan can be a peaceful, respectful place to live.

What the world needs now is love and forgiveness

DID YOU KNOW? Since its inception in 1995, AIL has served more than 12 million people through its programs of education, health and teacher training.
Dr. Yacoobi’s vision for a program to encourage Afghan children to excel at learning was realized this year, thanks to the generosity of a long-time supporter of AIL’s work. Students attending the Sakena Yacoobi Private Schools were invited to enter the competition. Those who did were interviewed and then tested in seven subject areas, including English/Computers, Sports, Music/Poetry, Science, Math, Logic and Chemistry. Gold medals were awarded to the top students in each subject and a cash prize and book was given to second place winners.

In addition, special prizes were awarded to three teachers at the school. A gold medal was given to an accomplished teacher of miniature art, and cash prizes were awarded to the painting and tailoring teachers.

Expectant Mother Program – AIL’s three-hour workshops on pre- and post-natal care and safe birth practices are making a huge impact on decreasing the infant and maternal mortality rates in Afghanistan (the highest in the world). Among the 80% of participants who reported after the workshop, there were no infant or maternal deaths and all deliveries were done in a hospital or clinic.

AIL Learning Centers – AIL’s Learning Centers continue to educate young girls and women who are unable to attend public schools. Traditional academics are offered, as well as income-producing classes such as sewing and tailoring. The centers are also a natural spot for Afghan youth to hang out and share their ideas and desire for the peaceful rebuilding of their country. Classes are offered in miniature painting, calligraphy and other art forms/media to help broaden their education.

Dr. Sakena Yacoobi Private Schools – In an effort to provide high quality affordable education for young Afghans, Dr. Yacoobi opened four private schools in her own name – two in Kabul and two in Herat. Although many of the 1,290 students receive scholarships through AIL to attend the schools, all four schools are financially self-sufficient.

Mobile Literacy – With cell phones and text messaging, AIL’s Mobile Literacy program is helping young Afghans learn to read and write. Students study literacy materials and respond to questions from teachers sent via text messaging. In only four months, young girls and women who entered the program unable to read the alphabet are now reading at a second to fourth grade level!