

# WORLD REFUGEE DAY



## WHOEVER. WHEREVER. WHENEVER.

Everyone has the right to seek safety





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Today, on World Refugee Day, we will pay tribute to the strength and courage of more than 89.3 million people, who are forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or climate change. As Dina Nayeri, an Iranian American novelist writes, "It is the obligation of every person born in a safer room to open the door when someone in danger knocks.", this day reminds us to change the present trajectory of social exclusion, alienation and despair. We, all need to invest in a world that treats people, who have lost their loved ones, their homes and their livelihoods, with dignity and respect. Simultaneously, 20th June, gives us the opportunity to concede the efforts of host communities as they are offering refugees a safe place and welcoming them in their countries, amidst social, political and economic chaos.

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Ishfaq Anwer Country Director Relief International



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On World Refugee Day, we acknowledge the plight of millions of refugees, applaud their resilience and courage and appreciate the contributions of those trying to give them opportunities for a better life. Tearfund's commitment to going where the need is greatest compels us to pray for and proactively seek options for assisting refugees where possible.

Today, there are more refugees than ever. While the coronavirus pandemic halted many things, it has not stopped conflict, natural disasters or persecution. People seeking refuge undertake journeys fraught with danger and often themselves in spaces where acceptance, compassion and help are not forthcoming.

Since the Afghan crisis began in 2001, Pakistan has hosted hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees on its soil. Many refugees were fortunate and were welcomed and eventually found homes, jobs and even acquired citizenship rights. But many still remain in need of support especially in the current climate of economic stress. Tearfund stands in solidarity with the refugee households in their struggle for a life of dignity and realized potential.

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tearfund

Mr. Jonathan Johnson Country Director Tearfund



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Today, I join others all over the world in honoring World Refugee Day, a day on which we honor the resilience and humanity of the millions of individuals who have been forced to flee violence, persecution, conflict and climate induced disasters. It's also a time to thank those who have given generously and recognize the compassion of communities who welcome refugees, as well as the bravery and dedication of humanitarian workers who give lifesaving help in these testing circumstances.

At a time when the number of refugees and other displaced people worldwide have risen to an alarming and historic high—more than 82 million- we have a moral responsibility to ensure that refugees have access to life-saving care, educational opportunities, and livelihoods that allow them to live in dignity and with hope for the future.

The International Rescue Committee is currently providing health, education, child protection and lifesaving support to refugees in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Today we reaffirm our sacred commitment to alleviate suffering through principled humanitarian assistance and redouble our efforts to find long-term solutions for refugees, including resettlement.





Ms. Shabnam Baloch Country Director International Rescue Committee



"Relief International takes good care of Afghani and Pakistani women and children, particularly widows and orphans. RI's programs gives us (Afghan Refugees) an opportunity to work for the welfare of other Afghans. The RI-led School Readiness Program is a creative idea that equips Afghan kids with learning tools before their regular enrollment in public schools here."





#### **Testimonial of Afghan Refugees**

(Their stories in their own way)

# "TOGETHER WE HELPED PEOPLE TO COME OUT OF THE FEAR OF THIS PANDEMIC"

Despite of Pakistan's own limitations as a developing country with a struggling economy, it is hosting estimated 3.5 Afghan Refugees since 1980s, among half of them are unregistered. The unregistered number is growing due to recent Afghan influx towards the Pakistan in 2021. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, one of the province in Pakistan, nearly all the 0.9 million persons identified as in need received at least one type of support. The major necessities which are fulfilled through various aid programs in Pakistan are: Health and Nutrition, Water Sanitation Hygiene, Protection, Food Security, Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items, Education, Livelihood & Social cohesion, Gender Violence, Logistics, Protection. Relief International is working majorly in all mentioned scope of areas.

22-years old Imdad is working for Relief International as a volunteer for over a year. He plays an important role as a bridge between Relief International and the Afghan community in Peshawar. Through Imdad, large number of men, women and children have been able to get food baskets and hygiene kits distribution, and have been able to take part in COVID-19 prevention sessions.

"The food baskets bring relief for Afghan families because of unemployment and low daily wages. We distributed these baskets every three months. During my time at RI, I have assisted three times in this distribution cycle," says Imdad.







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(Their stories in their own way)

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"Wars never bring peace. Thirty years ago, there was a war in Afghanistan. My grandfather and grandmother, along with their son (my father) used to live in Pachir Wa Agam in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. They left their homes with heavy hearts and migrated to Pakistan in search of shelter."

"Later during the cease-fire, they went back to Afghanistan again but lands and lives were so devastated that they came back to Pakistan again for good. They lived in Peshawar. My grandfather started a buying and selling business for livelihood."

They were just three of them when they came to Pakistan. Now my family has twenty-two members. I have three sisters and five brothers. We are happy in Pakistan. This country gave us a shelter, and our kids are getting an education here that we never thought would be possible. We consider it our own country now."

"Relief International takes good care of Afghani and Pakistani women and children, particularly widows and orphans. RI's programs gives us (Afghan Refugees) an opportunity to work for the welfare of other Afghans. The RI-led School Readiness Program is a creative idea that equips Afghan kids with learning tools before their regular enrollment in public schools here."

"The best thing about my work is that I was assigned to work in my own community area. During the COVID-19 pandemic, our work was tough, as we had to follow many new rules for gatherings and meetings. We used announcements on loudspeaker for mass gatherings, and then we segregated men and women in different areas and queues. We also ensured there were handwashing and sanitizing points and masks for people to use."

"Together we helped people to come out of the fear of this pandemic."





"When I was a kid, I was not admitted to the local Government School. My father used to sell fruits. He worked day and night so I could go to a private school instead. It was tough for him at that time as girls' education was not appreciated, but today I see that people feel proud if their daughter can get an education."

WWW.RI.ORG





#### **Testimonial of Afghan Refugees**

(Their stories in their own way)

# "TOGETHER WE HELPED PEOPLE TO COME OUT OF THE FEAR OF THIS PANDEMIC"

In Pakistan, persistent socio-cultural norms and preconceived notions of gender roles still prevail among Afghan families and prevent girls from attending school. In a 2018 study, 57% of surveyed school-aged girls reported not attending because their family did not allow schooling.

Zarghona was the first female Afghan child in her family to go to high school. She is originally from Kabul, Afghanistan and currently lives in Peshawar, Pakistan. She got married to a Pakistani citizen and now she has two sons and one daughter.

"40 years ago my grandfather came from Afghanistan. Since then we have lived in Pakistan."

"I have worked for Relief International Pakistan as a Volunteer for three years. I support RI's Food Basket Distribution, Hygiene Kit Distribution, School Kit distribution and Education for Out-Of-School Afghan Children projects."

"At first, it was a challenge for me to convince people to send their girls to school. Then I told them about Relief International's project; about how they are providing free education, books and stationary for Afghan Children in public schools of Pakistan.





HOPE'87's established Temporary Learning Centers are giving Afghan children an access to quality education with provision of bag, books, uniform and shoes in 3 districts; Khyber, Bannu and Peshawar of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) of Pakistan, giving hope to hopeless children and their families.



#### **HOPE'87 IS A HOPE FOR REFUGEES IN PAKISTAN**

Pakistan hosts millions of Afghan refugees. The influx of those seeking refuge began in 1979 in the aftermath of the Saur Revolution and the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan.

These refugees face so many socioeconomic problems, lack of education in around 80 percent of school-aged children of Afghan refugees is one of those problems. To tackle the problem HOPE'87 stepped in and started many initiatives.

HOPE'87 under the project "Access for out of School Children to Education and Safe Schools in Pakistan (AcCESS)" with the support of European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) established 140 Temporary Learning Centers (TLCs) where 4,729 (3,383 Afghan students, 1,194 TDPs, 152 host/Pakistani) are enrolled (2,775 girls).

HOPE'87 through its education voucher scheme is supporting 1,778 Afghan students (852 girls) by enrolling them in 12 low-cost private schools in district Peshawar. The education voucher is redeemable at HOPE'87' partner low-cost private schools and cover school fees and basic school supplies including school bag, uniform, shoes and books. With this provision, the retention rate of students is above 96%. 220 Afghan youth (145 girls and 75 boys) have benefitted from life skills trainings as well.





**220** Afghan youth



**145** Girls



**75**Boys



Sawaira Bibi, an Afghan refugee, who was selling snacks in the streets, is now getting free education in HOPE'87's established Temporary Learning Center (TLC). **140** TLCs have been established in 3 districts; Khyber, Bannu and Peshawar of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. and Humanitarian Aid With funding from Austrian Development Cooperation

Usman, an Afghan refugee, differently able child got admission in a low-cost private school through HOPE'87's voucher scheme, when he was finding it challenging to get admission to other schools due to his physical challenges. HOPE'87 also gifted Usman a new wheel chair so he can easily move from one



# QATAR CHARITY REACHED APPROXIMATELY 204,000 AFGHAN REFUGEES IN KPK AND BALOCHISTAN DURING 2020-2023





The Afghan refugees migrated and settled in Pakistan some 35 years back. These refugees are settled in temporary camps established by the government in both the provinces of KPK and Baluchistan. The KP province is one of the four administrative provinces of Pakistan, located in the northwestern region of the country along with the International border with Afghanistan.

The government of Pakistan has looked after millions of Afghans during the last four decades. Currently 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees are living in refugee camps in Pakistan. All refugees have been issued registration cards (proof of registration - POR).

As of today total 54 Afghan camps are operational in Pakistan, out of which 43 camps are operational in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, comprising approximately one million population, while the rest refugees are settled in Baluchistan and other urban slums of different provinces.



During the global pandemic COVID-19, In collaboration with Afghan Commissionerate, Qatar Charity supported Afghan Refugees in KPK and distributed non-food items (NFIs) containing towels, nail clipper, comb, lice comb, tooth paste, tooth brush, cotton flannel cloth, plastic mug, plastic lota, plastic soap dish, soap bar, Dettol soap bar, surf excel, plastic bucket and Dettol surface cleaner along with food packages and benefitted 3500 individuals.



# QATAR CHARITY REACHED APPROXIMATELY 204,000 AFGHAN REFUGEES IN KPK AND BALOCHISTAN DURING 2020-2023



On Eid-ul-Azha 2021, Qatar Charity 100% focused Afghan Refugees for Qurbani project and benefitted 23,100 individuals. During the recent festive of holy month of Ramadan 2022, Qatar Charity reached 2000 Afghan refugees and distributed food packaged for Ramadan month. These packages were containing flour, dates, sugar, rice, rooh afza, chickpea, ghee, salt and tea.

Currently, In partnership with UNICEF, Qatar Charity is implementing mega project in 6 districts of Balochistan. These six districts are Chagi, Chaman, Qilla Saifullah, Loralia, Pishin and Quetta. This project is fully focusing on water, sanitation and hygiene components at schools as well as Afghan camps. This one-year project is aiming to cover approximately 175,000 Afghan individuals.

Afghan Commissionerate- KPK Mr. Muhammad Abbas appreciated QC work especially in Ramadan and as majority Afghan Refugees are daily wagers and labors, they cannot afford food during the holy month. He further said, "he extends his full support with Qatar Charity in future projects and highly recommended for health and education interventions in Afghan Camps.

— WORLD REFUGEE DAY—

# ORBIS FLYING EYE HOSPITAL SIMULATION TRAINING BY QATAR CHARITY IN DOHA

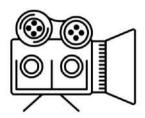


Qatar Fund for Development, Qatar Charity headquarters at Doha and Orbis are hosting a five-day professional development program, open to women in ophthalmology and nursing, from countries receiving humanitarian support from Qatar Fund for Development. The regional eye care training forms part of the second phase of the Qatar Creating Vision initiative, which was established in 2016. Virtual and theoretical learning opportunities for ophthalmologists and nurses, will be provided via Orbis's award-winning platform Cyber sight, prior to in-person simulation training. This will be delivered by Orbis's leading medical volunteers and staff on board their fully accredited teaching facility, the Flying Eye Hospital.

For this valued course, 3 female Afghan Refugees nurses and 4 female Afghan Refugees medical doctors applied from KPK- Pakistan.

Simulation training provides vital practice to medical professionals in a controlled setting. Simulation devices, such as virtual reality, artificial eyes, and life-like manikins – let complex procedures be broken down into smaller parts, allowing doctors to practice each step as many times as they need.

Travel and in-country costs will be covered for all selected participants and there are only a limited number of places available. Endorsed by Qatar's Ministry of Public Health, this is a unique opportunity for participants to train on state-of-the-art equipment and be exposed to multiple sub-specialties, as well as attend lectures and workshops.



#### **QATAR CHARITY DOCUMENTRY**

To watch the documentary, <u>click here</u>





Mr.Jaber Khan is 25 years old from Afghan refugee camp Naguman, Peshawar.

Ramadan is the month of religious importance and festivities in the Muslim world; they celebrate with fasting and Eid Festivals at the end. Customarily, **Philanthropists** support the poor proportions through food during Ramadan and on Eid to help them to take part in prayers with peace of mind and enjoy celebrations; especially the children, are more sensitive to deprivation due to poverty and remaining disadvantages. Likewise, Ramadan food Distribution of SIF is an important component of the SMILE Project, where most vulnerable families are supported with one-month food packages, mostly the head of the houses are casual laborers as daily work capacity is naturally limited due to fasting as well as harsh summer conditions.

Mr.Jaber Khan is 25 years old from Afghan refugee camp Naguman, Peshawar. He is an orphan having 5 family members. He is living with his mother and two brothers and two sisters. A poverty-stricken family is living in one room, which is made of mud in the Afghan refugee camp Naguman Peshawar KP. They are living in a vulnerable condition. This refugee family was deprived for three decades. This marginalized refugee community is far away from basic rights.

Mr. Jaber is the head of his family and he is labour and earns bread for his family. He is also patient with thalassemia disease since 2010. Being a patient with thalassemia, he is facing very hard to earn the bread for his family, especially food and health necessities.



Facing dire financial snags due to substance dependency and fighting aaainst thalassemia disease but unfortunately, due to COVID-19 being locked down I was at home and found myself at home with no work. This means no income for food and other amenities for my household.

I was not ready for this, as I depend on my daily tips to take care of my family," Jaber narrates sadly.

I am hardly managing my domestic needs and there is no other way of income but sometimes, close relatives and neighbors support us with food.

Mr. Jaber works as labour, which closed for six weeks, following the abrupt movement restriction imposed by the local government due to growing public health concerns due to COVID-19. "As the labour work was my only source of income since I lost my father seven years ago", he says. With no job and no income, Mr. Jaber can no longer support his household.



Further, he says as I am a refugee and live in a mud house where no proper sanitation system as well as we use contaminated tap water, which is communal. I do not have too much material in terms of daily usage utensils and have only three trunks for clothes and six matrices.

No, schooling as it is not affordable for me due to poverty. My brother and sisters are not going to school because my financial condition is not allowing me to bear my brother and sisters' education expenses. He is very curious about his brother's and sisters' education. He is already fighting against thalassemia disease which is very tough for him to develop a bright plan for them. He further shared that he hasn't any specific plan for them due to fewer opportunities and restraints as a refugee. but he wishes that my sisters and brothers learn technical skills and training which fabricate them and place themselves in the productive part of the society but sometimes I think may it be their destiny to refugee. remain illiterate being a Sometimes host communities who living our surroundings provide us with their old clothes for this event. On Eid day, we usually started with Eid prayers followed by Eid Greetings to each other and meals usually arranged for elders and relatives.



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We often use simple food in our daily routine and most of the food is consist of vegetables and kidney beans. We often buy this food item from a nearby market. My mother and I take food two times a day while my brothers and sisters taking three times a day usually the cost of daily food items is 400 to 500 but thanks to our relatives and neighbors sometimes support us, which contributes to reducing our food expenses. Covid-19 poses a greater direct

effect on all segments of society, particularly on daily wagers. Due to the current circumstance of the COVID-19 pandemic, the camp population was down within camp premises. Although, these restrictions are essential but increase the risk of a temporary shortage of food which already suffering the deadly impact of lockdowns and quarantines. No, but the COVID-19 pandemic created panic in this regard.

The SIF team visited our camp with Refugee Village Committee (RVC) and they briefed us about the SIF and Ramadan Food assessment. On another hand, I am receiving Ramadan food and Qurbani meat packs for two years from SIF that's why I and other refugee brothers are we are thankful to SIF and the generous people of France who are supporting every year in terms of Ramadan Food items, Qurbani meat packs or Eid Gifts which ultimately reducing our financial burden.

This is a great support to me especially during the holy month of Ramadan as well as the Covid-19 crisis poses a serious threat for me in terms of getting daily basis income generation. SIF food assistance not only reduced my labour work during the fasting month of Ramadan but also applauded a joy on my family's faces. I am happy that I received quality food, which is not affordable for me during the routine days from market and quantity too.

Covid-19 threatens to bring back these conditions and worse, for many other refugees' brothers in the camp. Earlier we were not serious about this pandemic but later on, when it affects threshed all systems, we were curious about its impacts. Thanks to Almighty Allah and SIF team, they not only assisted in food assistance but also whispered in our ears what is Covid-19 and how we can prevent it.

I am thankful the people of France and SIF, not only provide food assistance but also maintained our respect & dignity. The majority of the refugee camp population is very poor and cannot access and afford good and quality food at the market. I and my other refugee brothers appreciate the SIF team reaching us during the assessment and ensuring amicable distribution.





During the Ramadan food packs distribution before receiving our food packs, we were oriented on Covid-19 and its prevention. What is social distancing? How we can and our families keep ourselves from this fatal disease. SIF team marked circles to maintain social distancing from each other, and then they sanitized our hands with sanitizer and provided a mask to each individual. They also oriented us to stay at home.

The beneficiary is happy with the process and methodology adopted for the selection and distribution of Food packages with quality items and in a respectable way.





"I never experienced growing vegetables. Now, this small garden is a source of nourishment for my family. We eat fresh and free vegetables every day. Therefore, we are spending less on food and earning money from selling vegetables and eggs" Said Zar pari Bibi.

Ms. Zar pari bibi is one of the beneficiaries of kitchen gardening and poultry birds under the SIF SMILE project. She is 47 years old and from the Afghan refugee camp Hajizai. She is a widow and has 6 children and her husband died 12 years ago.

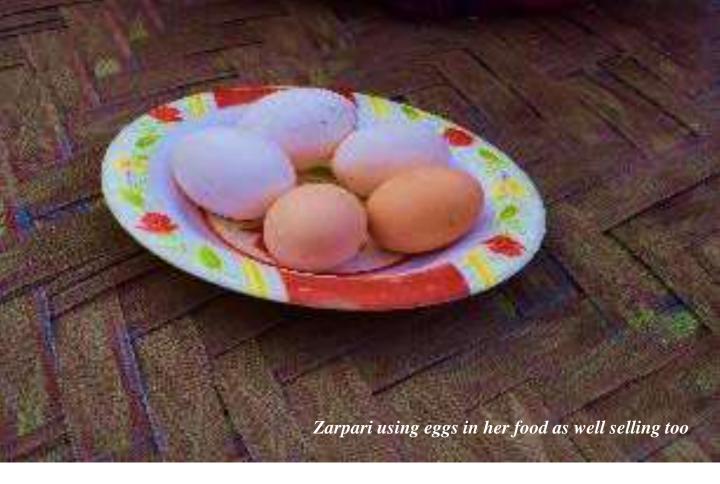
After the death of her husband, her children suffered a lot from her family members' behaviors. They never asked her about their needs and start neglecting her Although for a long time she tolerated it, she never give up and decided to start to feed her children. She started to work as a maid for neighbors by doing different house chores and getting PKRs.2000 per month. Although, it is very low income and not sufficient to feed her children properly at least It did not leave her dependent.

SIF through its SMILE project assessed and selected her while considering her need and vulnerability. She was assisted by providing kitchen gardening seeds and a tool kit and as well as poultry birds were also provided to her. She also participated in capacity-building training related to kitchen gardening and poultry birds techniques and management organized by SIF.

After the capacity building training, she started to apply her new skills on a small piece of land and converted the small piece of land into a kitchen garden to cultivate vegetables She shared that "I'm very happy that my yield crop growing well and hen laying eggs and I'm selling each egg @ PKRs.15" and I sell daily 3 to 4 eggs"

In a few months, she became able to get vegetables from her garden, and after a few weeks hens started laying eggs while some of the eggs are used for meals, and the extra vegetables and egg selling helped me to fight against poverty, now I'm able to save PKR .400 to 600 days and can easily buy new things for children's.





She thanks to SIF as the SIF has improved her knowledge about preparing garden beds, pits, and other techniques for increased vegetable production, "I'll use these new techniques of crops cultivation whole life".

According to her, she is able to buy and cook different types of food and vegetables. She and her young child are eating more vegetables and eggs to stay healthy. And through seeing the extra vegetable and eggs she is now supporting her household economy.







Afghan refugees have been living in refugee camps in Pakistan for the past four decades. basic services, need including healthcare, education and job opportunities. The most significant problem that these Afghan refugees face is timely access to health facilities in case of emergency. There are no health facilities in the refugee villages, so people must go to big cities to receive medical care. People in these villages are extremely poor and unable to cover the costs of transportation and medicines.

#### **OVERVIEW**

With support from Western Union, International Medical Corps conducted several first aid training sessions as part of the "Building Resilience, Preparedness and Disaster Readiness" project in Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province in Pakistan. The purpose of the project was to strengthen resilience and preparedness among Afghan refugees living in refugee villages in KP province by providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills to combat disasters.

#### INFORMATION ABOUT THE BENEFICIARY

Abdul Haleem lives in the village of Baghbanan in Peshawar district. His family immigrated to Pakistan during the war with the former Soviet Union. Abdul was born in Pakistan. His father, Noor Agha, is a religious scholar from Nangarhar, Afghanistan and a teacher in a local madrassa (religious school). Abdul is the father of four children (two sons and two daughters). He works as an outreach worker in a health facility.

## INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CORPS' ASSISTANCE AND HOW IT HELPED

Abdul Haleem is a community volunteer who participated in the first aid and transport training program and demonstrated a passion for learning. When field staff from International Medical Corps visited him, he expressed gratitude for the first aid training and shared his experience of a child being burned by boiled tea in the local madrassa.



He explained that before this training, they treated burns with toothpaste and mustard oil, which was an incorrect technique. After the training, when a child was burned, he washed the burned area with cold water, administered dressing and bandages to protect the wound from infection and took the burn victim to the hospital because it was a second-degree burn.

"The training was really beneficial," said Abdul. "This training should be required for students in madrassas."

International Medical Corps provided first aid training to more than 1,000 community volunteers (703 male and 321 female) in seven Afghan refugee villages in three districts: Peshawar, Haripur and Lower Dir. In addition, after the training sessions, first aid kits were given to the community volunteers, enabling them to serve as first responders in their communities.





Muhammad Inam his father's name is Molana Zabardast lives in the village of Zandai Miskin in Peshawar district. His father is from Nangarhar Jalal Abad, Afghanistan. In 1979, during the war with the Soviet Union, his family moved to Pakistan. Muhammad was born in Pakistan and he works as a laborer. Muhammad Inam is the father of eight children (six sons and two daughters). He participated in International Medical Corps' first aid and transport training and had a genuine interest in learning. When International Medical Corps' team visited him a few days later, he told them about his training experience and how it was very useful in his daily life.

"It was a fantastic experience for me," Muhammad Inam shared,
"because we never take any training like this." I suggest that
International Medical Corps organize similar training programs for
students as well."

#### INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CORPS' ASSISTANCE AND HOW IT HELPED

While participating in training from International Medical Corps, Muhammad learned how to treat someone who was unconscious due to cardiac arrest—when a person's heart stops beating suddenly. Muhammad learned that without treatment, death might occur in minutes. Chest compressions are used in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to simulate the heart's pumping action. These compressions help in the circulation of blood throughout the body. When his colleague fell from a high place and lost consciousness, Muhammad applied the knowledge and skills gained during the first aid training. He successfully provided CPR and his colleague recovered.

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### **DREAM BIG!**



# MERCY CORPS SUPPORTING YOUNG GIRLS IN MAKING THEIR DREAMS COME TRUE

How often do we achieve a desire on the very first of a mere try? For Fazila, an Afghan child living in Pakistan, many things have required sacrifices and struggles, but in the catalog of her hardships, no category consists of "painting". "It all just happens flawlessly", says Fazila "as if I only imagine the colors, and everything sorts up alright – on its own... flawlessly".

Fouzia is studying in one of the schools supported under PRM supported Program for Retention, Enrollment, and Protection (PREP-II) in Schools for Afghan Refugees and Host Community in Quetta. Mercy Corps is implementing this three-year program in 13 peri- urban locations of Quetta, Balochistan province.

In 2017, Fazila dropped out of her school in 7th Grade due to the financial limitations of her family and lack of support especially her brother. Back at school, she had to balance time – a clocked equilibrium for arts and academics. While being dropped out, all the hands on her clock were ticking only for the artist. "That's the best thing about painting" with confidence in her eyes, Fazila states "no one can restrict your imagination. I didn't have coloring sets or charts back then, but I could still imagine the colors that would be on the imaginary artwork of the walls in my house". Surrendering to her ever-popping requests of watercolors, her father brought her a pack of three colors - it was all that he could afford as a 45-year-old sole earner of a family of eight members. Blossomed in the joy of coloring, she spent hours on her artboard of a wall outlining, sketching, and coloring her forever imaginative painting on the wall. Then, the beauty of her artboard of a wall could only be found parallel to the intensity of her desires to more - imagine more, sketch more, color more. While the first of her mores was bound to none, the rest of the two demanded resources - none that she could buy through her pocket money, or her father could spare through his daily wages.

Knowing of Fazila's desires, one of her friends informed her of Mercy Corps' PREP-II Project which was supporting dropout girls with re-enrolment and financial support. After successful mobilization activities of the PREP-II Team, Fazila re-enrolled in her school and was now back again to being both a cheerful artist and a freewill student. Mercy Corps team not only supported her to get re-enrolled in the school but also provided her uniform and stationary to help her study. In addition, like other students supported under the program, Mercy Corps also provides a monthly stipend to not only encourage the parents to send their children to school but also to support the family in covering some of the expenses.



### **DREAM BIG!**



# MERCY CORPS SUPPORTING YOUNG GIRLS IN MAKING THEIR DREAMS COME TRUE

Soon after joining back her school, the envelope of her creative skills did not remain sealed for long and her teacher soon became aware of the artist in her class. "When I asked her of her inspirations to draw" Fazila's teacher mentioned, "she said: Madam, its colors... I first think of colors and then of the sketch that will compliment those colors."

After painting several artworks for her school, she participated in her first creative contest: The Intra-State Drawing Competition. Her energy was fueled by her biology teacher who mentored her throughout the contest.

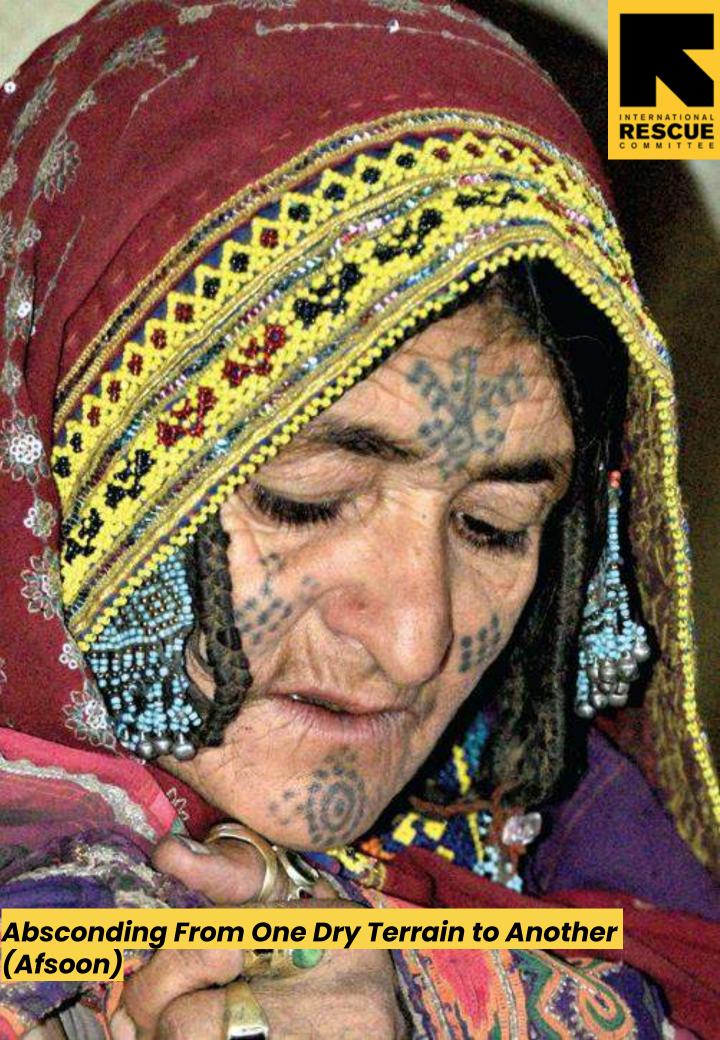
"I only participated because she [teacher] asked me to,"
Fazila remembers her pre-contest thoughts. I like my
artwork and I know it looks pretty and, (pupils up) at least to
me, (pupils down) but... (expanding her iris) Contests?
Competitions? Nah.

In the three-hour time frame of the competition, Fazila drew a painting of a girl holding a globe, portraying the empowered message of "All Girls, hold their World, in their own Hands" – a message she equipped herself with during the life skill sessions conducted by Mercy Corps in her school.

As the concept of her image was announced, applause sheered among the attendees of the competition, and there and then, she was awarded the winning prize for her conceptual creativity. Fazila now aims high above the stars; she wants to embed the dancing colors of her imaginative artworks into embroidery – a skill that she is currently pursuing to learn after her school classes.

Mercy Corps supports 2,058 students in project supported 30 government schools (894 girls, 525 boys) and 16 Accelerated Learning Program Centers (409 girls, 230 boys) through monthly stipend. To further make the schools a safe place, Mercy Corps also conducts regular sessions on life skills and provides child protection awareness and services in the project supported schools including that of Fazila. Capacity building of teachers, rehabilitation of WASH facilities, provision of safe spaces, implementation of COVID-19 SOPs and awareness messages around COVID-19 prevention are also some of the activities being undertaken in government schools as part of the project.





Every day, thousands of Afghans undertook a perilous voyage to seek refugee and protection in Pakistan, after the rebels took over the government in Afghanistan. Hunger-stricken and fleeing violence and persecution, families abandon everything and travel on dangerous routes in quest of refuge. The journey costed lives of many family members.

A family from Afghanistan struggled and went through heartbreaking incidents where the family lost a life in between the dry terrain mountains.

Afsoon, 56-year-old quoted, "My grandkids used to tremble as they heard gunshots during day and night in Afghanistan." Afsoon expressed her fear of the family's future and her sadness thinking of the life they would have to live, if they remained in Afghanistan which is their hometown.

During the very rapid political advancement in the province, the rebels were recruiting men and kidnapping young girls from their homes. She further added, "If families try to stop rebels, they will beat families and even try to kill family members who tried to stop them. To avoid the same fate for my family, I had no option but to leave the country and flee for safety."

Packing the remaining food, Afsoon, and her six sons and their six wives and fifteen kids began their journey to Pakistan, where Afsoon's elder brother lived peacefully for years as a refugee in Balochistan, Pakistan. The journey was hard for everyone, but it was perilous for her daughter-in-law. Afsoon narrated,

"The journey was very hard for my daughter-in-law, Gul Naz as she was eight months pregnant. Walking miles and sleeping on rough terrain, had a toll on her body. She had little information of what would happen when she went into labor as it was her first child."





"On the way to Pakistan, my daughter-in-law started to bleed and there was nothing, we could do to stop the bleeding. It was the scariest night for my family. My daughter-in-law Gul Naz had a miscarriage, barely surviving the night.", narrated Afsoon while getting emotional. She further added, "Upon entry in Pakistan through Chaman border-being the legendary gateway to Pakistan, has become a transit border for many Afghan families like us, trying to reach to safety. We took my daughter-in-law to the Lady Health Worker (LHV) in Hajizai, Pishin, where she was prescribed medicines and rest."

The family settled with hundreds of other migrants crowded into small mud houses on the outskirts of Pishin with Afsoon's brother. Now living in a makeshift mud house, the young ones with big, bright eyes as if there spirit is fighting to keep them from losing any hope while their stomach is being consumed by hunger and frustration of waiting.

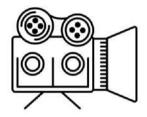
Initially, when the family settled in Pishin, they had to figure out a way to earn money and bring food to the house. Within a week, unfortunately Gul Naz passed away at the night in her sleep. Afsoon and her family were shaken when the learnt about Gul Naz's demise, that they refused to let Lady Health Worker (LHV) treat their younger daughter in law's kid. Over a period of two weeks, the family had regained confidence in nearby Basic Health Unit (BHU) and took their younger one for medication for seasonal flu and fever.

Staring at the sky and shrugging his shoulder, Afsoon son Aslam signs and quotes, "Being the elder son in this household, it is my responsibility to support my family. All their hopes are placed in me. I take all my brothers and sons with me to work on a nearby farm and bring money and food at the end of the day. But still, the money is not enough to buy other essentials."

Afsoon wonders what the family will do as winter approaches them. Her brother cannot spare a dime for food let alone blankets and necessities for winter. Afsoon's prayers were answered when International Rescue Committee's representatives brought in dignit and winterization kits for the winter after identification. "I saw the representative walking in with kits to distribute in our refugee pocket. Everyone was in shocked and happy at the same time, we could see blankets, quilts, rugs, mattresses, warm clothes, and kitchen utensils. Everything we require for the winters to survive. I could not stop the tears in my eyes watching the angels walking to us." Afsoon mentioned.

The whole neighborhood was ecstatic where everyone received dignity kits and winterization kits. "The day I left my hometown to come to safety, I knew things will work out for my family. My sons are working on daily wages, we have food most of the days, and now we have all the necessities, we needed to survive the winters. I am grateful for IRC to provide the kits." She added with a smile.

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# International Rescue Committee DOCUMENTARY



To watch the documentary, <u>click here</u>



#### **WORLD REFUGEE DAY 2022**

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#### Developed and Edited by:

Zartasha Niazi

#### Designed and Graphics by:

Saira Javaid Malik

#### **Data Collection by:**

Hina Tariq

#### **IT Support by:**

Nimra Abbasi