

Letter from Pakistan
Newsletter of the Shimshal Trust, October 2017



Harvest in Shimshal 2017

1. I've just spent four weeks in Pakistan, my first visit for six years. One purpose of my visit was to follow up on our scholarship students. I managed to find information about nearly all of the 98 students who have received scholarships from us. All the students are either still studying, in employment, at home with small children or looking for work. A particular pleasure was meeting Talha Rashid at a dinner party in Islamabad. Talha has received four

scholarships from us. When we received her first application we didn't quite believe it because her grades were so high. Talha is studying Biology and is interested in cancer research; we are keen to ensure she can continue to study. Talha arrived for our dinner on a motorbike driven by her father.



I met Raheem Sherazi (scholarship 2012) for coffee earlier the same day. He is working for a German environmental group on projects in the Northern Areas. He lives in two rooms which he shares with two young relatives who are studying in Islamabad. Life is still hard for young people trying to find work in Pakistan, and even when they have work they are unlikely to enjoy a high standard of living.



In the Northern Areas I stayed in the girls hostel managed by Hussn Bibi in Aliabad. A diesel-fumed little commercial centre near Karimabad in Hunza, Aliabad is surrounded by very high mountains including Rakaposhi 7,770 m.



Aliabad main street.

35 girls from remote villages in the Northern Areas, mainly from Shimshal, live in the hostel. Several of these girls receive scholarships and living allowances from Kiwi Maddad, a Muslim community group in Wellington, because their parents are dead and they have no relatives capable of supporting them. The girls can't go out of the hostel without adult company, so they live in quite a

confined situation apart from going to school every day. While I was there the girls started a No More Plastic campaign, by making cloth shopping bags. They also joined in my morning yoga sessions.



Aliabad is plagued by power cuts and water shortages. Hussn has installed back up solar lighting and also has battery-powered lamps in each room. Still the girls may have to do their homework late into the night lit only by torches. At present the solar batteries need replacing, and Hussn is worried about the cost of replacing them.

Shimshal itself has changed during my absence. The village has benefited from an initiative of Pepsi Cola. The company has installed street lighting in villages all over Pakistan using pepsi bottles as light bulbs. They are solar powered. Each house has a tv, which is often turned on



all day; a new power source is being engineered using water from a tepid spring so that the source of hydro will not freeze in winter. The secondary school is now being managed by the Aga Khan education service, and yet another boys' school is being built. The secondary school has internet and I sent my first Facebook message from Shimshal while I was there.

I found that in my absence older villagers have forgotten what the Trust does, so I wrote a report about our activities over the last 15 years and sent it to the president of the council. I wrote reports also on the women's craft centre, and the Khizerabad school which the Trust funded.

My visit as a tourist was interesting, and I'll attach my travel news letters for anyone interested.

2. We are about to make decisions about the scholarship round. We currently have enough money in the bank for about 7 scholarships. We usually aim for 14. If anyone feels moved to support a student scholarship now would be a great time to send us some money.

We give \$600 to college students and \$700 to university students.

Trust bank number

SHIMSHAL TRUST

Account number:

38-9001-0596230-01

If you do decide to help out with a donation please include your name as a reference and email us as well so we can send a receipt.

On behalf of the Shimshal Trust, Pam (Henson).

