

Shimshal Trust Newsletter August 2011: Report from Pakistan

On June 1st this year I flew to Islamabad from Heathrow. I planned to spend time with Hussn Bibi, who studied in New Zealand in 2003, and to visit Shimshal for a week. My time in Shimshal was mainly for Trust business. I wanted to find out what was happening to the craft centre that we have funded, and is still unfinished, and to talk to the teachers and students who had gained scholarships to see how they have fared. I attended a meeting of the Shimshal Ismaili Council education committee and I interviewed and photographed about ten students and teachers.

The craft centre.

The craft centre has only rudimentary walls and no roof. Recently a new committee has been formed to oversee the building, and they promised me that it would be completed by the end of August. Lal Paree, the woman who is a community nurse in Shimshal and features in the book Women of Shimshal, is now a



member of the Council, and she has responsibility for overseeing the craft centre. Lal Paree has sent a list of required materials to the Trust. If agreed, we need to raise about \$1200 to purchase materials to kick start the craft centre.

The students

I interviewed and photographed a number of scholarship students at the Shadow Girls' Academy and Hostel, as well as some that I met in the café in Aliabad where Shimshali meet when they are on shopping

trips or just passing through for work, and some in Shimshal. Please look at our Facebook site (Shimshal Trust) and our website (www.shimshaltrust.org.nz) to see the photos and reports. Read Ghulam Mussah's report which he sent when he finished his studies. My overwhelming impression is that by far the majority of students have used their money wisely and it has helped them to succeed. We do receive the occasional criticism from students but we use criticism to help us improve our processes.

Jamsheed



Jamsheed, now 14, is the boy for whom we raised \$2500, largely from the Pakistani community in Wellington, to have an operation on his club foot. Here is the story he told me: Raza took me to Karachi on the train. I stayed with Amjad's family. After a week Amjad and Raza took me to Aga Khan hospital. The doctor examined me and made a report. I was nervous because I wondered what they would do with my leg. Maybe they would cut it off. But the doctors told me my leg would be ok and I would be strong again. One week later I went back to the hospital and I had my operation. ...When I woke up the next day my leg felt very heavy and it had a cast on it. Then I saw Amjad Naz and Raza. Raza cried. It was really good to see them there. I stayed one week in the hospital. Then I went to Amjad's house, and from there I went to the hospital once a week to have my cast changed. I was in Amjad's house for seven months. After two months they took off the cast and I got some special shoes and they gave me some exercises. Now I can play cricket and football and I help with the farm work.

Before my operation I felt unhappy and worried. But now I feel more confident. I want to thank the doctors and others in New Zealand who

paid for my operation and helped me lead a normal life. I am enjoying study and I pass my exams every year. I want to be an engineer and study in Karachi. (translated by Hussn Bibi)

Shenaz

Shenaz, aged 22, may be our next “project”. She won a scholarship from us last year. But Shenaz has a medical problem which we hope we can help with. One leg is shorter than the other, and on one side her thighbones are thinner than the other. She walks bent over with one hand on her knee. These problems may be the result of a botched vaccination when she was small. Surgical shoes will help, as



will physiotherapy. She may need an operation. We are waiting for a medical report on her condition. Shenaz is the oldest of four children and wants to be a teacher. Once she is earning money she can help her siblings to study.

The Journey

I went to Pakistan on my own, but I took the precaution of getting a local travel agent to help me. In Islamabad I bought books for the schools in Shimshal. The Trust has resolved to donate \$300 NZ for school books, each year that we have the money available. I was already carrying 100 pounds sterling worth of books given by Lynette Willoughby, the English friend who came with me to Shimshal in 2000. One highlight of my journey was riding round Islamabad with my friend Abdullah, on the back of his motorbike (no helmet, no boots, no protective clothing, and a long flowing scarf!!). I flew to Gilgit then took a jeep to Aliabad, near Karimabad. Another jeep took us to the spillway on the Hunza Lake. A massive landslide formed the Hunza Lake, 25 kms long and lying over part of the Karakoram Highway, in

4

January
2010.
now
makes



It
an

obstacle on the journey, as well as being a dire hindrance to farmers who live north of the lake, and formerly exported their produce down county. A twin-engined, gaily coloured boat took us to Pasu where another jeep picked us up and drove us the rest of the way. I was very well received in Shimshal and it was a real pleasure to meet old friends again.

Conclusions

I'm really heartened by the information I received from students and the Council on this visit. I have no doubt that what we are doing is worthwhile.

We raise only a small amount of money each year, but it is not easy to raise. If you have been considering donating to the Shimshal Trust, an automatic payment will help us enormously. If we can raise the \$6000 a year we need for scholarships from supporters' automatic payments, then any surplus we raise from film shows, book sales, WOMAD, and Pakistani cultural evenings at home can be used for special projects, books and more scholarships.

We already receive half that amount in the form of automatic payments. If you would like to make an AP to the Trust, or a one off donation, here are the details:

Bank account: Kiwibank , The Shimshal Trust 38 9001 0596230 01

<http://www.kiwibank.co.nz/personal-banking/ways-to-bank/make-payments/automatic-payments.asp>

If you decide to make a donation please send an email to let us know your address, then we can send you a thank you card and a receipt.

contact@shimshaltrust.org.nz

Bye for now, Pam and the Shimshal Trust.