Report From Kabul

Nabi and I landed in Kabul last Thursday. On Friday, Basir handed us a contract drafted by the Ministry of Education governing the construction of the school for girls in Farza. For the story of "Zohra's school"click here. This project had been bouncing around in the construction department for several weeks. The terms of the agreement were unacceptable and our view of what the contract should contain was 180 degrees from theirs. We knew immediately we needed to meet with someone higher on the organization chart. The day was a downer, triggering a double Snickers bar suger high night. that transitioned into a splitting headache.

While I was enjoying a chocolate fix with a Tylenol chaser, Nabi was having dinner with a friend. He came back beaming. By chance he ended up sitting near someone who knows the Minister of Education. Upon learning of our plight, he offered to arrange an appointment with the Minister of Education.

Sixteen hours later the man at the top of the chart, after learning what had transpired below, immediately signed a memorandum of understanding, I had prepared. He saw the project exactly as we did. He said, "Afghanistan needs help and we shouldn't put conditions on gifts".

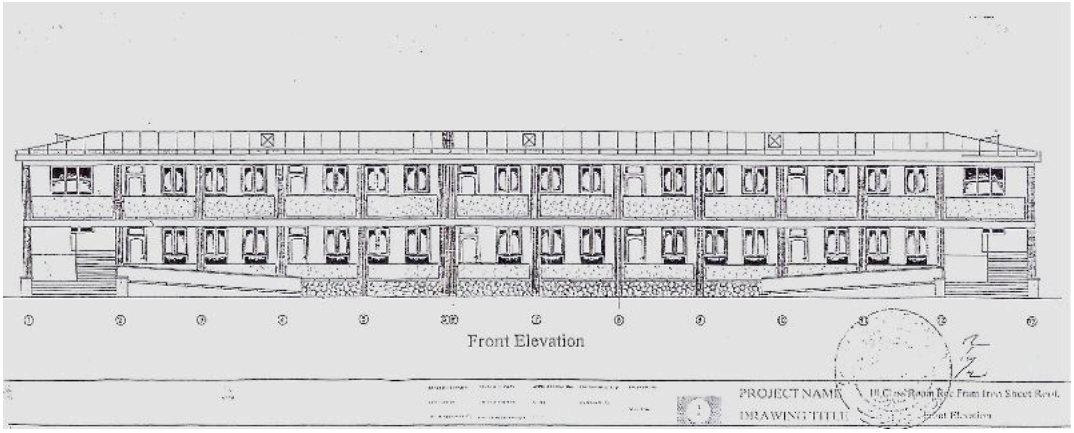
This Friday, the villagers will hold a ground breaking ceremony. Whether it was serendipity or Inshallah, it's great to know construction will begin this week.



HERE'S WHERE CLASSES ARE HELD



INSIDE THE TENT



HERE'S WHERE THEY'LL LEARN WITHIN A YEAR

All That Stuff

122 buckets of rice were distributed yesterday to students from the neediest families, identified by their teachers. The next 280 buckets, along with clothing will be distributed tomorrow to 290 Aschiana "street children" (the entire school). Seventy eight of the street children are sponsored by TIE supporters. The balance of the rice and clothing will be distributed to displaced families living in camps in Kabul. That's 100,00 plus meals and over 15,000 pounds of clothing, blankets, bedding, shoes, school supplies, and toys we weren't using, Redistribution of wealth is a difficult sale. Redistribution of stuff is not!

Packing Party October 24th --- Details to follow.



DISTRIBUTION DAY



HEADING HOME WITH RICE AND CLOTHES IN HAND



"Aschiana girls" sponsored by TIE supporters receiving rice and clothes in April.

The Spelling Contest

It's happening!!! There will be over 45 competitors from three villages and Aschiana. Everyone is looking forward to the competition. This is a first. If successful, it will become an annual event. It has been an effective

motivational tool and will be a joyful event.

People frequently ask whether we're afraid, while in Afghanistan. The answer is no.. Events where people know we're coming do, however, make us nervous.

Guests are, according to Afghan custom, entitled to protection. That was one of the reasons given for not capturing Osama Bid Laden and handing him over to us. Nabi seems to have forgotten this custom. He keeps walking a safe distance behind me.

What's happening to the dollar?

The dollar has been dropping in value! Last year the exchange rate was 50 Afghanis to the dollar. Yesterday, the rate on the street was 45 to the dollar for old bills and 43 to the dollar for new bills. Yes, there is a difference between worn currency and new.

Can someone explain why the dollar is falling in Afghanistan? We must be injecting significantly more dollars into the Afghan economy. That explanation is consistent with our clear, hold, and build exit strategy.

Unfortunately, the cost of purchasing materials for Farza's school has risen by 8 % since we started

If you want me to bring any Afghanis home to add to your retirement plan, write. Interesting times, when Afghanistan, the fifth poorest country in the world, has too many dollars.

Budd



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