

Dear Friend of HOPE,

We wanted to thank you for your continued support of the HOPE *worldwide* Vocational Training Centre in Kabul, Afghanistan. Afghanistan is troubled by ongoing war, poverty, low provision of education and health services and high unemployment, particularly of youth. Your generous support provides free computer and English language courses for over 150 youth from low-income backgrounds. The resulting employment of our graduates is helping Afghanistan's young generation build a stronger future for themselves and their families.

In this newsletter, we will provide you with an update from Valli Mahaveer, Country Director of HOPE *worldwide* Afghanistan. Valli, a wife and mother of three, lives in India and recently visited Afghanistan. She shares about her experience...

Valli's Trip to Kabul

"In February 2021, I visited Kabul for the first time in fifteen years. As I landed at Kabul International Airport with my husband, I was amazed to see the graveyard of bombed planes next to the runway had been replaced by a new building housing the Aviation ministry. Also there were no hanging electric cables or broken walls in the baggage claim area. As we were picked up by a HOPE staff member and drove around the city, I was impacted not so much by all the new buildings, but by the large amount of cement barricades protecting government buildings, embassies and international charities.



I stopped on one of eight hills surrounding Kabul city (see above). The last time I was here, there only about 25 % of the hill was covered with houses. It's at least 80 %. This is largely because of migration of people into Kabul from other areas of Afghanistan where conflict is ongoing as well as Afghan refugees returning from neighbouring countries like Pakistan and Iran.



As looked around the streets, I was surprised to see a painting of a woman as well as seeing more women walking around- in the market or on their way to their place of work. This was really encouraging to see! However I was reminded how this sense of freedom is still very fragile. Just two days before my visit, two female judges who work at the Supreme Court in Kabul were targeted and murdered by extremists. I was constantly on my guard and security had to be carefully managed by our team on the ground as we met with government officials our bank manager and visited the HOPE training centre.

In 2020 unemployment was nearly 12 %. Unfortunately, this has only worsened due to the ongoing COVID pandemic and conflict between government and opposing groups in regional areas. Jobs for new graduates are in limited supply and vocational courses for undergraduates are even more scarce.

The HOPE Community provides a safe place to develop vocational skills and is managed by some amazing staff. One of them, Mohammad Asif has been working at the centre as a volunteer for the past 5 years. He graduated in computers and English. In addition to finding employment, he wanted to give back to the centre and continues to help students. Life is still hard for him. He shared with me how his father was made redundant due to COVID-19 and so the family relied on him as the sole breadwinner. His sister graduated from the English class and is yet to find a job. Despite the ongoing hardship, Asif and his family continue to help others and hope for a better future. HOPE was recently able to provide food aid to Asif and his family (right)



Mohammed Ahsan is a student who recently graduated from the HOPE Community Centre, completing both English language and computer courses. Before he came to the centre he worked as a cashier at a local bank. With his new skills he was soon promoted to the role of Bank Manager! He is very grateful to the dedicated teachers and the courses that led to his promotion.

Our goal is to give people the skills they need to find employment. With your ongoing support we are able to this and as a result take families out of poverty. Fund permitting, we will expand our courses from English and Computers to involve other skills such as Tailoring.

Thank you again for your generosity.

Kind regards,

The HOPE *worldwide* team (collaboration of UK, India, Australia and Afghanistan)

