

Winter 2007

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ReGreening Afghanistan: *One Tree/One Life at a Time*

Our Mission:

To advance economic and environmental developments through entrepreneurial support, community and individual tree planting and reforestation of the country.

■ In addition in 2007:



Above: Widow begging for food

Our Pledge:

Through the utilization of ALL resources, including trees, we will improve the standard of living of Afghans, aiding those with fewest resources first.

**CommonWell Institute International, Inc.
*striving for***

A Peaceful, Free, and Environmentally Sustainable Afghanistan

In Afghanistan almost all trees were cut down during three decades of violence and war. The warring factions did not want snipers to hide in trees, and the poorest Afghans cut trees to provide firewood during the harsh winter months.

In addition to these factors, Afghanistan's recent droughts have taken a toll on all vegetation, including the destruction of pine forests in the southern regions. At the current rate of deforestation, the woodlands and mountain forests will almost disappear without a trace within a few years! The ecological balance has already been changed forever.

The lack of forestation has resulted in dusty roads when dry, and muddy roads during the wet seasons. The dust, red and thick and known as "Kabul fog," has become so thick that it has created a dangerous visual and health concerns. Nightfall brings danger to those depending on bicycles as their mode of transportation, as they are frequently run down in the dark red landscape.

The resulting air in the city has become toxic and respiratory illness is rampant. Trees, vital for purifying the air, also produce more moisture in the air that will lead to more rain.

From a nutritional standpoint, trees provide an ongoing source of food for Afghan families. In the bearing season, the fruit is available as a food source, and in the off season, the families dry the fruit for a source of nourishment and nutritional health.

Not only is the shortage of wood leaving families without a source of heat, but the lack of wood has led to extensive cultural and artistic deterioration. Once a thriving art form by Afghan craftsmen, elegant wood work and wood carvings have become rare in recent years.

Our Achievements So Far

■ In 2006, students at the Afghan Relief Organization school were introduced to the importance of trees in the environment. We distributed literature to students on 'Uses of a Tree', 'Benefits of Trees' and 'Care of a Tree', and 'What Sustainable Environment?' The children studied about benefits and uses of trees in their school for three months prior to the tree planting March 21 New Year's Day. 2006

Through your contributions, we distributed 1,000 fruit trees to the school children -- one per child who received the literature that was previously distributed by their teachers. The trees were planted at each student's home.

- Trees can be purchased for
- \$ 1.00 each!
- In 2007:
- 2,100 trees were planted as a result of generous donations to the project.

Additionally, Three women have been set up with honey making boxes and necessities in Ghazni. By next year they will each have multiplied their bee keeping boxes and will produce more honey to sell in the market. A bee keeper can be set up and fully supplied for only \$ 300.00 each

Zero dollar administrative expenses have been spent on these projects



All has been accomplished by 100% donated time

We Need Your Assistance

Afghanistan is not a “post conflict country” -- it is a post destruction country, and the country’s environment has suffered to the point of crisis. The eco-system must be repaired and replenished – urgently! People and other living beings that share the environment are in desperate need of trees and greenery ... We must plant trees not only at each house, yard and compound, but in every school yard, and through large scales re-forestation programs.

Please help us by sending your fully tax-deductible contribution to:

CommonWell Institute International, Inc.

*** a 501 (c) 3 organization ***

c/o Elise Collins Shields, Ph.D.

1482 East Valley Road #264

Santa Barbara, CA 93108

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Note: “ReGreening Afghanistan”



Brief History of ReGreening Afghanistan:

One tree at a time

- **2003-4:** A group of friends in California, Arizona and Vermont envisioned Re-Greening Afghanistan through building Permaculture gardens for families in Afghanistan;
- Funds were raised, Concept Papers were written and literature on Permaculture (Permanent Agriculture) for training, seeds, tools, etc. were gathered to send to Afghanistan. CommonWell Institute International, Inc. (an Arizona 501 C3 non-profit corporation managed the formal, administrative and financial aspects of the fundraising)

- **2004:** Sultana Parvanta, Ph.D., relocated to Afghanistan with thousands of seeds hoping to launch the project. She soon discovered that the lush gardens and orchards that she remembered from her past were not only gone, but the project was not feasible due to the continued drought;
- The initial project was redesigned to accommodate the lack of water, and save the expense of deep wells in addition to protecting the aquifers from further contamination.
- **2006:** The tree project was initiated and the school children learned to use grey water from daily chores to water the trees in their yards. School curriculum centered around trees – their environmental benefits, reading Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*, researching trees on the computer, and so on. On March 21, (Afghan New Year) the first **1,000 trees were planted** by the students.
- **2007:** The tree project was extended and, with the help of several volunteers, a total of **2,100 trees were planted** on March 21, 2007. Today, 3,100 fruit trees are fostering new life in Afghanistan – one tree at a time.

One student at a time

- ***Other Activities:*** A simple tape recorder changed a young woman's life. A student in journalism, she was offered a job with a local English newspaper, provided she had a tape recorder. ReGreening fertilized her life with the vital tape recorder needed to provide her with the necessary prerequisite for her assignment.
- A young male 9 yr. old son of a friend of Sultana's – a driver -- needed funds to enter a modern English school for the year. The father stated to Sultana, "I want my son to be educated – not like me." CommonWell provided \$600 for six months of tuition. Tuition will soon be due for another six months.



One woman at a time

- Twenty women – (widows and their daughters) in northern Afghanistan were given \$75 each to buy a loom and wool for weaving Kleems. They weave these floor coverings and sell them in the market – with half the proceeds the women buy new wool to weave again, and the other half of the income is used for simple living.
- A woman bee keeper outfitted several women with bee boxes in time for spring. At \$ 300 per box CommonWell supported the women's right to be self sustaining and prosperous. Through her position at the Ministry of Commerce, Sultana has introduced the bee keeping project to a source in the Afghan government that work with an NGO based in Kabul, and the project will be expanding to several provinces and hundreds of women will begin their own bee keeping businesses.



*Women Weavers
Sponsored by ReGreening*

Through the donation of time is free through volunteers, the administrative costs are held to less than 1% and 99% of the resources are sent directly for service delivery;

PLEASE JOIN US IN SUPPORTING THE FAMILIES OF
AFGHANISTAN

IN REBUILDING THEIR COUNTRY!

Sultana remains in Afghanistan -- please

Contact Elise Collins Shields with any questions!

(520) 906-8404 mobile

or

email at ecs@commonwell.org

We encourage you to view "Charlie Wilson's War"



