

Newsletter, November 26, 2020

Dear friends,

A corona wave is rolling again in Afghanistan. In the summer, our colleagues were convinced that most Afghans had had the disease and that the epidemic will be over soon. But our small program to help alleviate the economic consequences of the disaster showed us that not very many families were affected. And now, as the temperature is going down, there is a second wave of the disease in Afghanistan as well. There is a steep increase of people suffering, and even worse, the number of people dying by Corona is increasing.

We - my wife and I - do not want to travel to Afghanistan in the current corona situation. I mostly appease you then by reassuring that I often talk on the phone with Kabul, mostly with the office manager Abdul Hussain. Sometimes it is about the politics of the Afghan government, the Taliban, the Islamic state, Pakistan. But mostly it is about more concrete things, about questions that OFARIN has to decide:

In Dasht-e-Barchi, a mullah asked OFARIN to support the teaching of four classes of adult women only with material, training and advice. OFARIN does not need to pay the teachers. We could hardly refuse this. Two weeks later Abdul Hussain had to report that only one teacher wanted to take part in the adventure. We decided to try it with the one lady. Abdul Hussain equipped the good woman with the necessary material so that she could prepare for the first seminar. Again two weeks later the first seminar took place. The candidate had not yet understood many things. She would come back and we would continue to talk with her.

In Ser-e-Kotal, the lessons had so far taken place in an inconspicuous mosque and in some neighboring houses. OFARIN had built additional rooms and toilets there over the years. We had also added supports in the lower rooms so that everything would not come to an abrupt end in case of an earthquake. Ser-e-Kotal is located on a hillside in the city. Further up there is no water. At the bottom of the valley hand pumps were installed. Sometimes people queue up to fetch water and carry it uphill. Nowadays, there are companies that drive drinking water up into the mountains in battered tankers and sell it to the people. OFARIN became active in Ser-e-Kotal several years ago because Karisadah, a mullah who lives here, encouraged us to do so. The area is so poor. We could not resist.

In Ser-e-Kotal, the number of students fluctuates, which makes teaching difficult. People move away from here whenever possible. But this was probably not the only reason that students did not come. Karisadah is a kind person only at second or third glance. He does not seem to get along well with parts of the population. This is not necessarily his fault. All ethnic groups of Afghanistan live in Ser-e-Kotal. The mutual affection of the inhabitants is limited.

The right to use the mosque building in which we held our lectures was also disputed. Karisadah bought his own property nearby and built a spacious mosque there, where his apartment is also located. His family and our classes have moved there now.

OFARIN's trainers in Ser-e-Kotal are Fausia and Hassina. Fausia is married. Hassina has just been engaged – to the oldest son of Karisadah. She will marry in half a year at the latest. Until then we have a problem. As long as she is not married, she is not allowed to enter the house of her future husband. And that is her workplace, the mosque, where the lessons take place. Fausia has a baby. She cannot additionally supervise Hassina's classes. Karisadah has three suggestions as to who could fill in for Hassina temporarily and who we could then dismiss after the wedding: his wife, his second son or his daughter: Karisadah's wife is not young. She will no longer adapt to our teaching methods, Afghans are not used to it and need time to accept it. The daughter is too young to be accepted as a trainer of teachers. Most classes are taught by female teachers. We can hardly have them supervised by a young boy. Some more phone calls are probably needed to sort the issue out.

One of the first to receive Corona help from OFARIN was Muzhgan. She lives in the Shindowal district of Kabul and worked there as a teacher for OFARIN. In spring her father and mother died of Corona. Muzhgan remained alone with a sick grandmother. Muzhgan has six sisters and five brothers. They are all married. They all had their own problems. She could not expect any help from her siblings, Muzhgan had told our colleagues.

The brothers have now sold the family home, where Muzhgan taught and lived with her grandmother, with all the inventory. Our teacher and her grandmother were placed with a sister and then in a tiny chamber in one of the brothers' house.

Our man in Shindowal is the very reliable Abdul Rassul. He reported that Muzhgan's brothers are addicted to drugs. We should not judge that. Many young men go to Iran to earn money. There they do hard physical labor. In order for them to endure this, Iranian employers provide them with drugs. Then, when they are physically ruined, they return to Afghanistan.

Abdul Rassul reported that Muzhgan had urged him not to tell the brothers about our support. They would have taken the money from her immediately. We thought about making Muzhgan a local trainer. After all, she had already worked successfully as a teacher for several years. This way she would have had a sufficient income in the long run. But the brothers did not allow her to do that. As a trainer she would have to come to OFARIN's office for reports and training. That went too far for the brothers. As a trainer, she would have to attend classes in other people's homes. That was not possible either. Nevertheless, there had always been lady-trainers in Shindowal visiting classes in private homes. Therefore Muzhgan could not teach anymore. Besides, OFARIN's payment for 90 minutes of lessons a day would not have been enough to support two people. Now Muzhgan has nothing more. The point is not that two people could fall below the poverty line of 60% of the average income. Muzhgan and her grandma simply have nothing to eat.

Muzhgan is engaged. Abdul Rassul thinks the fiancé is a decent guy. He lives out on the outskirts of town in Reshkor. This would be a chance for Muzhgan. But it is in the distant future. Weddings cost a lot of money. It is a question of the family's honor. Often a couple is promised to each other, but the groom cannot pay the bride price. With poor families, it takes several years before the marriage takes place. By then Muzhgan has starved to death.

Abdul Hussain will meet with Muzhgan's fiancé.

OFARIN's financial problems are comparatively bearable, although the amounts involved are quite different. In this gloomy Corona autumn quite a lot of people have helped us, including some we did not know before. This secures our modest situation for a few weeks more than usual. We are not out of the woods yet. But we are happy.

People who support OFARIN are recruited for the monthly newsletters. For some of those affected this newsletters are may be annoying. If so, please write us! We will take you off the mailing list. Whoever wants to receive our newsletters, on the other hand, can register via the homepage **ofarin.de**. However, nobody should feel obliged to donate. However, we will try to persuade you to do so in the newsletters.

It looks like all the possibilities we have set up for donations are now working. For a while, donations that came through Paypal were transferred back to the donors by Paypal. We had given Paypal a wrong address of our own. This is now fixed. We apologize for this.

Due to the fact that the number of donors is slowly increasing, we have to "industrialize" the contacts to these people, who are so near to our hearts. I can no longer write to everyone personally.

German tax offices recognize stamped deposit receipts or similar for donations up to 200 €. In such cases you do not need a donation receipt from us. We also want to issue donation receipts only in January of the following year. For most donors this will be enough. If you need the receipt earlier or a receipt for a smaller amount than 200 €, please write! We will do the necessary.

Best wishes from our Corona cage,

Peter Schwittek.

Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator (free version)