

Afghanistan Relief Organization

A non-profit 501(c)(3) humanitarian non-governmental organization



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THE ARO E-NEWSLETTER UPDATE

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RELIEF TRIP TO AFGHANISTAN: ARO EXPERIENCES CHALLENGES AND SUCCESS

The ARO relief team left in early April for Afghanistan shortly after the start of the war in Iraq, despite worldwide travel warnings, temporary evacuation of some relief teams in Afghanistan, and overall concern about security.



ARO volunteer Mumtaz Soleman with children in their “classroom” near Tora Bora.

For the first time, the ARO team traveling from America included a large majority of women volunteers (both Afghan and American). Many of the Afghan American members of the team had been separated from their homeland since the first Russian invasion, more than 24 years ago. The trip represented not only an important relief effort, but also a very personal commitment by volunteers. In total, 14 relief volunteers traveled from America to meet with ARO's Afghan-based volunteers.

***“I was stunned by the devastation. At least half of the buildings in Kabul are in ruins. Most disturbing was that people are making their homes in rubble that seems likely to crumble at any moment...
On a positive note, I saw thousands of children eagerly attending school, even though their ‘classrooms’ were most often a tent, a tarp under the open sky or even a stable.”***

While in Afghanistan, the ARO volunteers distributed relief and school supplies in Tora Bora, Jalalabad, Paghman, and Parwan, among other areas. In some areas, the ARO team was provided an armed escort and an advance team, who met with local leaders, organized the distribution site, and arranged for relief team security, preceded distributions. ARO distributed thousands of pounds of school supplies and regionally purchased rice and flour.



Some of the ARO volunteer team on the Spring 2003 Relief Trip in Afghanistan

Relief supplies collected by ARO volunteers—that had been delayed by an international shipper—arrived in Kabul the first week of August 2003. ARO volunteers based in Kabul managed the sorting and distribution of the additional supplies, with oversight by ARO chairman About Khalili. Read a detailed report about the ARO Spring 2003 Relief Trip at <http://www.afghanrelief.com/reliefm03.htm>.

ARO OPENED THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION CENTER AS PART OF RELIEF TRIP EFFORT

The ARO volunteers also worked on the finishing touches of the new Technical Education Center (TEC) in Kabul, which opened its doors in April 2003. The TEC—located near Kabul University—is already hosting classes in English and vocational / job skill training. ARO volunteers have installed some computers, and a later relief trip is planned to install and network a large number of computers, for classes on basic computer skills, repair and maintenance.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Education For All 2000 Report reveals that Afghanistan's education indicators are among the worst in the world. The number of children, youth, and young adults whose education has been disrupted since 1990 is conservatively estimated at eight to nine million.



Staff and the first students outside the TEC building near Kabul University

Technology Education Centers, such as the TEC, can provide expedient and practical training to facilitate employment and self-sufficiency among both the youth and adult populations. The TEC also can be an additional training resource for the educators needed throughout Afghanistan. The future of Afghanistan lies in the education provided today.

The TEC requires funding of approximately US\$1000. /month for full operations. ARO is actively seeking fundraising and grant opportunities, and can provide detailed information to philanthropic organizations.

Read detailed information and about ARO's TEC at <http://www.afghanrelief.com/tec.htm>. View photos of the TEC at <http://www.afghanrelief.com/photo.htm>.



Inside the TEC: clean classrooms with new desks and chairs made by ARO volunteers

HOW YOU CAN HELP!

The ARO relies solely on volunteer help and donations to accomplish our mission. Volunteers on the relief trips pay their own travel expenses. Funds are always needed to help with shipping costs of high-value or hard-to-obtain items, and for the purchase of additional relief supplies in the local region. Funds are needed to continue the TEC operations and develop new aid programs.

Your contribution can help continue the efforts of ARO to provide relief and self-sustainability to people throughout Afghanistan. Please contact the ARO at info@afghanrelief.com.

Want more information about ARO?

See www.afghanrelief.com, call 818-258-3333, or send us a message at info@afghanrelief.com.

DONATIONS: Your tax-deductible donation can be mailed to: Afghanistan Relief Organization, P.O. Box 10207, Canoga Park, CA 91304. A receipt will be mailed. Look for ARO on the non-profit database www.guidestar.org, key search words "afghan relief", for additional donor information.