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>> North Darfur – First Impressions

Dear Friends of PAI,

Thank-you for taking a look at this new edition of PAI News in which we share with you more about our projects contributing to holistic development.

Christmas in Europe is often a time for reflection, Christmas songs and the warm light of candles, snow and frost, the smell of mince pies, and happy memories. But how do people celebrate in other parts of the world? What happens in Australia? Do they have Christmas trees in South America? Do people sing carols in Africa? Different cultures celebrate differently.

Celebrations are an important mosaic in the life of people. Do we understand what we do when we help others? In our desire to help, we must ensure we fully understand people's needs. How can this be done across cultural differences? These are important questions for sustainable relief and development. Cultural competence is very important to us at PAI.

In October I was able to visit some of our projects in Yemen. As part of our cooperation with the Yemeni Ministry of Health, PAI strengthens reproductive health in rural areas. I was very impressed how, with respect to the Arab culture in Yemen, our co-workers, in addition to their technical expertise are able to use their language and cultural skills to enhance the effectiveness of their work.

As the new International Director of PAI, I look forward to seeing the organisation go from strength to strength. Whatever culture we are part of, we can truly value each other and in partnership with affected communities, tackle poverty together.

Thank you very much for your support. I wish you a joyous Christmas time and a good new year.

Yours

Jochen Schmidt

International Director



Jason Knapp has just joined the PAI team in EL Fasher as logistics officer. He gives his first impressions on life and work with PAI in the challenging context of North Darfur, Sudan.

Just two weeks ago, I stepped off the plane and into life and work in Darfur. What an interesting and complicated place—this arid and remote region! I find myself particularly shocked by the dry climate after working most recently in the tropical Aceh, Indonesia. Soon after arrival in Darfur, I experienced the firsts of desert life, including hours of driving on sandy tracks, and attempting to make a purchase in colloquial Arabic. At the same time, day-to-day work at PAI the PAI office lends itself to a much more normal life. My colleagues have been working on project proposals, budgets, assessments, and managing a range of projects, while I have been learning the ropes and organizing logistics.

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Already I've had a taste of the motivations and complications of work in this region. During my first week, I visited some of the different villages and IDP camps where PAI is running Primary Health Clinics, Education Projects, and Community Health Development training sessions. In each of these sectors, **I've seen the significant need and yet sensed an incredible resilience of the communities themselves.** The projects are both shaped and complicated by the ongoing, complex crisis, not to mention the long-term roots of poverty in the region.

Looking back on these few weeks, I'm encouraged to see the work of a small, yet vibrant organization having such a positive impact on people's lives. I find the commitment of the staff impressive and am excited to work in an NGO where I feel a commonality of vision. Certainly it will be a long road ahead, but I look forward to participating in PAI Sudan's investment in these remarkable communities.



➤➤ Spotlight on Somaliland

Article written By Matt Smith, PAI volunteer, Somaliland.

PAI began a partnership with the Somaliland Street Children's Association (SOSCA) in 2008. PAI Volunteer Matt Smith gives an insight into our work there.

Meet Faysal. Faysal is 14 years old and one of six boys who are a part of the SOSCA street children project. He shares a story much like his fellow "brothers" at SOSCA.

Some of the boys have family members who live in town or in other areas of Somaliland, but due to financial hardships have been forced into homelessness. Faysal however lived on the streets because he is an orphan.

Originally from Togwajalle, Faysal's life was all too similar to that of many of the street kids in Hargeisa. Life was rough; food was scarce or non-existent; addiction to drugs (mostly glue and sleeping pills) was a familiar escape; and **sleeping on the dirt streets was commonplace.**

However in 2005, life began to change for Faysal. He, and other boys he lived on the streets with, were offered a simple education and regular meals by the initiative of SOSCA. The SOSCA Board, comprised of five men and two women of equal voice, was founded in 2005 by a hand full of men and women who saw a great need in their city and joined together to do what they could to help.

Initially, the simple one roomed school that SOSCA used meant that the children still had to sleep in their designated space outside on the street, however, this year SOSCA moved to its present two-room location where the boys have classes and can sleep indoors on their own mattress. It was also this year that PAI began a partnership with SOSCA with the aim of building capacity and supporting SOSCA in reaching their potential.

The boys at the school unanimously agree that their lives are much better since SOSCA found them and they each see big changes in themselves. Although they still have many struggles, the children are grateful for their increased opportunities, are happy and enjoy a greater sense of peace, full of hope and ambitions as they look forward to the future. Faysal says he would like to become a surgeon, while the aspirations of some of the other boys include: becoming a pilot, an automotive mechanic, a computer technician, a language professor, a journalist, and the youngest of the group (11 yrs. old, Farhan) told me

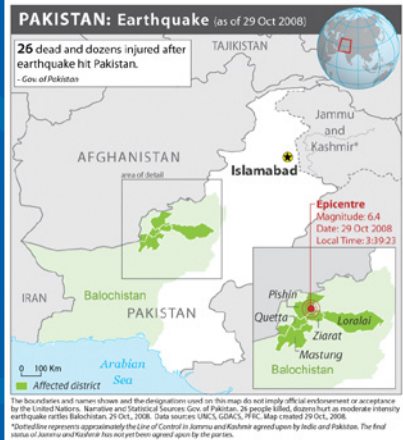
"I'd like to be the president of Somaliland one day!"

Farhan – Future president?



Faysal

>> Bringing relief after devastation in Balochistan Province



Courtesy of www.relieffweb.int

In the early morning of October 29th 2008 two earthquakes struck the north-eastern part of the Balochistan Province in Pakistan. The first earthquake registered at 5.2 on the Richter scale, and drove thousands of people from their homes. Shortly after the first earthquake, another followed registering 6.4 on the Richter scale. Information was slow to filter out, but it is now clear that the earthquakes have resulted in 300 people's lives being lost and more than 500 people injured. Thousands of homes and public buildings were destroyed in two districts of the Balochistan Province.

meet immediate needs and be well received by the local community.

In coordination with Mera Jan, and numerous other community leaders, as of the first week of December, PAI Balochistan has been able to distribute gas heaters and deliver water storage tanks to each family in the village, rehabilitate the damaged water system and coordinate the process of clearing debris.

PAI Balochistan has continually been overwhelmed by the support of the community in the relief process. Though life is extremely hard and many families have had to send their women and children away for the winter, they are actively taking steps to meet their community's needs and rebuild their lives.

Despite having disappeared from the pages of the International news, the work of rebuilding lives for the affected communities will continue for months and years to come. Please consider how you can get involved in supporting this vital work. Currently, PAI Balochistan is considering assisting affected locals in the rebuilding of structures using earthquake resistant technologies and contributing to the care of affected children through post-disaster counselling.

PAI Balochistan's Project Coordinator, Noor Muhammad, began relief efforts from the Quetta Projects Office just a few hours after the earthquake struck. Having reached the earthquake affected areas he was immediately overwhelmed by the loss of life and destruction. In one village he visited there was only one survivor among numerous families. The overwhelming destruction was in stark contrast to the beautiful mountains and orchards that surround the affected villages.

After surveying the area and coordinating with both the government and other NGOs, PAI Balochistan chose a severely affected village with roughly 1,500 residents in the Ziarat District and began planning relief efforts in coordination with the local community. The village of Kang Bangla was chosen by PAI because of the relationship that was quickly established with numerous leaders in the community. Mera Jan ("My Soul") one of the leaders worked closely with PAI staff in the survey of his community to determine its needs. Though he had lost his home and the majority of his belongings, he was happy to give his time to helping PAI make contact with his neighbours and plan a disaster response that would



Intern in Indonesia

PAI has recently begun to take on interns who are keen to gain experience of working with an international relief and development organisation. PAI is committed to investing into people and helping them further develop their skills. Simultaneously, interns are able to make a valuable contribution to the work of PAI in valuing culture and empowering communities.

Mark McAdam, an International Relations student from Wheaton College, Illinois, recently undertook a 2 month internship with PAI. He gives a few comments on his experiences.

“At the start of my internship I participated in a intensive training course that introduced basic concepts of development and relief work. I was then immersed into substantive office work as I researched background information for a new PAI project in Somaliland. In this

process I was astounded by the confidence PAI displayed in entrusting me with such vital work.

The second part of my internship took place in Indonesia where PAI works in projects alongside community based NGOs. After having spent time in both training and the logistics of office work, I was tasked to review projects and practically apply that which I had learned in preceding weeks. My time there was invaluable: aside from connecting with locals involved in and benefiting from PAI’s work, I was able to contribute to the PAI team by teaching English, documenting the programme’s merits and challenges, and making recommendations to enhance project success. The gratitude of locals and their thankfulness for PAI’s work validated all of PAI’s efforts.

Interning for PAI meant hands-on work that truly mattered. I had a tremendous summer experience, and I doubt I could have had the same experience elsewhere.”



Changes at PAI UK

There have been some significant changes for PAI UK during 2008. We bid farewell to CEO Jim Long and trustee John Mosey this year. We are very grateful for their faithful and valuable contributions to PAI UK and the wider organisation.

We are happy to welcome two new trustees onto the board of PAI UK; Andrea Winkelmann-Gleed a social science researcher from Essex and Matt Thomas a desk officer with the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) in Manchester. Andrea and Matt have extensive humanitarian field work experience in Africa and Asia respectively.

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Pictures: Private and PAI

Opportunities available with PAI UK! Administrative Support Manager

As part of a current restructuring and expansion, we require support in managing contacts with donors and supporters of PAI in the UK through providing administrative support. There is further scope to get involved in our fundraising activities for relief and development projects and in wider aspects of the work. This is a voluntary position with expenses paid.

Trustee/Treasurer

Have you got what it takes to be part of the team strategically shaping PAI UK during its current process of expansion? We are looking for an individual with an accounting/bookkeeping background to join the UK Board.

Please contact George Thackray for more details on either of these positions. Email: info-uk@partner-aid-international.org