

Education and Knowledge are Drivers of Development

Sarajuddin has been a teacher for 30 years and it is still his dream job: “If people remain uneducated and uninformed, they can’t fulfil their dreams and visions. Without education, people don’t develop. Neither does the country they live in. That’s why, even as a young man, I wanted to become a teacher and even today, teaching children is still my passion.”

Nowadays, Sarajuddin cannot solely focus on teaching anymore, as he became the headmaster of a school in Hamdard (province Balkh) when the school opened in May 2015. Sarajuddin himself came to Hamdard as a refugee from a volatile district of Balkh province. Hamdard is a township that hosts around 165 families of internally displaced persons developed. Until the opening of the new school building, teaching and learning conditions for inhabitants were burdensome. The German government government funded the construction of the new school at a total cost of more than AFN 18 million.

School lessons used to take place under a tent, where children were sitting on mere clay soil, suffering from cold in winter and extreme heat during the summer. No wonder many parents did not send their children to school at all. Even teachers attended only irregularly and the school lacked proper learning material. Motivation hit rock bottom, amongst students and teaching staff alike.

Head of the village, Faiz Mohammed and a villager elder deemed the situation unacceptable and started taking action: “The community quickly provided land for the new school. However, there was no money for a school building. We personally audited in front of all possible authorities of the provincial government and campaigned for building a school. We were very lucky that the German government provided funding.”

With the new building and Sarajuddin as headmaster, the school has undergone change. 21 teachers teach 13 classes of girls and boys. After finishing seventh grade, the boys continue their education at a secondary school. Girls usually stay until ninth grade: “Parents usually don’t allow young girls to go to school if it’s too far away. That’s why we have the permission from the government to teach them here for longer.”

620 students have attended school on a regular basis for one and a half years now. Sarajuddin makes sure, all children as well as teachers are at school on time. Right at his inauguration, he called a meeting with all staff



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members and clarified: “Every teacher who is responsible and reliable is welcome in my team. If you don’t care about work hours, school policy or class discipline, I don’t need you here.” Strict words, that did not fail their desired effect. The school’s standards rose rapidly.

Parents who used to send their children to boarding schools now appreciate Hamdard’s academic achievements and happily enrol their children at the local school. “Many parents see the new building and enquire about the education concept. We show them around in the school and explain our aspirations for students, teachers and parents. We have already had 65 newcomers and expect more applications for the next academic year.”

School rules and teaching standards have to be observed by everyone. The experienced headmaster teaches maths, Dari and Islamic studies himself, too. Workdays start at 7:30 a.m., and end at 4 p.m. The dedicated headmaster expects this not only of himself, but of his whole team, because, “Our school wants to educate the new generation of our country and prepare them for their responsibilities. The children have to learn to take responsibility, for themselves, their village, and the whole country. Education and knowledge are drivers of development. In my opinion, education is the first step to secure a country’s development. The children now enjoy going to school here and it’s my way of helping my country.”

Even though most of the district’s inhabitants arrived in Hamdard as internally displaced persons, they do not want to return to their villages and communities. They started a new life, made new friends, and found a stable environment. Just like Faiz Mohammed, who opened a real estate business: “Most of us left their past lives behind. We had a fresh start here, this has become our home– and now, we even have a good school.”

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