

## **WorldCrafts Gives Hope to Afghan Families**

Contact: Andrea Mullins, [worldcrafts@wmu.org](mailto:worldcrafts@wmu.org), 1-800-968-7301

(BIRMINGHAM, Ala.) – Oct. 28, 2008 – Amid the arid lands of Afghanistan, where hills and snow-capped mountains surround deserts and poppy fields, a cloud of war hovers over the terrain and all who inhabit it. But there are those who, with the help of WorldCrafts, have found deliverance.

WorldCrafts, a fair-trade, nonprofit business, is helping to give Afghan families an expectation of a life beyond their impoverished conditions through a partnership with an artisan group comprised of women who make jewelry, mosaics, and sew.

The women who make jewelry, a task that was traditionally done by males, will sell their hand-made products through WorldCrafts, and use the proceeds to pay for healthcare and education for themselves and their families.

“I am very happy that we will soon start a literacy class here,” said Natalia,\* an artisan from Afghanistan. Forced to drop out of school at age 10 due to illness, Natalia is illiterate.

She currently lives with her mother, single sister, two brothers, and her brothers’ wives and children.

Her father died when she was 11, and she and her sisters were forbidden to marry before her brothers. Natalia, now 28, is deemed too old to marry. But she discovers freedom in her ability to work.

“It is very good for me to have my own money,” she said. “I can provide everything for myself without asking my brother. Now I can even help my brother, and I put my nephew in school.”

At the age of 15, Asha,\* too, understands the constraints of financial oppression. The ninth grader resides in her paternal grandfather’s home with her mother, father, three sisters, three uncles, and her uncles’ wives. Between her health problems and her mother’s, Asha and her family often wondered if they would have enough money for medical treatments and school for Asha and two of her sisters.

However, the young girl, who dreams of becoming a geologist, finds some solace in her job as an artisan with WorldCrafts. “My father is currently unemployed. I use the money I earn to go to school and to help my father provide for the family,” she stated.

“I want to finish the 12th grade and go on for a masters/doctorate,” said Anya,\* a 32-year-old artisan. Despite hardships, like her husband being injured in an accident, Anya continues her work. “I have children going to school, and my husband is unemployed,” she stated. “The job is a big help for me.”

Anya also expressed that she wants her three children to be educated as well. Perhaps, through her job as an artisan, she can see her dreams for herself and her family come to fruition.

For each of these women, and the other artisans not mentioned here, WorldCrafts has not only given them a glimpse of life outside of continuous war and poverty, but also a chance to achieve it.

As the Afghan artisan group expressed, “We all are very happy with this job. It helps us to forget our family problems for the hours that we are working together, laughing and talking. When we are together, we talk and learn what is going on in the world. Being together makes us brave and gives us courage to fight for our rights. When we see that our children are happy that we have money to put them in school and buy clothes for them, it makes us happy. Thanks be to God for giving us this job. Thanks to the people who try to provide work for us.”

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Since 1996, WorldCrafts has imported handmade crafts from artisans worldwide, providing them with hope and income. WorldCrafts works with 70 artisan groups in 38 countries to provide 370 quality items. Visit [www.WorldCraftsVillage.com](http://www.WorldCraftsVillage.com) for more information about artisan groups, the complete product line, and resources for planning a WorldCrafts party.

\* Names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the women.