

## **Reflections from Ash Khan, Visionary and builder of Village School, outside Jalalabad in Afghanistan.**

*The most incredible part of my whole Afghan experience was witnessing the enthusiasm for education displayed by the young girls in the village school near Jalalabad. They came early in the morning, some of them wearing the white chador with a green stripe, which was the quintessential marker for the Nazaneen Jabarkhel School girls. You would see the uniform in the city of Jalalabad or in the village school. School started at 8:00 AM and you would see scores of young children walking a kilometre or more to reach the school before start time. They were playful and chasing each other, just as you would see in any schoolyard in Canada.*

*One morning we had decided to be at the construction site early in the morning. We saw three very young children heading towards the school. We stopped our taxi and asked if they would like a ride to school. It was a chilling January morning and they were not dressed very well for the winter. I can remember them wearing tethered clothes yet their faces were clean and they were clinging on to their worn out satchels. They piled in the back of the station wagon and were very thankful.*

*During the four months of construction, students would wander away from their dilapidated tent classrooms to view the progress of their school. They were looking forward to the day when they would move into the new building and be sheltered from the warm summer sun or the harsh winter. They were so intrigued by the construction process and at times had to be shooed away for their own safety.*

*One day I found a brown box containing some books that were sent from a school in Nevada. The American children must have collected all kind of books in English and sent them to Afghanistan through the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Jalalabad. The PRT office gets hundreds of items such as the pens and pencils and regularly distributes them to the schools in Afghanistan.*

*Interest in education there was equally strong amongst the boys. I was introduced to a young boy who had given up a job with his father in order to study and was one of the brightest students in the school.*