

Newsletter, August 20, 2021

Dear friends,

After I have tried to foresee the future of Afghanistan a little bit, I will now focus on what OFARIN could do in this scenario.

What tasks can OFARIN perform in the future and how?

We cannot say now what the future of Afghanistan will look like. Therefore, we do not know what lessons we can teach. We are sure that our teaching program, as it is, will help many people. To be able to write, to read with comprehension and to calculate well, that gives something to all people. Those who can do this gain self-confidence and judgment. For some of them, our lessons have given a significant impetus for their lives. This is shown by the research of the journalists who came with us to Kabul in June. In addition, the lessons have helped to develop a sense of community among the people. These lessons are important and valuable. It must continue whenever possible.

We had dreamed of expanding the content of the program. We would like to carry out the lessons in other areas and in more classes. We should be cautious with such plans in the current situation. We do not know what the future will bring. But it will also have an impact on our income. If we expand our program now, but donors get the impression that it is not possible to work in Afghanistan, we will have to close classes for lack of money. That is bitter. We should not change our program significantly, either qualitatively or quantitatively, before things in Afghanistan become much calmer.

School classes cannot be secured against attacks. But our classes are not far from the homes of our students and teachers. That reduces the danger.

Our clientele belongs to the poor part of the population. The families of our children do not dream of rich countries where they could make their fortune. They don't have money to buy the necessary trafficking services. They have to find a way to happiness where they are - even if the happiness is small.

Will the Taliban allow OFARIN to continue to operate? OFARIN's program was created under the old Taliban rule and at their request. In Logar, we have come to a prosperous coexistence with the Taliban. Such facts could be quite helpful. We assume that the Taliban took their former anti-education stance mainly under pressure from the ISI. Many of their leaders understood even then that education was urgently needed. Otherwise, our teaching would not have been possible. One can hope that there will be no Pakistani interference in education.

When calm returns to Afghanistan, we will see what is possible and develop our program accordingly. We will keep you informed about that.

Our friends and supporters will have a problem in understanding our stance properly. Cooperation with the Taliban will be a tightrope walk. And there may be misunderstandings about the rope we are walking.

Even if there is a peaceful end to the war, the Taliban movement has prevailed. The struggle for modernization has cut a bloody swath through Afghan society for a good hundred years. Since then, there have been forces that want to make Afghanistan - at any cost - a modern country; like Belgium or Germany, with ministries and their bureaucracies, with state schools and with compulsory military service. This was at the expense of traditional life and the forces that had dominated until then, especially the mullahs. The mullahs fought back and successfully defended the old ways. The communists, who wanted to bring something new and modern in their own way, had to give up. And

then came others who also wanted to bring modernity, namely democracy and human rights and equal rights for women. The defenders of the old ways rejected that, too. They fought against it and obviously prevailed.

So we want to conduct our lessons in as much partnership as possible with people who have won a war against the rule of constitutional law, human rights, democracy and women's rights. These partners will have little to do with us accusing them of violations of the rule of law. They derive their right from Sharia law and custom. For them, the emancipation of women is an aberration.

Nevertheless, we do not expect that our female employees will no longer be allowed to come to the office. But if that should happen, we will look for ways and means to keep them busy by working from home. Some things will become necessary that we will only be able to report on verbally in small circles. Please, have faith! We will do everything to protect our employees and students.

Our teaching is doing its good work. It should take place under difficult conditions. Then it is especially needed. If we throw in the towel in protest, we will be patted on the back. But the Afghans have nothing to gain from it.

OFARIN has dared to cooperate with mullahs and mosques and has had surprisingly good experiences. Trust and even friendship have developed in the process. You have to take the mullahs with you if you want to make progress. I would be very disappointed if this did not also apply to the Taliban.

Best regards,

Peter Schwittek