



Ambassador Program
presents

The Current Healthcare Situation in Afghanistan
with His Excellency Said Tayeb Jawad and Mrs. Shamim Jawad

The country made headlines after September 11, 2001, but only to the extent that American media outlets supplied partial information. Initially bombarded with images of a poverty-stricken, hard line Islamic country ravaged by decades of war and, since 1996, devastating intolerance, Americans learned almost nothing about the diverse peoples and cultures of Afghanistan that once flourished within its mountainous borders.

Today, Afghanistan is on a road to social, cultural and economic recovery. Its deep rooted cultural traditions which were once banned by the Taliban are making a much anticipated comeback. The country's geographical position, combined with its geological terrain, has given rise to a great diversity of foods, arts, languages and traditions that developed over many centuries and are thriving today. From its longstanding tradition of woven carpets with their distinctive red hues and octagonal designs to its traditional folk music and Dari poetry, Afghanistan's culture is a vast combination of history and religion influenced by over 5,000 years of armies, empires and trade routes.

However, even as Afghanistan's culture is once again beginning to flourish, the country is in dire need of continued assistance from international healthcare community. After almost three decades of war and destruction accompanied by severe droughts, Afghanistan has the world's worst health indicators. Afghans have a life expectancy of 35 years, among the lowest in the world. The infant mortality rate is 165 per 1,000 live births and one out of every four children dies before reaching the age of 5. Although access to healthcare for women has relatively improved, it is still severely restricted in rural areas. 75% of the population does not have access to safe drinking water and Afghanistan is among one of the six remaining countries in the world where polio, like landmines, still kills and maims many children everyday. Other preventable and curable diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis, and measles continue to kill thousands of children and adults every year.

International aid channeled through UN agencies and NGOs has helped provide basic healthcare services in urban cities. However, rural populations remain severely underserved throughout Afghanistan, which is where the majority of Afghans concentrate, including over three million refugees and internally displaced people who have recently returned home from exile. Newly built hospitals and clinics lack medical staff, supplies, and equipment and in some, up to three patients occupy one bed, sharing bed sheeting and other facilities. Disposable medical devices are repeatedly used due to supply shortages and the patients' inability to provide their own.

The Embassy of Afghanistan in Washington, DC has identified Carelift International—a committed humanitarian non-profit organization—to work in cooperation to improve the healthcare situation in Afghanistan. In addition to expert training programs, Carelift secures new

and used equipment, pharmaceuticals, and supplies from U.S. health institutions and manufacturers and redistributes them to healthcare facilities abroad. Given the scarcity of medical supplies and facilities in Afghanistan, this process will enable doctors and nurses in the country to access modern, lifesaving tools and offer a cost effective outlet for hospitals and corporations to upgrade their inventories, thereby minimizing waste. These complimentary programs will strengthen Afghanistan's overall health status by creating sustainable improvements in medical and health education systems.

As the country works to remedy its humanitarian conditions, Afghanistan is simultaneously rebuilding its economy by embracing a free market system and modernized infrastructure. Major international banks are moving into the country, providing financial security and personal and small business loans that will create a level of economic stability that has not been achieved in decades. And while numerous industries are being developed to integrate the country into the global economy, Afghanistan is currently focusing on rebuilding crucial sectors like energy and mining, agriculture, transportation, urban development, workforce training and communications.

As part of International House's Ambassador Program and Afghanistan's reintegration process, International House of Philadelphia and the Embassy of Afghanistan, with special assistance from Carelift International, invite regional healthcare industry insiders and the general public to learn about the issues still affecting healthcare in Afghanistan and how individuals and businesses in the Philadelphia region can help. Program takes place on November 15 at 7pm at International House, 3701 Chestnut Street.

An independent non-profit organization founded in 1910, International House of Philadelphia is both a unique residential community for students, scholars, interns and professional trainees from over 50 countries, and a public venue for arts, cultural and geo-political programs that foster global thought and insight. As home to 350 residents attending more than 25 area institutions of higher learning, International House is an incubator for future global leaders. And, with public programs like the World Economic Lecture Series and Ambassador Program, International House serves the region as the nexus between international culture and international business™ while remaining true to its mission of promoting global understanding through personal connections.

The Ambassador Program provides the general public a forum to learn about the culture of the Ambassador's country and business leaders the opportunity to develop economic ties beyond Philadelphia.

For more information on this program or to learn how you can get involved, please contact Elizabeth Lowe at elizabeth@ihphilly.org or 215.895.6553.