



Tajikistan School Connectivity Project

NEWS

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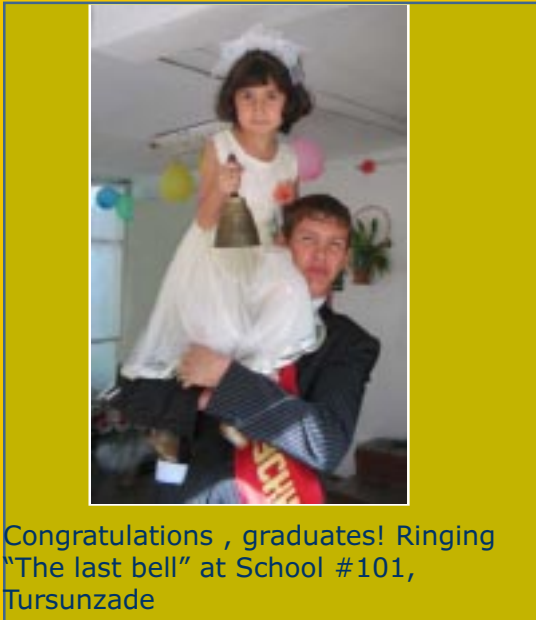
LETTERR

The Tajikistan School Connectivity Project for Central Asia is establishing 20 Internet Learning Centers (ILCs) in secondary schools across Tajikistan. The program's main goal is to increase global dialogue and educational opportunities by installing modern computer equipment with Internet access in schools, as well as developing training and learning projects for teachers and students.

Tajikistan School Connectivity Project activities include:

- teacher training on using computers and the Internet in classroom teaching
- US school partnerships on civic education projects and teacher exchange
- public access and programs for community members and disadvantaged groups
- development of sustainable practices for schools and communities

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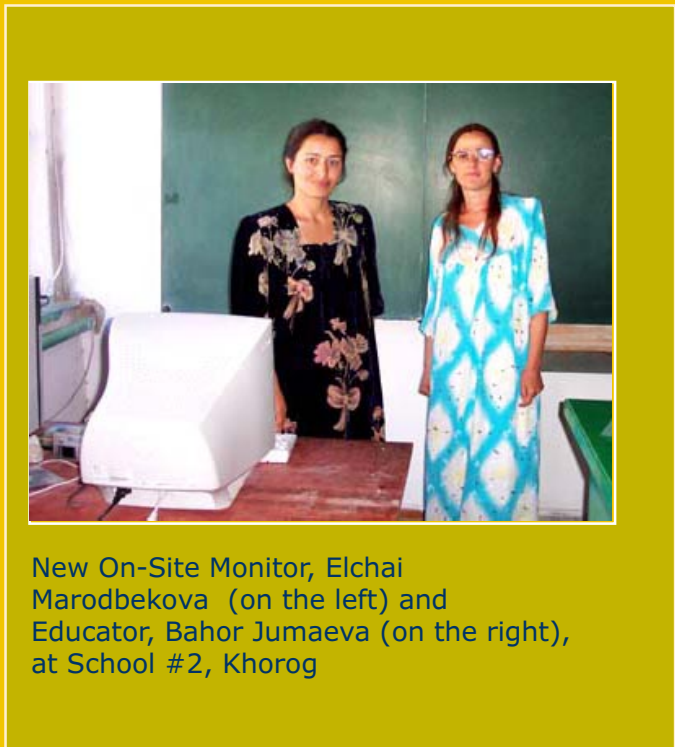
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New Internet Learning Center Connected in Khorog

In May 2004, Relief International - Schools Online opened its 20th Internet Learning Center at School #2 in Khorog city in cooperation with Aga Khan Education Services. Khorog is located in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), an isolated region in the Pamir Mountains of eastern Tajikistan that is home to a large population of Ismaili Muslims.

School #2 is located in the center of Khorog, but it struggles to keep the best students who often go to private schools once they reach the higher grades. Now with the help of the Internet center, the school hopes they can increase attendance levels. Connectivity Program Director Garth Willis visited the school and helped prepare the room for the computers. The director of the school expressed his gratitude that pupils and community members would have a chance to communicate with the world through the ILC. School #2 plans to hold an official opening ceremony to start the school year in September.



Connectivity Students from School #2 in Gissar Lead Human Trafficking Trainings

Connectivity students from School #2 in Gissar were invited to a seminar on human trafficking organized by NGO «Sanitas» and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The students played different games and roles to learn more about their rights and human trafficking. As student Afzal Sharipov said, «The trainers explained to us that human trafficking is illegal.... Now we know that it is really slavery.»

At the end of the seminar, trainers divided the students into two groups and asked them to conduct the same seminars in ten other schools in Gissar. The first seminars the students led were for students from 8th-11th grade at Schools #2 and #10. The teachers and students of the schools were surprised at how confident the student trainers were about the material, and the participants had lively discussions stemming from the different games and performances.

From February until May, the student teams conducted trainings and seminars in ten schools in Gissar. During the seminars, the students distributed brochures from IOM. The student trainers also received the support of the local government of Gissar. At the end of their trainings, the students created an electronic bulletin in Word to show the results of their trainings and spread information about human trafficking.



Students learning about the dangers of smoking at School#3, Kanibadam

Kanibadam Students Learn the Dangers of Smoking from NGOs and Internet

On May 31, the ILC at School #3 in Kanibadam held a round table discussion called «From Tobacco To Narcotic in One Step» with the participation of NGO «Khaeti Solim». The main goal of the event was to convince students who are beginning to smoke that smoking is unhealthy. ILC staff and Lead Teachers organized the event, which included eighteen Connectivity students and four Lead Teachers.

At the ILC, participants of the round table had an opportunity to visit websites against smoking cigarettes and drugs. Students did research on the history of smoking, especially in Russia. They found out that the free sale of smoking tobacco only began during the time of Peter I, concluding that in Russia smoking is a very recent habit.

The students also signed a pledge not to smoke as part of the «Stop Smoking and Win 2004!» project on the www.nosmoke.ru website, organized by the World Health Organization and the Institute of Pulmonology of Russia. They gave different prizes to the winners who agreed to stop smoking. After this activity, the Kanibadam team e-mailed a newsletter about this event to other Connectivity Schools.



Connectivity students becoming trainers on human trafficking, Gissar



Students from Gissar at the seminar on Human Trafficking

Disability Program Participants Learn Life Skills Through Connectivity Training

Through Connectivity Project outreach training, one of the participants in ORA International's Disability Program is now a volunteer at the Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP) Resource Center. Nafisa was a librarian at Dushanbe's main Firdausi Library before a car accident left her paralyzed from the waist down. After four years completely housebound, Nafisa joined the Connectivity training program for people with disabilities at the ILC in School #10, Dushanbe (see Connectivity Newsletter Issue #1, January '04). Nafisa had never used a computer before.

The training she received from Connectivity staff and students taught her not only new computer skills, but also gave her self-confidence and positive encouragement. Through RI-SOL contacts and Nafisa's willingness, she was accepted as a volunteer at the AKHP Resource Center. The AKHP Resource Center houses over 3,400 books, 600 CDs, and 500 videos in English, Russian, and Tajik about the humanities, and receives an average of 50 visitors per day.

At the center, Nafisa researches book information on the Internet, categorizes and labels books, and signs out books on the computer. After participating in the Connectivity Program training and volunteering at the AKHP Resource Center, Nafisa said, «I finally feel that someone needs me. I know now that I have useful skills to offer.» Nafisa wants to continue learning new methods of library management using technology, and plans to utilize the AKHP Resource Center materials to learn English.



Students at Ukiah High School in Ukiah, Oregon

US Students Create Travel Posters for Tajikistan

As a follow up to the Stereotypes activity, teachers Rob Batease and Norma Barber of Ukiah High School in Ukiah, Oregon had their students research Tajikistan. Using the results of their research and the information they learned from the Stereotypes forum, the students created travel and tourist posters for Tajikistan. Their posters showed how much the students learned about Tajikistan, and helped to reinforce positive views of the realities of life in Tajikistan among students from other classes.

New US School Partners Prepare for Next Year

Our US team has been hard at work recruiting more schools to join the Connectivity Project next year. Oroville High School, a rural school on the border of Canada in Oroville, Washington, has just joined. Harker School, a private school in the heart of Silicon Valley, in San Jose, California, will also participate. And our latest addition to the project is High Tech High International, a new charter school that focuses on technology in San Diego, California. High Tech will also host the five Tajikistan teachers who will visit the US in September. The teachers will spend a day at High Tech to see their classroom technology in action. All these schools already use technology in teaching and are very excited to know more about Tajikistan and their partner schools.



The AKHP team and Nafisa - learning and working together

The Tajikistan School Connectivity Project for Central Asia is a project of Relief International - Schools Online's Global Citizenship & Youth Philanthropy Program and has been made possible with major funding from the United States State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Global Catalyst Foundation

Tajikistan and Uzbekistan School Connectivity Projects Hold Cross-Border Forums

The first forum between Connectivity Project in Tajikistan (administered by RI-SOL) Central Asia and Uzbekistan (administered by IREX) was conducted on May 7, 2004. Students from both countries took an active part in the forum, posting many interesting replies to the questions: What is your ideal school? What are the pluses and minuses of your school now? What would you like to change?

After the success of the first forum, it was decided to conduct forums every week. Forums are held on Fridays from 14:00 to 15:00, in a different language each week - Tajik, Uzbek, Russian, and English. Schools participating in the forums are School #20, Fergana, School #115 Karshi, and School #11 Termez in Uzbekistan; and School # 2 Gissar, School #12 Kurgan-Tyube, School #1 Sarband, School #4 Chkalovsk, School #3 Kanibadam, School #16 Jabbor Rasulov, School #4 Khujand and School #10 Vose in Tajikistan.

The topics for the forum questions are based on the input of students. One of the most interesting forums was about the role and importance of Russian language in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Some students said that it is necessary to keep Russian as the language of education as there are less textbooks and materials in national languages. Others had opposite views.

The last forum took place on Friday, June 4. Students from both countries were asked to find information about the traditions and customs of the other country on the Internet, and then post the information they learned on the forum. Students then replied to the posts about their country, agreeing or correcting what they found. The students decided on what people from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have or do not have in common.

The forums have been a great success in helping the students increase their Internet and computer skills, while learning more about the people, traditions, and customs of their neighbors.

«It is very important to save our native language – for us, for our future, for our kids.... Our native language is our legacy; we received it with the milk from our mothers, with our culture. But every educated person should know as many languages as he needs to better his future – Uzbek, Russian, Tajik, English....» — Zarina, School #16, Gulyakandoz, Tajikistan

«During the Soviet period we were living under one roof — Tajikistan and Uzbekistan — and then we became independent states. But we are still friends, because now we know we have similar traditions and rituals.» —Dmitry, Gymnasium 'Parvoz', Uzbekistan



Connectivity Students participating in the Tajik/Uzbek forum at School #16, Gulyakandoz.



Connectivity Students and Lead Teachers participating in the Tajik/Uzbek forum at School #2, Gissar.



Connectivity Students participating in the Tajik/Uzbek forum at School #4, Chkalovsk

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