

GSE District 5340—Afghanistan (District 3270)
By Steve Brown
March 20, 2004

Background

Our District 5340 has donated \$11,000 of DDF to District 3270 for a one way (inbound) GSE team to come to our District made up entirely of Afghans for Rotary year 2004-05. Rotary Foundation Chairman James Lacy has approved this GSE.

We corresponded with the Chancellor of Nangarhar University (December 13, 2003—letter attached) advising him of this program and requested his assistance in helping to identify candidates for this program. The Chancellor then asked each department (other than the medical school) to recommend two candidates for the interviews. (The Medical school administration arranged for interviews for many of their faculty.) We requested advance information on possible GSE candidates from the Chancellor's office. Fary Moini on site as a Rotary Volunteer arranged for 26 individuals to send their CVs to Steve Brown. (Note that The Rotary Foundation specifically stated that she could not spend her time on this activity under her grant fund acting as a Foundation Volunteer so her time spent on this was not funded by the grant funds which covered a sixty-day span.)

Steve had requested a blanket waiver of the age restriction and the restriction that only non-Rotarians could make up the team, in advance of the selection process. After considerable delay, he was advised that such a request could not be considered until the selection process had been undertaken. He was advised that waivers on age restrictions as a general proposition were unlikely, but because of the uniqueness of this exchange, minor deviations perhaps could be provided. He was advised that with the exception of a Rotarian team leader, it was not likely that other team members could be Rotarians. This latter request was made in that Steve and others are working on the formation of the Rotary Club of Jalalabad and some of the GSE applicants are also proposed charter members of that proposed club. Timing of the chartering is uncertain and the process of formation of that club is the subject of a separate memorandum. Completed chartering documents for establishing a 22 person Rotary Club of Jalalabad were tendered by Steve and Fary to District 3270 DGE Raul Rohaila in a meeting in Peshawar, Pakistan on March 15, 2004.

Steve Brown and District 5340 DGE Sandi Rimer met with District 3270 DGE Rauf Rohaila in Anaheim in February 2004 to review the GSE process and Rauf was provided the CVs that Fary had collected. Steve, Sandi and Rauf also met with Harvey Newcomb and Elizabeth Lamberti from foundation staff regarding this exchange. During these meetings there were several anticipated problems and open issues identified. Steve reported to Rauf that his district had been turned down on receiving the exception "up front" for a waiver of the age restriction and a waiver of having Rotarians on the team other than the team leader. These exceptions had been requested given the anticipated problems in finding suitable candidates who are likely to obtain visas and to have these issues taken off the table during the interview process.

Rauf raised additional concerns regarding what level of input Pakistani Rotarians would have in the process regarding selection and participation on the team. Steve noted that the condition of the donation from District 5340 was for the team to be made up of Afghan professionals affiliated with the Nangarhar University. Steve mentioned that this program was sufficiently important to his district that outside funding would be sought if it became too complicated to satisfy TRF and District 3270.

It was decided that the selection process should go forward with a subsequent re-visiting of the issue of if the candidates selected would fit within the GSE framework acceptable to TRF and to District 3270. Steve advised that he would be setting up interviews in Afghanistan that District 3270 would be invited to participate in if scheduling and sufficient notice permitted. At the March 15 meeting with Rauf in Peshawar, he advised Fary and Steve, that he was satisfied with the selection process and the candidates recommended but he would insist that the team have as its primary leader a Pakistani Rotarian who would be an educator.

Interviews

Once in Afghanistan, the scheduling of the interviews was a bit fluid, but when dates were set, candidates lined up at the door. Although Steve let Rauf know of the interview schedule, there was not sufficient lead-time for Pakistani Rotarian participation.

The first set of interviews resulted in 13 candidates at Nangarhar University interviewed by Steve and for some of these interviews Rotarian Farid Saydee (a new Afghan Rotarian from District 5340) sat in. The second set of interviews (4) was undertaken the next morning by Steve and Fary Moini. The final set of interviews resulted in 12 candidates being considered by Steve and Fary from the medical staff at Nangarhar Medical University. A total of 29 candidates were interviewed.

Evaluation Process

There were four fundamental criteria employed in evaluation candidates

English Proficiency
US Visa Qualifications
Age
Transferability of Vocational Experiences

English Proficiency

All 29 candidates spoke some English. I insisted that the interview take place in English but left it open to allow my interpreters to help with issues that needed clarification. I advised that one of the selection criteria was ability to converse in English. A few candidates did not heed this advice and preferred to talk through interpreters even though

I could tell they knew English reasonably well. They were eliminated. Those that spoke good English received high interview marks.

US Visa Qualifications

Even though requested, I have no personal advance assistance from the US State Department regarding likelihood of getting visas for candidates. I have reviewed the “official criteria” from Department of State—Consular services web site. I know it is easier for females to get visas and I know that having a spouse and children is required in many of these types of instances. Accordingly, I ruled out single male candidates and prioritized ones with children. Home ownership is also important but in Afghanistan no one interviewed owns a home in the tradition of how that concept is perceived in the West. This visa eligibility category only ruled out two or three individuals.

Age

I have a strong disagreement with TRF regarding their general parameters on this restriction as it applies to what we try to accomplish in our district using educators for GSE. Yet, I agree with the general concept that when differentiating among candidates of equal qualifications, the ones with the longest career in front of them makes a better investment. I note that with age comes wisdom, more flexibility of professional time, better ability to train others, and additional advantages. However, I felt that those mid-fifties or older would not be the best investment for us given a good pool of younger candidates which we have. I should note, that most individuals I interviewed who were mid-forties or older looked at least 10 years older than their age. I found this difficult as being 56 myself and my contemporaries looking in their mid-sixties.

Transferability of Vocational Experiences

This became an incredibly important category. By way of example, we interviewed many “ophthalmologists”. However, to be an ophthalmologist in Afghanistan, one must just graduate from medical school and start cutting up eyes. They have no specialized training. Their counterparts in the states have many years of training after medical school and use very expensive and sophisticated equipment. Bringing one to the US would be interesting for the individual but of little transferable benefit. We would be better off using funds to bring an ophthalmologist from India to train the six doctors we interviewed to provide basic instruction to train the eye doctors in Afghanistan.

Team Administration and Sponsorship

It is agreeable to have a Pakistani team leader but we will need to have an assistant team leader who lives in Jalalabad. That person will be charged with much of the administrative responsibilities of assist in the trip and team member preparations. It is not realistic to plan to have those responsibilities undertaken by a Rotarian in a different country particularly when communications between the Pakistan and Afghanistan are so

difficult. The official team leader should still meet with the team in advance of the trip to assist in the Rotary orientation.

It is contemplated that all the team members (except the Pakistani team leader) will be sponsored by the Rotary Club of Jalalabad once it is formed. Until then, the Afghan team members can all be sponsored by the La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club in District 5340.

Candidates Recommended

I should first mention that there is a clear separation between the candidates recommended and the others interviewed. If some don't work out, we have others to choose from but in each case, it will be more difficult to put together a good program.

Dr. Mariam Akram Age 42 married-no children



This lady is an Ob/Gyn. Her English is excellent even though she has a slight stutter. She has spent time in India. Her husband is an Engineer. She is the only female who received the opportunity to interview. She will win our hearts. I do not have a professional placement program lined up for her but do not think it will be a problem at all arranging such a program in our District.

Dr. Khalif Ahmed “Behsud wall” Age 42 married with two children—youngest being 6 months



Dr. Khalif is a pathologist and assistant administrator of the University Hospital. His English is excellent and his demeanor will fit in well. Retired Pathologist and District 5340 Rotarian Dr. Heinz Hoenecke advises that he should be able to put together a program for Dr. Ahmed that will fit well within the organization Heinz founded, Pathologist Overseas, which serves developing countries. Also offering assistance is District 5340 Rotarian and Pathologist Dr. Art Mendoza.

Dr. Nasir Khan age 35—married with children—his family lives in Peshawar, Pakistan



This doctor is a pediatric specialist and has an interest in neonatology. Through our district contacts at Children’s’ Hospital we should be able to provide a meaningful vocational experience. His English is excellent and he is the administrator in charge of the Nangarhar University Hospital.

Mohammad Dost “Safi” Age 27 married with three children ages 3 to 10 years



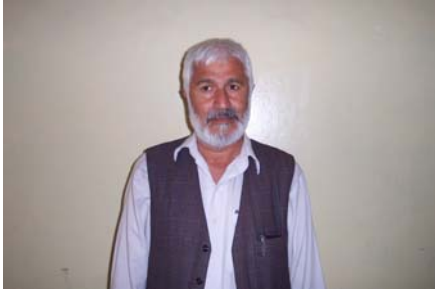
Professor Dost is a teacher of English as a Second Language at Nangarhar University. He is enrolled in our computer classes at NU. He can benefit from additional training in how to teach ESL. San Diego State University has offered a one-month scholarship in their intensive ESL teaching course. Professor Dost would benefit well from this. He is listed as a charter member of the proposed Rotary Club of Jalalabad on the documentation we provided to DGE Rauf. We can remove his name from the Charter list of Rotarians if that is what Chairman Lacy would prefer as a way to include him on the GSE team.

Mohammed Hamid Kadwal Age 27 married with no children



Hamid has a degree in veterinary medicine. He teaches physiology but also teaches English as a Second Language. We need to determine if he thinks he will benefit better from ESL training, vet vocational experiences, or both. He was not selected to be in the first group of professors for Internet training but he is always sat the computer lab. He has a thirst to learn. We can probably set up programs for him at UC Davis Vet School and at the Imperial Valley and at Blythe.

Mohamid Tahir Age 51 married with four children



Mohammad is head of the Agriculture Faculty at Nangarhar University. His English is excellent, he works part time for a US based NGO, and he has been elected to the Board of the Rotary Club of Jalalabad if we are able to get it chartered. We could remove him from the Charter list of proposed Rotarians, although we hope instead that as Assistant Team Leader, Chairman Lacy would accept him as a Rotarian and approve his age. He has e-mail access and some transportation within Jalalabad. He would be an excellent Assistant Team Leader for the GSE team. Rotarian Mark Shelton, Assistant Dean of Agriculture at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo advises that it will be beneficial to have Mohammad spend time at their agriculture facility and interact with faculty there. His university is seeking funding for longer term agriculture programs in collaboration with Nangarhar university and having Mohammad present at his university as part of Rotary's GSE program will assist in moving this collaborative effort forward.

Submitted by,

Steve Brown