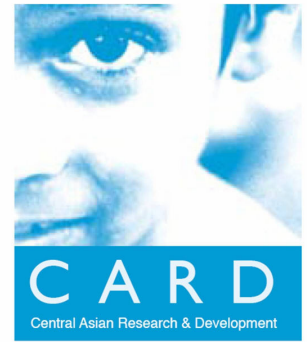


CARD - Azerbaijan

Central Asian Research and Development - Spring 2008



Dear Friends and Supporters,

Welcome to our latest newsletter about CARD's work in Ganja. Our work continues to focus on our three programme areas which are: Children's Welfare, Mental Health, and Vocational Training.

A big thank you to all CARD sponsors and supporters without whom none of this work would be possible. This edition contains an individual's story from each of these project areas, highlighting issues and needs that are being faced, how CARD is helping to improve lives and opportunities for the future plus a short word from some of our recent volunteers about their experiences. There are many ways to be involved and help support the work of CARD, please drop us an email if you are interested.

Neil and Lucy Atherton

Please note that the names below have been changed to protect the identities of the vulnerable people we work with



Children's Welfare Programme

Ramziya is a very determined, beautiful and sociable 3 year old who always steals the crowd with her smile. She is not speaking yet but she uses her face very expressively, especially her eyebrows, to communicate and attract attention!

Ramziya was brought to Ganja Babies Home by a midwife 3 years ago when she was just hours old. During the pregnancy her mother, a psychiatric patient, couldn't understand that she was pregnant and made other excuses for her changing shape. Her mother was accompanied to the maternity hospital to give birth and then went straight back to the Psychiatric Hospital where she has lived for a long time. (We continue to support her through our Mental Health Programme.)

From birth Dilshard, our Child Welfare Programme Coordinator, observed that Ramziya had club feet and began advocating for her. We helped her to get casts and splints and we saw her feet improved. She has been wearing special boots since she has been walking but now her feet are getting worse again. CARD is now planning a trip to a Specialist in Baku to investigate whether she needs surgery.

Volunteering

We are three girls from Norway that have been CARD volunteers the last four months working in the babies home as part of CARD's Children's Welfare Programme. We have also been involved in English classes at the Vocational Training Centre. We have had a great time here in Azerbaijan, met a lot of good people and made a lot of good friends. Even though we have had a hard and cold winter without water, we will miss Azerbaijan. It has been very interesting to get to know another culture and we have learned a lot. We hope we will come back to visit Azerbaijan in the future, time will tell....



Mental Health Programme

If you ever visited Ganja Psychiatric Hospital I can assure you that Valida is one of the hauntingly beautiful faces that you would remember for the rest of your life.

Valida is 28 and has a family history of mental health problems. Her mother was schizophrenic but cared well for her 4 children until she died during Valida's late teens. In her early 20's Valida really tried to make a new start for herself. She went to Baku, rented a flat, met someone and got married. But she had a difficult relationship with her new mother-in-law, and in the end she was asked to leave. When she tried to return she found out that her husband was dead! Although we don't know for sure, Valida always says, "Maybe his heart was broken that I left him and that's why he died". After this she had a few different jobs in cafes but each of them only lasted 2 weeks before they let her go. She doesn't know why. Unfortunately, she thinks that everyone else is ill but is unaware that she is. When she returned to her father's house her mental health was very poor and thus he quickly had her taken to the Psychiatric Hospital. She has now been at the Psychiatric Hospital for 6 and a half years and is involved in many of the different aspects that our Mental Health Programme offers, which is Coordinated by Flora. This includes regular weekly music, sewing, and painting classes, twice weekly feeding for the most under-nourished patients, and recreation/exercise sessions. She loves getting out of her secure ward and coming to classes whenever she can and she is brilliant at knitting and crochet. It's a blessing to have her in our classes.



To find out more about volunteering with CARD please contact us at: atherton@cotse.net

Vocational Training Programme

Our Azerbaijan Vocational Training Programme continues to develop and grow. We now have over 80 students attending classes in English, Computers, Carpentry and Carpet Making. The picture below shows students enjoying their end of term/ New Years party hosted by Sevil, our Programme Manager/ CARD Operations Manager. We continue to provide free courses for Genja's poorest and most vulnerable teenagers and find that many of them have incredible stories.

A parent of one of our new students came in during January to ask us for any advice we could offer to help her help herself. Her daughter is very bright and doing well in all subjects but her mum was concerned because, although she wanted to continue sending her daughter to our programme, some days she couldn't even afford to send her to ordinary school.

As she explained her story it became clear that she is a very devoted mother and that she has done an incredible job at raising such a bright young girl despite incredible hardships. Overcoming cancer, the loss of her husband, and the loss of her business, this woman's life is a testimony to the strength of the human spirit. Fortunately, CARD has been able to support this family by offering advice about jobs and by supporting the student's travel costs to ensure that she is able to consistently attend both school and English & Carpet Making classes at our centre. It's wonderful to be able to help meet the needs of disadvantaged families in this area and to provide opportunities for their children to receive quality vocational training as well.



Interested in sponsoring a project or individual? We need sponsors in all 3 areas of our work: baby sponsorship, Leyla sponsorship (mental health) or student sponsorship (vocational training). We'd love to hear from you. Please contact us at: atherton@cotse.net

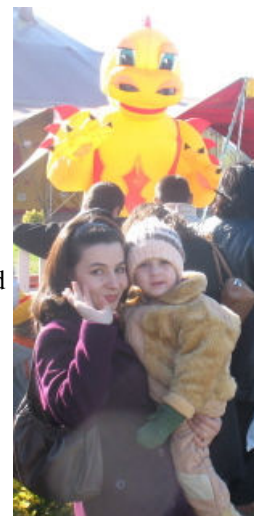
New to CARD? We'd love to keep you informed.....Please let us know by emailing us at: atherton@cotse.net

Changed your postal or email address? Please let us know by emailing Angela at: trustees@CARD.org.uk

Outings



The psychiatric patients don't get many chances to go outside the walls of the hospital and experience normal city life, so when we get the opportunity to treat them to a special event in town, we take it. In the late autumn we were able to take a group of patients to see a local symphony orchestra perform (pictured above). We were also able to take another group of patients and a group of children from the Babies Home to see a circus that was in town. Both of these events were such a joy, both for the patients, the children and for us. To see the looks on the children's faces as they watched the circus performers was priceless, and to see how excited the hospital patients were as we walked together to the symphony was such a delight. We love getting to treat them to these outings. It makes them feel special and it helps them to feel like they are a part of society as well. It's yet another way that we get to serve the most vulnerable in this area, and it's made possible because of people like you! Thanks to the generous giving in response to the idea of a Christmas Gift Catalogue by a group from London we were able to organize the circus trip and we hope to organize some more trips such as picnics in the summer.



Picture: Dilshard (our Children's Welfare Co-ordinator) with one of the children at the circus.

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