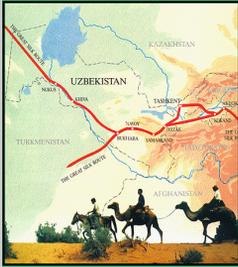


# Joint Development Associates International

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## Discover Afghanistan

Afghanistan lies on the Silk Road, a route that merchants have traveled for 2000 years between China, India and Europe. The country shares borders with Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in the north, Iran in the west, Pakistan in the south and China in the east.

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Dear Friends,

Tribes, clans and ethnic groups among Afghans make the culture rich and varied; and yet they are all Afghans. There are Tajik, Turkman, Pashtun, Uzbek, Hazara, Nuristani, Aimaq, Qizilbash, Baluch, Arab, Kirghiz, Kabuli - just to mention a few! They often live together with members of their own ethnic background and in addition to Dari, speak their "clan" language.

In northern Afghanistan there are villages where you find Afghan-Karakalpaks. These Afghans have "relatives" across the border in Uzbekistan, living in the autonomous region of Karakalpakstan.

Over the years, JDA has cooperated with The Blind Society in Karakalpakstan. They offer programs to the blind, near blind and disabled.

## Lessons In Braille

The emphasis has always been to offer assistance to the whole family, not just the disabled member. Blindness in this part of the world is often due to close family marriages. In Nukus, the capital of Karakalpakstan, one large apartment building accommodates an entire blind community of families. The conditions are appalling: overcrowding, no running water and inadequate outdoor sanitary facilities are typical.



The Blind Society works to alleviate these conditions. It offers training to the blind and campaigns on their behalf to ensure that their legal rights to education, compensation and as citizens are met by the government.

At The Blind Society children learn skills, are challenged to go to college and enjoy belonging to a community where they are encouraged to reach their potential.

Leadership training and instruction on their legal rights give the blind the tools they need to effectively participate in their communities and to apply to universities and colleges. As a result of The Blind Society's work, there are currently about 90 blind students in secondary schools. Adult education classes teach the blind to read and write in Braille. The organization has a modest library, and the members publish their own newspaper in Braille.



The organization works to increase public awareness of the challenges the blind face and the strengths this group of people can bring to the larger community.