**Project Summary**

**Describe the project. What was done, when, and where did the project activities take place?**

This District 5190 Grant # DG2223062 was initiated to provide financial and volunteer support to two NGOs [Non-government organizations] that are currently aiding Afghan  individuals and families that are in hiding following the collapse of their government last summer, 2021.  These supported individuals assisted in moving the international agenda to build a more stable Afghanistan and are now facing retribution from the Taliban as a result of their past partnership with the US.

The two organizations are **EVAC** and **Operation Snow Leopard [OSL]**

**EVAC**  is an all-volunteer 501c3 that works to protect, evacuate and resettle their group of 352 Afghans that are in hiding with the fear of imprisonment, torture and execution by the Taliban.  The majority are families with young children.  Not only are they unable to work because they are in hiding, but they are also faced with starvation, disease and instability associated with Afghanistan’s collapsing economy and extreme food shortages.  Many are also Hazara, an ethnic minority that is facing genocide.   Most of these individuals have immigration pathways to the US or other 3rd countries and have hope for a better life if they can survive their current situation and leave Afghanistan.

**Operation Snow Leopard** is a 501c3 group of private citizens working to evacuate our Afghan partners and their families including: interpreters, women leaders, human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, and other vulnerable minorities who have been stranded in Afghanistan after the collapse of the Islamic Republic August 15, 2021.  These people are actively hunted by the Taliban because they stood with the U.S. and against everything the Taliban represents.

To avoid capture, most spend no more than one night in a single location. Many live apart from their families to spare them the likely horror of seeing their loved ones executed or detained and never heard from again. The Taliban visit their homes almost daily, and relatives are often assaulted, tortured, and robbed for not disclosing their whereabouts. As fugitives in their own land, they cannot earn a living and only venture out in public in the most desperate situations. Operation Snow Leopard intends to honor the promises our country made to these people.

**What:** Due to the generosity of Grass Valley and surrounding communities, The Rotary Club of Grass Valley in partnership with multiple District 5190 clubs, provided a wide range of support to these at-risk Afghan Allies. The support included food, shelter, medical and educational resources, as well as assistance in the procurement of necessary identification and immigration documents. Specifically, the grant provide internet services to 21 families so that children in hiding can attend school, parents can improve language skills, search for jobs and prepare for their family’s future. We funded urgent medical care for 3 individuals to include an emergency C-section, medical testing for a woman’s rights activist and a man with spine injuries as a result of torture at the hands of the Taliban. The grant provided funds to improve food security and maintain secure housing. Individuals awaiting the ‘next step’ in their journey were able to obtain visa extensions so that they can remain in safe third countries while their US immigration cases finalize. A translator who is a high value target of the Taliban and his family, as well a medical student, received passport assistance, opening the door to the next step in their journey. In the midst of this effort, Afghanistan experienced a significant earthquake. The grant provided fuel for a mobile emergency response clinic.

The grant activities were completed in a circuitous manner due to the extreme importance of protecting the identity of the recipients from any Taliban retribution. OSL and EVAC have a network of local, on-the-ground partners that assist them in supporting and maintaining their respective ‘flock’ of individuals and families. The transactions were completed in Afghanistan. Direction for purchases, engagement of professionals, and in-person activities were lead and coordinated by EVAC and OSL leadership and carried out by trusted in-country partners. Because of the nature of these operations, not only did this grant provide the material support, but it also had a synergistic effect, improving processes and in country networks, connections and relationships. Each time a new problem or need arises, it requires both a monetary and human solution. The grant provided funding for multiple new challenges, which created an opportunity for new connections, lines of communication, partnerships etc. The more these NGOs are financially empowered to take action, the more capabilities they develop.

A rotary volunteer is now part of the EVAC team, coordinating further fundraising and helping with immigration casework. An on-going volunteer need that we are looking to fill is assistance with EVACs “on-call” and “emergency response” system. This would include frequent communication via secure internet messaging with the individual Afghans to assess and respond to daily life needs, maintain information flow, share logistical information, and improve processes, supply chain and general level of care provided. This role would also assist in triggering EVAC’s emergency response process in the case of medical emergencies and immediate security threats.

The grant was funded May 25 and grant ended the first week of July. Thank you to 5190 District Leadership for extending the grant deadline to July 31, 2022, at which time the grant summary is due.

**2. How many people benefited from this project?**

We are fortunate that we have been able to assist at least 60 + families (136+ individuals) between the two organizations. The total number aided is likely more, because of how large Afghan families are and how most are starving. The food and internet access were most likely shared with extended family in need. As I was reading through the invoices, I felt that each invoice contained a remarkable story.

**3. Who were the beneficiaries, how were they impacted by this project, and what humanitarian need was met?**

The beneficiaries of this grant were families and individuals that are in hiding from the Taliban following the collapse of the government in August 2021. This grant provided food packages covertly delivered to 18 families in hiding. The packages included enough food to sustain all family members for one month, including formula, diapers and other necessities for 4 infants. The grant funded internet for 21 families for two months. The internet will allow EVAC to provide educational classes and resources so that children in hiding and out of school for over a year, can continue their education. Additionally, the internet will allow parents to search for secure work and immigration opportunities, improve their language skills and prepare for resettlement into the US. The grant funded 4 months of secure housing in Pakistan for 5 families including rent and utilities. It also provided one month of food for the 5 families living there. Several high risk individuals were able to extend their visa applications or pay for passports as a result of the grant. These documents will enable future evacuation to safe countries. Urgent medical needs were met, including a c-section for a complicated birth which resulted in a safe delivery with healthy mother and newborn. The grant also funded an MRI for a man tortured by the Taliban, and medical testing for a young woman who is a women's rights activist.

priviledge

**4. How many Rotarians participated in this project?**

The Rotary Club of Grass Valley South was very fortunate to have 100% support of the Rotary Clubs in their area. The clubs in Area 4 include:

Rotary Club of Gras Valley South- Grant Lead

Rotary Club of Grass Valley

Nevada City 49er Rotary Club

Nevada City Rotary Club

Rotary Club of Penn Valley

Two Clubs in District 5190 contributed:

Rotary Club of Reno

Rotary Club of Truckee

We received two significant individual donations from community members.

**5. What did they do? Please give at least two examples, not including financial support provided to the project.**

Several club members spoke at meetings, proofread documents, participated in formulating a OFAC  [Office of Foreign Assets Control] reply. Members were instrumental in obtaining two individual donations from non-affiliated community members. One member is now a volunteer with EVAC. She is assisting them with further fundraising, congressional support and immigration casework. Members from other clubs met to discuss the feasibility of a partnership with a club in Pakistan. Early in the grant cycle, district and national board members met to discuss the feasibility of this project . The Treasurer of the Grass Valley South club is collecting all relevant documentation, ensuring timely disbursement of funds and ongoing fund documentation. The International Projects Chair prepared project proposal documents and maintained open and consistent communication channels with the grant recipients.

**6. If a cooperating organization was involved, what was its role?**

*A cooperating organization is any reputable organization that provides expertise, infrastructure, advocacy, training, education, or other support for the grant project.*

Two cooperating organizations were part of this district grant:

**Operation Snow Leopard** is one of the two grant recipient organizations. They provided by zoom meetings and written documents, a detailed summary of their most urgent and timely needs that could be met during the grant period. They provided guidance in terms of communication messaging to ensure anonymity of the individual recipients. They engaged interior on-the -ground resources to purchase and deliver food, pay rent and assist in obtaining required documents for movement to safer friendly countries in the region and beyond. OSL resources provided in the moment education to all of the Rotarians involved about the day to day activities of sheltered individuals. They kept track of their required invoicing and shared that information in a format that made grant administration simple and straightforward. The robust organizational structure both in the US and in Afghanistan and Pakistan helped to ensure timely distribution of resources provided by the grant.

The second cooperating organization is **EVAC**. EVAC engaged their local, in-country resources to safeguard the identities of the individuals and families receiving health care and other services provided by the grant. Representatives from EVAC met with the area Rotary clubs to provide information and to identify urgent needs that could be met via a district grant. They engaged their team of trusted local partners to ensure that rent was paid, food was delivered, and the anonymity of their ‘flock’ was maintained. The EVAC team shared some unique ‘flock’ family challenges during the grant period. Thankfully the grant had earmarked funds for medical care; as another baby was born by c-section and the grant was able to pay for pre- and post-natal care for them; coordinated by the US based resources and their Afghani partners. They had adequate resources to be able to provide grant required documentation.

Both organizations maintain a database of information about the persons they are assisting, and the resources provided and a variety of other data points. They use information gathered from their flocks to smooth and update internal processes, update important information about travel challenges and inform others. Both organizations use a variety of methods to communicate with the public. They both have and continue to develop strong networks across the globe to support their efforts to meet their stated missions.