



## MDF ambulance's wintery operation

**D**espite wintery conditions the Masawat Development Fund's ambulance is in full operation in the Charkent region, northern Afghanistan.

Equipped with snow chains for part of the mountainous journey, the four wheel drive vehicle continues to save lives, transporting patients to hospital located in Mazar-e-Sharif.

Masawat Development Fund president, Najaf Mazari says, "Snowy conditions make it difficult for our driver, but thankfully the four wheel drive can continue to operate in the snow and ice."

In spring many roads are inaccessible to a standard vehicle due to melting ice. Equally in winter, the snow makes it difficult for cars to access the remote region. Residents are often cut off at these times, with some choosing to relocate to Mazar-e-Sharif. For residents without the resources to relocate, life can be extremely difficult, especially when they are sick, injured or due to give birth. Residents who remain in the region have the option of giving birth at home without medical assistance or travel up to 14 hours on the back of a donkey in the freezing snow.

The Masawat Development Fund now offers another option for residents, a free transportation service to seek medical attention in hospital.

The MDF ambulance continues to be one of the only free ambulance services to operate in the region. Najaf says the ambulance mainly transports pregnant women, but has been called to transport a variety of sick and injured patients from young children to the elderly.

The ambulance driver, Noor Agha assisted in a road traffic accident, where four people were seriously injured. He has also transported a patient under police guard.

Najaf said Noor Agha has had close calls with patients nearly giving birth in the ambulance. One pregnant patient was reported to haemorrhage, but thankfully reached the hospital in time to save her life and her baby's life. On another journey, the ambulance became stuck on ice dislodging the bumper bar. The driver managed to manoeuvre the damaged vehicle off the ice in time to reach hospital.

Najaf is energised by the emergency operation MDF is providing for his hometown. "I like to think for every mother we save we save a baby's life also".

Najaf believes the success of the MDF is the strong partnerships built between the



Above: The MDF ambulance equipped with snow chains to ensure a safe operation in snowy conditions.

Australian team and the team working in northern Afghanistan.

"We are working with people we can trust, this is important to build MDF," he said. Najaf says that since donating the ambulance to the region 18 months ago, he has seen many different charities start up, but believes MDF is one of the only Australian non-profit charities who have remained in the area.

**Related coverage:**  
Our Shining Star page 3



A newborn safely enters the world with medical assistance



Above: Baby girl safe in hospital.

Left: Mother and baby boy return home in MDF ambulance after safe delivery in hospital.



Above: This wintery landscape taken from the MDF ambulance, as it continues to operate in snow and ice in the mountainous Charkent region, northern Afghanistan.



## President's message

Welcome to the second edition of our quarterly MDF newsletter. Thank you for your ongoing support.

We hope you enjoy reading about what we are working towards as a non-profit organisation, to improve the living standards for some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world.

As you know, we are funding a free ambulance service for residents living in the Charkent region, northern Afghanistan. It has been over eighteen months since donating this ambulance and we have seen a significant increase in patient numbers. With this increase we hope to expand our staff to cope with the higher demand of patient transfers. We are in discussion to employ a nurse to assist with patients during transportation. We need to raise more money to achieve this.

Each month we receive photos of patients transported to hospital in Mazar-e-Sharif. It gives me tremendous energy to see what the MDF ambulance is doing. When I see these pictures of the patients and the ambulance working, I always feel like doing more to help these people.

We continue to build partnerships in northern Afghanistan to strengthen our mission, to raise financial support to improve health services and educational resources in Balkh province.

A small amount of Australian currency goes a long way in Afghanistan and with your contribution we can all make a difference to improving the living standards for people who live without basic health services and educational resources.

We have an exciting year ahead with plans for another film night scheduled mid year. Plans are in place for our annual Afghan dinner scheduled for early August.

If you have any questions or want to make a donation log on to our website, or visit me at 461 High Street, Prahran or call on 03) 9529 2068.

**Najaf Mazari**

This newsletter is published by MDF. If you want to contribute or comment on any news contact news editor Nieve Dee: [nivedee@inet.net.au](mailto:nivedee@inet.net.au)

## Letter to the editor



Dear Friends of Masawat Development Fund,  
Thank you so much for the newsletter. I did enjoy it very much indeed. Most interesting to learn a little more about the area, and the "Donkey Ambulance"! We thoroughly enjoyed the last fund raiser in Dandenong & look forward to the cinema night. What a wonderful cause this is, and it is just a privilege to be even a tiny bit involved.  
With very best wishes for a most successful evening,  
Elenor McKenna

## How can you help MDF?

### Become a Member

There are many benefits to becoming a MDF member. You can have as much or as little involvement as you wish. You will be kept up to date via the website and by our quarterly newsletters about the work of the organisation, and you will be invited to attend events. New memberships cost \$20 (\$10 joining fee + \$10 annual membership fee) and subsequent annual Membership Renewals are \$10.

### Make a Donation

In Australia it is hard to imagine the consequences of dire poverty and damage caused by thirty years of war and unrest. However, the reality is that every contribution that we make, small or large can help improve the lives of the people in Balkh province. Your donations will greatly assist us to continue our work in Balkh province.

### Buy a book

You can support the work of MDF by buying one of Najaf's book. All proceeds from book sales donated to MDF.

### Attend charity events

Attend our fundraising events held throughout the year.

### Volunteer with MDF

Do you have a special talent or skill that could contribute to raising funds for MDF? You can join the charity organisation.

### Share on social networking sites

Spread the word on Facebook and Twitter.

**New MDF Blog:** <http://mdfcharityfund.wordpress.com/>

MDF Website: [masawatdevelopmentfund.org.au](http://masawatdevelopmentfund.org.au)

Catch up on news on either the MDF website or new blog, or connect to our social networking websites. Share our mission!



# Our shining star

Dan Cudmore shares the life of Noor Agha, the ambulance driver at the centre of the MDF emergency operation.

With a constant increase in patient numbers, the 24 hour emergency service has become a valuable medical resource for residents in the Charkent region.

This free medical service would not be possible without the dedication and professionalism of Afghan national, Noor Agha, who continues to save many lives.

Joining the Masawat Development Fund over 18 months ago, Noor Agha has proven himself to be highly skilled, operating the four wheel drive vehicle in all weather conditions. At times, the terrain is so steep the emergency vehicle is unable to reach patients. Mr Agha uses a custom made stretcher to carry patients to the vehicle.

As one of Masawat Development Funds most valued team members working in Balkh province, Noor brings skill and expertise to the MDF organisation with four years driving experience for another NGO based in the region.

On call practically 24 hours per day, Mr Agha makes 10 to 12 return trips

from the village clinic to the regional hospital in Mazar-e-Sharif each month. Each trip takes more than 6 hours return in summer and much longer in winter depending upon the degree of snow and ice on the roads. Recently he made three return trips to the hospital in the space of one day, driving for more than 18 hours to bring sick or pregnant women to the care of the regional hospital surgeons.

Mr Agha lives half of the year in Mazar-e-Sharif and the other half of the year he lives in the Charkent region, 50 km south of Mazar-e-Sharif. He has a wife and five children, three boys and two girls, who live and study in Mazar-e-Sharif. In Dari, the word "Noor" translates



Ambulance driver Noor Agha preparing a patient for hospital staff.

into English as 'a shining ray of light'. We count ourselves as fortunate to have Noor Agha as a key part of our MDF ambulance programme.



Village residents assist Noor Agha with a custom made stretcher used to rescue sick and injured patients in steep locations.



Noor Agha, behind the wheel of the 4 wheel drive vehicle used to transport patients from the Charkent region to Mazar-e-Sharif. The emergency service also transports patients home after receiving treatment in hospital.

## Ambulance station update

The Masawat Development Fund is planning to build an ambulance station in Sharshar Village. Najaf has donated land to construct the dwelling planned to house the ambulance. Working in collaboration with an architect based in Melbourne, the dwelling will include two rooms. One room for an office and one for a bedroom for staff to stay overnight. The plan also includes a two car garage for the ambulance. Building will commence as soon as the snow melts and roads become more accessible for tradesmen to travel from Mazar-e-Sharif to Sharshar village.

# Film Night Fundraiser

**O**n Sunday 1st December 2013, the Masawat Development Fund held a charity film night to raise funds for the construction of an ambulance station in Sharshar village in northern Afghanistan.

The iconic Classic theatre at Elsternwick was a perfect location and with the MDF committee providing homemade Afghan style finger food prior to the event, the scene was set for a great evening of entertainment.

Nearly filling the cinema to full capacity, MDF members and friends raised around \$1,250 to fund the second phase of the MDF ambulance project. The second phase involves the design and construction of a permanent under cover office, reception area and garaging facility for the MDF ambulance.

The documentary film 20 Feet from Stardom did not disappoint the audience, with over 120 members and guests settling into view the documentary based on the untold true story of the lives of backup singers who performed with some of the greatest musical legends of our time.

The film documentary directed by American filmmaker Morgan Neville, explored the unsung voices responsible



Delicious Afghan finger foods prepared for the fundraising event. Guests enjoyed Hakeema's homemade boulanee and pakora, served with a spicy mint chutney.

for shaping popular music of the era between the late 50s through to the 80s, something most of the audience could relate to.

The film also reflected on the conflicts, sacrifices and rewards of a career spent as a backup singer harmonising with others.

If you missed this charity event you can attend the next film night, scheduled towards the middle of this year.

Details for this event will be posted on the MDF website, or alternatively if you sign up to become an MDF member you will receive a personal invitation via email. Keep tuned and come along to support a really worthwhile event.

**B**oulanee is the Farsi word for "filled bread" and is an unleavened and stuffed turnover style flatbread from Afghanistan. The vegan flat-bread is either baked or fried with a vegetable filling, traditionally served as either an appetizer, side-dish, or main dish. Although boulanee is a traditional Afghan dish, there are variations of this staple savoury dish made with yeast dough, and filled with tasty fillings. Variations include, Turkish borek and gozleme, Greek calzone, and Indian samosa to name a few.



Najaf Mazari pictured with an Australian of the Year 2014 nomination certificate sent to him from Adam Gilchrist, the Chair of the National Day Council.

## Australian of the Year nominee 2014

**Najaf Mazari has been recognised for his humanitarian work, receiving a nomination for Australian of the Year Awards 2014.**

Nominated for his inspiration to humanity, as he is deeply involved in creating a better climate for asylum seekers in Australia and his humanitarian efforts with MDF, raising funds for medical and educational assistance for some

of the poorest and most vulnerable people living in northern Afghanistan.

More than 3,000 nominations were received by the National Australia Day Council, with each nominee recognised for leading in their field, inspiring others, or making a significant achievement. Although Najaf was not a finalist, he is very proud to receive a nomination.

### Launch of MDF website

The Masawat Development Fund is launching a new website. The new website will keep members and friends up to date with news and fundraising event. The website provides options to donate money and read about the past and present work Najaf and his committee have achieved since establishing the charity organisation in 2008. Log onto <http://masawatdevelopmentfund.org.au>



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# MDF committee 2014

# MDF

Masawat  
Development  
Fund

The Masawat Development Fund held their AGM last December to elect committee members for 2014.

Each committee member elected contributes a diverse range of skills and life experience to collaboratively improve the quality of each charity event, to enhance the cultural experience for members and guests.

With a broad range of professional backgrounds and personal interests, the MDF committee work to develop

strategies to maximise fundraising profits, and continue to establish future MDF projects. While each committee member is unique they share the MDF mission: to raise funds to provide health and educational resources for people living in the Charkent region, northern Afghanistan.

For a detailed biography on each committee member, log on the MDF website: [masawatdevelopmentfund.org.au](http://masawatdevelopmentfund.org.au)

**President**  
**Najaf Mazari**



Author and businessman, Najaf founded MDF with friends in 2008.

**Secretary**  
**Nancy Otis**



Nancy joined MDF in 2009. She has an interest in human rights and currently works in local government.

**Assistant Secretary**  
**Rod Parnall**



Rod is a founding member joining in 2008, with a background in arts and international education. He actively supports Afghan asylum seekers settle in Australia.

**Treasurer**  
**Dunstan Towing**



Dunstan is a founding member joining the committee in 2008. He has a background in financial management in the clothing industry.

**Officer**  
**Dan Cudmore**



Dan joined the MDF in 2010. He has an interest in social and economic issues common to developing countries. He has a marketing and management background.

**Officer**  
**Nieve Dee**



Nieve joined MDF in 2013. She has an interest in Afghan history and culture and has a professional background in journalism and education.

**Officer**  
**Fairlie Hinton**



Fairlie joined MDF in 2013. She has a nursing background and now coordinates post-mortem human tissue research facility, that supports research into brain and mind disorders.



## Annual Fundraiser Dinner An Evening in Afghanistan, 2014

Each year the MDF committee sponsors an Afghan Evening of traditional song, dance and cuisine that highlights the achievements of Afghan people living in Australia.

This year's event will coincide with Eid Al-Fitr festival, also known as the feast of breaking the fast. The occasion will mark the end of Ramadan.

Based on the nature of the Islamic lunar calendar,

Eid Al-Fitr is expected to be on or around July 28, 2014. Estimates are based on expected visibility of the hilal (the waxing crescent moon following a new moon) and may vary according to location.

If you are a member you will receive an invitation to this special event. For more details please visit our website: [masawatdevelopmentfund.org.au](http://masawatdevelopmentfund.org.au)

