

# Guldusi-Newsletter

May 2023

by Pascale Goldenberg

Dear friends of Guldusi,

In 2022 I was able to travel to the embroiderers' villages in May and September. Because of the amount of work involved, I don't write a newsletter after every trip, but limit myself to two newsletters a year when I travel more often. I am French, but both my French and German versions are corrected. Then they are translated into English. A graphic designer arranges the text and photos that I give her, and I hereby thank everyone who contributes to the production of this newsletter. If you would like the embroidery program to be made available to foreign friends, ask for it in other languages.

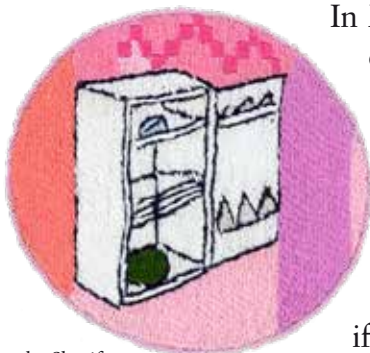


## Trips in May and in September

The trip at the end of September was problem-free. I spent very little time in Kabul, but was mostly in the villages, where I could meet with nearly all the embroiderers, although about 25 of the women are still in Iran. As in May, the general misery was clearly visible, and given the approach of winter, alarming. As a comfortable European, I was constantly confronted with the question of how the population can survive winter under such conditions. At present, only the embroiderers are earning money in their villages and thus able to contribute to their families' survival.

## Yakhtshol or Tolo?

In May 2022 I had some of the embroiderers fill out a questionnaire, to learn how many of them have a refrigerator or a TV, or both. The results, as compiled by the translator, were: 21 women have both, 38 have a TV, 3 have only a refrigerator, and 30 have neither. When I returned to the village in September, one of the embroiderers asked me humorously if I had brought refrigerators for everybody.



by Sharifa



by Zakia

## Violence against women

Ten years ago I asked the women what kind of future they wished for themselves and their daughters. The highest-ranking answers were peace, enough food, schooling for their daughters at least to learn to read, and less domestic violence.

The survey during my September trip asked: „How often are you beaten by your husband: never, every day, sometimes in the week, in the month, just once? Nearly all the women were outraged by this question. Only one admitted sheepishly to being beaten once a week; two others once a month. All the others claimed: never!



by Morsal



»Female Afghan« by Shahrbanoo

It is hard to believe that such a positive behavioral change has taken place in the last ten years. Presumably the reality is worse. When the economy is very bad, the men don't get work and cannot fulfill their duty as providers for the family. Under these conditions it is to be feared that enormous frustration and tension build up at home, which results in violence against women. The reality behind the women's statements, which were perhaps made out of a sense of honor, remains open.

## The February trip

I got a visa for early 2023, but during the Christmas holidays I doubted that I would be able to fly, as the Taliban had enacted a new law that made Afghan women despair.

To the right is the content:

The document was ambiguous. Were foreign women or Afghani female employees of domestic and international organizations forbidden to work? I asked my translator if she was willing to work with us and she didn't hesitate for a second to commit to the three days' work in the villages. That made it clear that I would go.

*Office of the Deputy Minister for Finance and Coordination  
Directorate of NGOs Coordination*

To ACBAR Organization!

Subject: Stopping National and International Organizations  
Female Staff Work till Further Notice

As you know, the Ministry of Economy bears the responsibility to coordinate and lead all the national and international organizations on behalf of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. As per the most recent information, there have been complaints regarding the non-observance of the Islamic Hijab and other rules and regulations pertaining to the work of females in national and international organizations.

The Ministry of Economy as per the responsibility it has/had in terms of application of the rules and regulations of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, instructs to all the organizations to stop the females work in their organizations till further notice. In case of negligence of the above directive, the license of the organization, which has been issued by this ministry, will be cancelled.

The above items are herewith stated to you to cascade it to your partnering organizations to proceed with their affairs as per the contents of the letter.

*With regards, (Autographed by)*

*Qari Din Muhammad Hanif – Minister of Economy*

## Valentine's Day

I flew on February 14, Valentine's Day. Social media was carrying this news: *All sweet shops, jewellery stores, florists and handkerchief salesmen in Afghanistan are required to demand a marriage certificate from male customers. No marriage certificate, no sale.* Confused, I asked how this statement was to be interpreted, and a dealer in Kabul told me that he was doing business as usual, as Afghans had not been informed about these instructions. The Taliban does not recognize Valentine's Day as a holiday; in any case one should celebrate privately and discreetly at home. Our translator's brother, who was relatively newly married, had decorated the living room with balloons and flowers and ordered cake from a pastry shop.



by Shieba



## Embroiderers and the quiet rebellion

We spend one day in every village, altogether three days in the three villages. In the course of the day, all the embroiderers come to the courtyard in which we (translator, employee of the association who pays the women, and me) spend the day. In winter the day starts later, as it is still very cold in the morning. We comment on the embroidery and I place the next orders. We take this opportunity to pay the embroiderers for the embroidered cloth that they delivered the last time. Payment is made at the meeting following the delivery of the work for Europe.

The women in this conservative region would never go onto the street to demonstrate their dissatisfaction. But the first examples of embroidery with rebellious themes have appeared. The women dare to embroider what they may not express verbally. I want to show you all these special embroideries, because they are so unexpected.



»I love freedom« by Khatema



»Open our schools« by Hosna



»Women like freedom« by Hosna



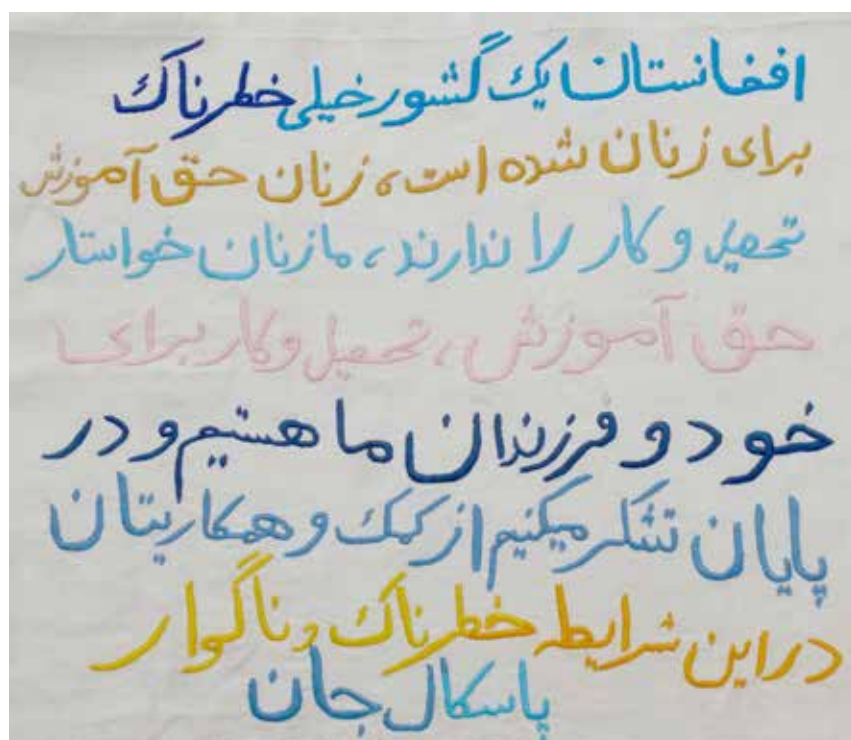
»We have a right to education« by Kathra

## Bechta

She is not an embroiderer, and I do not know her personally. But she had a 35 x 40 cm. cloth presented to me, which was skillfully and carefully transcribed with the following text:

*Afghanistan is a very dangerous land for women. Here woman have no right to education, vocational education and employment. Under these difficult conditions, which are unbearable, we are thankful for the help and cooperation with Pascale.*

As a matter of fact, I am the mediator, but the embroidery program Guldusi would never have succeeded all these years if sufficient embroidery hadn't been sold. And I would be grateful for your continuing interest and support for the embroiderers, so they can earn their livelihood through the embroidery program into the future. **Your loyalty through the years has been wonderful and I thank you heartily for your long support.**







## Feroza

For two years Feroza has been embroidering hands holding a bird. Last time she was given dark blue fabric, which she embroidered with dark thoughts. I asked her to comment and she explained: the man is weeping because there is no more bread (Nan) for the children (1). One grieving woman is leaning on the shoulder of another woman (2). A Taliban member is beating a woman because her Tshadri (full veil) is too short in front (3). A family sells a child, a girl, to enable them to feed their other children (4). She is forced to marry an old man (5). She may not speak and may not attend school (6).

I asked Feroza how she came to produce embroidery with such themes. She answered that she has seen these things in television news. Note: in the villages that I visit no one has sold a child.

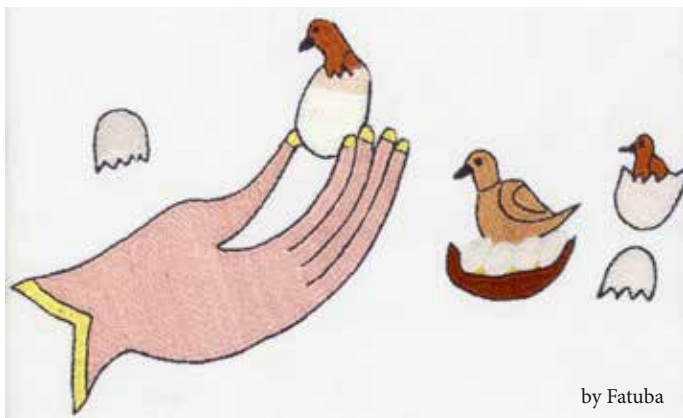


## And more women

During my visit many other women came to me, who are not embroiderers but hope that I can support them in their financial plight. Their destitution is diverse and unimaginable. The interpreter translated what the women reported. And our employee E., who is the only man who gets to see all the women, made a list of those whose need is greatest. At the end of the three days we held a meeting with our second employee from Kabul, to determine which supplicant could be helped with what amount of money.

In two cases it concerned children for whom free operations had been arranged, a plan which threatened to fail because the parents could not raise the travel money to get them to the hospital in Panshir. It was only 21 Euros for two people, round trip. Two other cases concerned mothers with children who had no home and thus had to search among their relations for a place to stay. A young woman who suffered from epileptic seizures 10 to 14 times a day had no more money for medication to stabilise her condition. The worst case for my feelings as a mother was the family with four children who as a result of polio could neither speak nor get out of bed.

We decided to offer financial help in 23 cases, of which only two involved embroiderers. The money for these families comes not from the embroidery sales but from contributions. If you want to support families in need, the account for donations is „[Stick-Not-Hilfe](#)“.



## Solar Incubators

Such encounters and my helplessness are an emotional burden for me, which grows with every trip. It is unbearable that the misery never ends and one can't see any positive developments. Nevertheless, sometimes we succeed in achieving lasting help. In order to free a family with 10 children from a dramatic economic crisis we had the idea of acquiring a solar incubator. Our representative in the villages gained his first experience in autumn and will implement this plan – help to self-help –

next spring. When he has mastered the technology for installing a solar incubator, he will present the incubator to the family. The device remains in any case the property of the DAI, our association.

With this device chicks can be produced from fertilized eggs within 20 days. Then they can be put up for sale, either immediately or later, when they have become hens. It is also possible that the family can then generate income from egg sales for their own livelihood. The family itself must pay for the feed. Our associate E. will monitor the raising of the chicks until the family can manage it independently. This investment was also made possible by contributions to Stick-Not-Hilfe.

## Film Documentary

Thank you to G.T. for the information on this film documentary, which I can recommend:

[FREE TO RUN,](#)  
[A FILM BY THE NORTH FACE](#)





## A young artist and the discovery of calligraphy

In September I met a young girl in Kabul, who had discovered that she liked to draw. She had already finished school when the Taliban came into power, so now she stays at home. I asked S., who can work in several artistic techniques, if she could portray the word „Bird“ („Paranda“) in calligraphy. This technique was completely unknown to her, so at first we had to go back and forth between Farsi and English in the Google-Translator to understand each other. In February she delivered five pictures that I considered a very successful beginning. I told her I would have the pictures embroidered and buy them from her. She agreed, and it was her first sale. For my next trip I ordered calligraphy for the word „angel“ („Frishta“).

Anyone who wants to help this young woman buy artistic materials and take an online English course can contact me and place an order (Calligraphy, Portrait with WhatsApp-foto) for 20 Euros.

With these cheerful and hopeful thoughts this long newsletter comes to an end. Thank you for your interest and support. I would be delighted if you pass on our story.

Best wishes,  
Pascale



Signature covered to protect the artist.