



5 days after being admitted to the camp, the men were much more relaxed, the withdrawal symptoms largely gone.

Laila’s Men

Story and Photographs
by Zachary Prong

Heroin addiction has ravaged Afghanistan, the world’s largest producer of opium.

In Kabul, underneath the Pul-i-Sokhta Bridge, hundreds of addicts live amongst the trash and putrid water. Onlookers watch from above as they smoke and shoot-up.

One woman, Laila Haidari, has made it her life’s mission to help these men. After nearlu losing her brother Hakim to heroin addiction she started Mother Trust in 2011, an NGO that runs a rehab center in Kabul.

Her work has brought her into conflict with many powerful people: Mullahs infuriated by a woman working with men, corrupt government officials seeking to treat addicts at their own clinics for profit; gangsters angry that she is attempting to wean their customers off heroin.

In January 2014, unknown assailants cut the power to Haidari’s home, broke in and tried to strangle her with a wire. Haidari managed to fight them off, grab her shotgun and shoot one of the men in the leg.

They both escaped. She still doesn’t know who sent them.

When asked why she continues to work despite the threats to her life, Haidari responded, “When I see the people, the mothers, the sisters, the daughters and parents suffering because of their loved one’s addiction, I have to continue... Maybe we can’t bring political changes to Afghanistan, but we can all try to change our humanity.”



The walls of the Mother Trust Camp are covered with photographs of the infected wounds many addicts suffer from as a result of intravenous drug use. Afghanistan, which produces approximately 90% of the worlds opium, has long been ravaged by drug addiction. According to the United Nationsa, more than 12% of Afghan adults are drug users, double the global average.



Immediately after being admitted to the camp, the men are shaved and washed. Most of them were filthy after living under a bridge.

“I have hope.”

- Zaman, 18, one of the addicts at the Mother Trust Camp, started using heroin not long after he dropped out of school at the age of 14. He eventually made his way from Ghazni Province, just south of Kabul, to the capital where he’s been living on the streets for years. He agreed to come to the camp with after meeting Laila because he wants to be with is family again. To be happy.



Laila tries to convince an addict to come to the Mother Trust Camp.



Laila consoles Qoorban Ali after he broke down on his first day in the camp.



The men inside the camp 5 days after first being admitted to the camp.



A portrait of Zaman shortly after he was admitted to the camp.