

AFGHAN WOMEN'S FUND

Courage, Compassion, Change

Fall / Winter 2015

A Word from Our Director



Dear Friends,
All of us at AWF appreciate your support for the needy and determined women and children of Afghanistan. We strive to give you regular reports so you will know where your much-needed contributions went and how your help changes lives. We hope you find this most recent newsletter informative and inspiring; we truly could not do it without your help. My most recent trip to Afghanistan took place in April and May of 2015.

Fighting and lawlessness continue to plague the country. Travel inside Afghanistan is slow, dangerous, and requires careful planning. In the middle of a trip we sometimes got word of fighting or other danger that necessitated changing our route or plans. Afghans live with these risks as a daily reality. As a result we were unable to travel to some places I planned to visit in person. Instead we asked villagers and project leaders to come meet with us whenever possible.

Peace, Fahima Vorgetts-Gaheez
Director, Afghan Women's Fund

Laghman Province

In previous years, we helped the sister villages of Surkhakan and Qarghayee create a new system for irrigation and drinking water and start a women's shura, literacy classes, vocational training, and a medical clinic. We are delighted at their additional steps. They have built a bigger clinic, freeing the old building for computer and English classes taught by several young local teachers to girls, boys, and adults. Elders told me proudly, "Our girls learn computers now, thanks to AWF's initiative and the children's hard work." Both shuras are functioning well. The head of Qarghayee Shura moved to another village and conveyed their great interest in developing similar projects there, which we would like to start as soon as possible.

Ghazni Province

Women involved in the two Ghazni shuras are working hard and progressing rapidly. They are adding more projects and members so their enterprises will benefit more families and individual women. Currently they make and sell several varieties of hand embroidery, and have added tailoring and a jewelry-making project. Their biggest obstacle is security. Fighting, bandits, and kidnapping risks frequently prevent them from taking their products to the large regional market. Instead, different villages do business with each other as a substitute, although this does not bring in as much income.

Please Help AWF Reach These Goals in 2015-2016

Malalai School in Logar Province met outside and in a burned out bus until 2009 when the elementary school we helped them build opened for several hundred students. They now educate several thousand, through high school, in the same space, and they have a waiting list! Classes are again meeting outside in tents. They have asked our help raising \$40,000 for a major addition to the building.

In many areas, the risk of assault by anti-education extremists makes families leery of letting their girls walk long distances to an after-school class or a library. Five schools affiliated with AWF have asked our help in creating small on-site libraries and computer work stations for their students, teachers and community, estimated at \$15,000 each.

The nearest medical care to Seya Chob is a 90-minute drive over rutted dirt tracks. Since 2013, the elders have asked our help in building and equipping a small clinic. They have already obtained land, and plans and permits have been secured. Once funding is collected (\$50,000), construction can begin.

Logar Province

The schools in Kulangar (Sher Mohammad Khan School) and Deh Now (Malalai School) won first and second place in a girls' school competition of academics, organization, cleanliness, and facilities. Both include high schools now. When we started in 2008, each had fewer than 500 students. Now Sher Mohammad Khan has 1,200 and Malalai has 2,050, both with waiting lists! Some classes are again being held in outdoors, others in hallways. The Malalai principal and families asked AWF to help add a third floor of classrooms. As summarized on page 1, this will cost \$40k for each school. I told them we would make raising this money an AWF priority. Please contact us if you can help! In the meantime, in addition to a year of school supplies, we donated tarps for shade, computers and printers, book shelves and several hundred books on history, geography, health, philosophy and other subjects, to create a small library.



Malalai School in Deh Now

Mir Taqi Shah: This village is making great use of the water system we helped them establish in recent years. As predicted, their crop yield has more than tripled since its completion, providing increased food, independence, and income. The school we built a few years ago thrives, used as the elementary school in the morning, for women's literacy and vocational training in the afternoon, and for men's meetings some evenings.

The women's shura in Mir Taqi Shah has graduated 80 women from their literacy and vocational classes so far. Because of its proximity to both Kabul and populated parts of Logar Province, this shura gets more outside business than most. On this trip AWF was able to give



Sher M. Khan School Principal & Students
with overflow tents on the left

them 20 additional sewing machines to support their expansion and further income-generation.

Wardak Province

Security concerns prevented me from going to Wardak, so I was grateful that leaders from several villages in the Seya Chob area could travel to meet with me. They are eager to build the women's clinic we have been discussing. Plans and logistics are finished, land is available, and the project is just waiting until we can raise funds: \$40k for building plus \$10 for equipment. The elementary and middle schools we helped them create are doing well. They emphasized that building a high school is a top priority as there are none in the area. It always encourages me to hear the dedication of such elders, mostly men, to children's education — especially education for girls.

Also in Wardak, the girls' school in Qala-e Jalil now has over 250 students. As you may recall, \$10-15 in supplies can make the difference between getting an education or being deprived of one as students cannot attend without providing their own supplies. Villagers sent us a letter lamenting the ongoing violence that prevents them from providing for their own children, and asking us to let you know that your help enables their young people to stay in school.

In the Chak-e District of Wardak, the shura, led by a very capable woman, is busy with beading, tailoring, and embroidery work. They make everyday clothing and special items for weddings and celebrations for local sale and

occasionally travel to sell at Kabul's larger markets. When they heard the success that the shura in a neighboring area has had in jam making, they asked our help in starting a similar project. While I was there we obtained equipment and a trainer so they can begin classes and production with local plums, apples, and grapes. Chak-e villages are far from any city and each other. It is very difficult, usually impossible, for women to travel, so AWF's ability to share successful ideas from one shura to the next is important for expanding opportunities. This new project will serve a local need for fruit preserves and create opportunities to employ more women. Having their own income gives women some economic independence in not having to wait for their husband to give them money for necessities, and pride and comfort in helping to provide for the family.

Members of this shura recently renamed themselves "Ikhlas Shura" meaning sincerity or purity of motive, referring to the 112th Sura of the Qur'an. It also provides literacy classes for women and girls' education in rented rooms in a private home. In June they emailed a special letter (below) to AWF supporters.

اخلاص علمی او گلتوئی ټولنهه

Ikhlas Educational and Cultural Shura

Afghan women need to learn something for improve their life and their economics, but Afghan government doesn't pay attention to their problems. On the other hand some charitable organization and people [do] help with afghan women. Fahima is one of those women who has strong humanity feel, and she helped in Educational and economical field with afghan women. We and [those] who benefit from this helping material (educational material, jam producing courses) praise her feeling and helping. These educational help encourage girls to come to school and their number increase from 11 students up to 22 students in the first class [grade]. Also the jam producing process...is continuing. In the first round, 20 women learned that how [to] teach the jam-producing from apple to the other women, [and] 40 more women now learn apple jam producing from [the] 20 women who was learned at the first round. Special thanks [to] Fahima and other charitable organization which help with Afghan women and we wish to this helping process will be continue for Afghan women in the future.



Baba Qushqar Sura Teacher
and volunteers

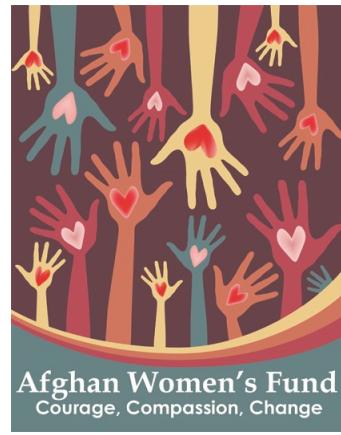
Kabul Province

Our new school in Mama Janak is the pride of the village. Even elders come to the literacy classes! A few years ago, no one in the village could read. When a letter or notice arrived, villagers had to walk at least 30 minutes to reach someone to read it. Now adults and youth in Mama Janak can fill this need themselves. However, several teachers walk great distances, 6 days a week, to reach the school. They asked for our help in purchasing several motorbikes so they can have more time for teaching. Please contact us if you can help!

The well we helped Mama Janak dig a couple years ago is now also providing irrigation for two additional small villages nearby, leading to an 80% increase in their income due to more abundant crops.

The clinics at Mama Janak and Mushwani Ulia are both functioning but are stuck in bureaucracy, waiting for permit approval for full time permanent doctors. Until then, a few essential services are provided by visiting doctors or nurses who occasionally come to the clinic.

In Mir Bacha Kot District, I had the honor of presenting 20 widows, graduating from tailoring classes, with their own sewing machines. Our dear friend and supporter Neptune Malikzai of New Jersey donated funds for 10 of these. Widows have a particularly difficult position in Afghan society and many are destitute, so income from sewing curtains and other goods will make a profound difference for them and their children. I was also able to distribute school supplies, continuing our previous work of providing them to over 4,000 destitute students in 11 villages of the Mir Bacha Kot District in recent years.



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The Istalif Shura continually strives to involve and employ more women. In addition to jewelry, tailoring and embroidery, they recently started raising chickens and vegetables, and preserving or sun-drying many of tomatoes for winter sales and meals. They have also started making sanitary pads. Menstruation is not talked about openly in Afghanistan but discretely making and selling these supplies makes it more possible and comfortable for women to attend school and lead active lives.

This shura has long been self-sustaining, but AWF supports its expansion when we can. On this trip I helped them start a leather crafting project. We had made plans by email, and I was able to purchase equipment and finalize a contract with a trainer while I was there. These new projects include literacy classes, with the first class of 20 graduating soon. In recent years this shura has also been sending representatives to large international "shows" to sell their jewelry and embroidery in China, India, Tajikistan, U.S., Pakistan, and Iran. These additional sales help them train and empower more women.

Thank you for making it all possible!

AWF is 100% volunteer organization committed to helping the people, especially women and girls, of Afghanistan forge a better future. This is a huge task and is not possible without your support, for which we are so grateful. Thank you for your help and trust these many years, and into the future.

COURAGE
COMPASSION
CHANGE

Courage to create a new and peaceful society.
Compassion for the women, children and all those who suffer in these times. Change through education, healthcare and sustainable employment.

PLEASE SUPPORT AWF

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