

# AFGHAN WOMEN'S FUND

## Courage, Compassion, Change

Fall 2018

### A Word from Our Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Once again it is time to send you a report of our work in Afghanistan. The projects you sustain help people who otherwise would have no means to better their situation. Your donations, large or small, to support education, health, and employment not only changes the life of an individual woman or girl but benefits entire families and communities in this war torn country. Thank you for your ongoing help!

I was in Afghanistan during April and May of this year, and stay in frequent touch with our many partners, and volunteers, year around. People across Afghanistan continue to build and strive, and we are proud to support their efforts. Please read our report below.

Peace,  
Fahima Gaheez  
Director, Afghan Women's Fund

### Dental Care Partnerships

While we have often reported on AWF's assistance to medical clinics and even hospitals, we have neglected to mention our newer work supporting dental care. Dental providers and clinics are severely inadequate across Afghanistan, with profound consequences. AWF gives supplies to dentists who are training others in basic



dental care so they can serve more people, thanks to a dedicated U.S. dentist. Each dentist we work with has also agreed to provide free care to at least five destitute people each week, a generous stretch as most of these dentists get paid very little in the best of circumstances. So far we are partnering with

one dentist each in Kunduz, Kabul city, Mir Bacha Kot, and Jalalabad. We hope to expand this work as donations and supplies allow.

### Helping Suicide Bomb Survivors in Kabul

There have been many suicide bombings in Kabul city in recent years. For example, in the Dashte Barchi section of the city, Da'esh militants have been targeting residents and gatherings. Each suicide bombing creates a profound emergency: The families of those who are killed and wounded are traumatized and left without that person's contributions to the family. The wounded need scarce medical care if they are to survive. Whole families, and communities are terrorized. Local resources are stressed; clinics and hospitals are understaffed and lack even basic supplies.



**A survivor who lost numerous family members in a suicide bombing meets with NVWO volunteers.**

AWF donates what we can to help, working through our partners in the Non-Violent World Organization (NVWO) peace group. The brave and hardworking young Afghans of NVWO, led publically by Faiz Ahmad Sidaq, quickly and securely take our contributions of



medical supplies and emergency funds to where they are needed. Currently, NVWO is helping several teens who had multiple relatives killed. AWF paid for these two young men, and several others, to complete a 3 month mobile phone repair course so they can support themselves.

## Kabul Province: Mir Bacha Kot

AWF continues to work with the villages and people of the Mir Bacha Kot area north of Kabul. In 2018 this included assisting a dedicated male volunteer who organizes and teaches literacy classes. He has now recruited a second excellent teacher so they may expand the classes. Approximately 88 adult women and a few men have completed basic literacy through these new home-based classes, supported by AWF's providing supplies and support.

Like so many schools in Afghanistan, the Mir Bacha Kot school (which AWF has proudly helped over the years) keeps expanding because so many families want their girls to be educated and there are not enough schools. Once again, it is educating far more girls than can fit in its building, even with two school shifts per day. So, as is common, about 300 girls and their teachers are again doing their best to conduct classes outdoors in the open.



While AWF does not have the funds to finance a much-needed school addition, we were at least able to provide two large classroom tents to give the girls and their teachers some protection from the sun, wind, and rain. Although more tents and room are needed, the new tents allowed the school to resume computer classes; the small computer room had been occupied by a full primary class that has now moved into a tent. Computer literacy classes take place morning and evening. The room is also sometimes used as the school "nursery." Teachers with babies under 2 years old pool their money to pay a trusted person to watch their children while they teach. Afghan Women's Fund also donated school supplies for about 750 girls whose families cannot afford them, and medical supplies to the school's in-house medical clinic for students and teachers.

## Kandahar Province

In Kandahar Province we are partnering with the PenPath Education Organization to open schools in remote, underserved areas controlled by the Taliban. PenPath convinced Taliban leaders to allow them to operate small primary schools safely,



but needed tents to serve as classrooms. AWF was honored to be able to donate two large class-room sized tents complete with walls and windows to provide some shelter for the students and teachers.

## Women's Shuras

I occasionally stay in touch with the various women's shuras AWF helped to start in years past. They are successfully self-sufficient now, so we don't work together as closely anymore. They report continued struggles with safety and hostilities, but working together to sustain their efforts. Several are expanding. For example, in a past newsletter we reported that the Istalif Shura had started a sister organization in Mazar e Sharif when a key organizer moved there. They recently reported that it is very busy, with about 500 affiliated women – matching the size of the original shura. And they have started traveling abroad to sell their items as well as in local markets.

Unfortunately we cannot report on any new shuras that AWF itself is sponsoring or helping to develop – funding and donations in the U.S. have dropped so much in recent



years that we do not currently have the money to give start-up grants as we did in the past.



## Nengrahar / Jalalabad

In the Khewa District of Nengrahar Province (often called Jalalabad after its capital), over 80 women graduated from 12-month long basic literacy classes in April. Many of them are widows. They then moved into an AWF-sponsored vocational training course over the summer. Due to local needs, it focuses on sewing clothing for local people. AWF donated sewing machines and fabrics for training and start-up, and hired four teachers. So far we have been the ONLY outside group supporting



education for women in this area. People were embarrassingly grateful, so happy to have access to basic education in this conservative Pashtun area. AWF also donated medical supplies to several Jalalabad clinics to support the victims of recent suicide bombers, as detailed in the section on Kabul earlier in this report

## Logar Province

The Malalai School that AWF helped to found years ago continues to be a leading school in Logar Province; we continue to support their dedication to educating as many local girls as possible. This trip, AWF donated school supplies and facilitated the donation of 12 new laptop computers I brought them from a U.S. nonprofit that refurbishes them and sells them inexpensively. Not the latest but great to learn on!

However, our happiness at the school's success is tempered by tragic news. On August 4th Mr. Malek Iqbal was killed while trying to broker peace and protect the school during local fighting among Taliban, Da'esh, and government forces. Several other local residents were killed as well. Not a wealthy man, Mr. Iqbal donated an acre of his family orchard for the Malalai school in 2008. He and his sons built a room atop the school, from which

they kept watch when fighting was near, to protect the school. In March 2018 he donated another piece of land for a women's shura and community center. The village has drawn up plans and raised some local funds, but neither they nor AWF have enough money yet to finish building. For years, Mr. Iqbal also helped organize local women's literacy classes and vocational training, setting up the classes, distributing the supplies AWF donated, and convincing families to send the women.

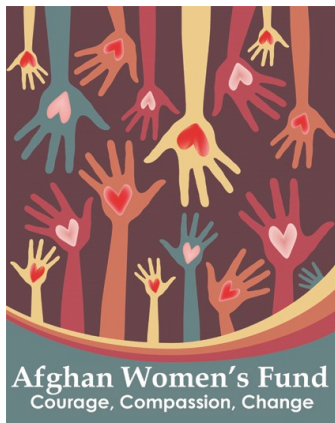
Afghanistan society is indeed male dominated, and women face many injustices. Yet Malek Iqbal was an example of the great hearts of many Afghan men. He had only a few years' formal education but was devoted to education for girls and women. His place will be hard to fill. His wife and daughter continue their involvement, his daughter teaching tailoring even to those with no money to pay. His sons pledged to ensure the school's future and finish the community center. It is



about a half kilometer from Malalai School and will be home to women's classes, meetings, and trainings. It will also serve as a *fateha horna* for women in the community – a place to gather and mourn and receive members of the community when someone dies.

In the nearby Deh Now village, about 120 women have graduated from literacy classes Mr. Iqbal helped to organize during 2018. They are now working hard in vocational training classes of 20-25 women each, learning tailoring, beading, and jewelry making.

During my trip there AWF donated 60 sewing machines to help them create economic opportunity for their families and community. Our next goal is to help them purchase more sophisticated jewelry making equipment (stone cutting, polishing, piercing) and perhaps equipment for preserving jams and pickled vegetables to eat during the winters and to sell.



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## Badakhshan

Our volunteer Masad continues to work diligently in Badakhshan to provide education for girls and boys. With the help other local teachers, he is providing daily education for almost 400 children, although without proper classrooms or other facilities. Some of the 800 students he started out helping are now old enough to walk to the distant official public school, but many girls cannot walk the several kilometers safely if they have no brother or cousin to walk with them. Also, government-run schools are often over-crowded to the point of not accepting students. Thus Masad's volunteer schools fill an important gap. AWF donated school supplies and some building materials again this year. The school we mentioned in a previous report is still under construction, slowed due to a lack of funds. He and we are working to raise money for supplies and expenses – if you can help please be in touch! We hope it will be completed by next spring.



[www.facebook.com/AfghanWomensFund](http://www.facebook.com/AfghanWomensFund)

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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[www.afghanwomensfund.org](http://www.afghanwomensfund.org)

Or send your tax-deductible donation to:

**AWF**

c/o Jean Athey

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