



AFGHAN WOMEN'S FUND

Courage, Compassion, Change

FALL 2021

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I am writing with a broken heart about the chaotic situation in Afghanistan since the Taliban have rushed back into power. With the new wave of brutality that has overtaken the country, we have seen horrific and surreal images of people fleeing across the airport tarmac, trying to climb onto planes and falling in their desperation to escape the atrocities of the Taliban. Throughout the country, women and children are being displaced from their homes, experiencing rape, torture, and murder, and fleeing violence. The life of every Afghan is at risk, especially women and children, and we at AWF stand together with them in solidarity and support.

Hundreds of thousands of innocent lives have been lost over 20 years of war and Afghanistan has gone through decades of human misery and tragedy after tragedy, including deaths caused by disease, loss of access to food, water, hospitals, infrastructure, and other indirect consequences of war. I am angry, appalled, and disheartened by the unfathomable withdrawal without a proper exit strategy which has left the 35 million Afghans in grave danger as the Taliban took control of Afghanistan on August 15th. Since then, tens of thousands of people are in hiding, fearing for their lives, and moving from place to place to avoid the Taliban's persecution. Although the Taliban announced an amnesty,

their foot soldiers still raid homes, terrorize people, put them in jail, or just kill them on the spot. The Taliban are beating journalists who report from the streets.

Since the Taliban took over, most government offices are closed, banks' hours are limited, and the salaries of government employees are unpaid. The Taliban announced an all-male interim government, and most women who were in high-ranking positions are forced to stay home. Everyone's life is controlled by fanatic radical religious groups who have no knowledge of how to govern. There is a degrading and depressing political environment inside Afghanistan, and many people feel hopeless and desperate. Afghans are protesting on the streets of several cities against their violence and harsh laws -- many of the protests led by women.

Many families are without income and desperate to put food on the table, and some are so desperate to save the lives of family members that they are forced to sell their own children. Our volunteers are carefully delivering food and emergency aid to families and internally displaced people. The Taliban police are everywhere, and we don't want to attract attention.

Although it feels like Afghanistan is in a very dark place, as one volunteer put it, "We will lighten up our lives even if it is with a candle." We, the Afghan Women's Fund, will hold that candle and find ways to help people, especially women, to be educated and self-sufficient.

A Word From Our Director

AWF OFFERING HELP

Education Continues

AWF still is, and will continue to be, on the ground, always engaged despite the risks. When the Taliban were in power previously (1996-2001), they closed all schools for girls, but there were tens of thousands of clandestine schools; people were using their basements, living rooms, and yards as teaching spaces. This time the Taliban promised that they won't close the girls' schools as long as girls respect the Islamic dress code, and the schools don't teach anti-Islamic curriculums. Afghans are very resilient people. They will find ways to succeed, and we, the AWF team, will stand with them.

We have started hundreds of literacy and vocational training classes over the past many years and helped tens of thousands of girls with their education, and we will continue to do so. Education is the only way to win over oppressive ideology. If they are given the opportunity, Afghan women will bring the ray of hope, the ray of light, and the light of success to their respective communities. Afghan women need helpful partners to go ahead, to go forward. Let's be partners with Afghan women.

Most of our work is in rural areas where the Taliban had maintained power for years. We have worked with villagers who are starving for education and a better life under difficult circumstances. Here are a few examples of our work in 2021.



LOGAR PROVINCE

In March/April 2021, we donated school supplies to thousands of destitute students of our three schools in Logar (Malalai, Sher Mohammad Khan and Mosayee) and paid teachers' salaries.

KABUL NORTH

Thousands of girls in schools in Mir Bacha Kot, Mamajanak, Mushwanie Ulia, Saraye, Daku, and many more in the north of Kabul received donated school supplies.

GARDEZ (Paktia)

Eight literacy classes and vocational training (tailoring and sewing) for women were completed in August 2021, and some women started to use their new learned skills to be productive and financially independent.

NANGARHAR PROVINCE *Achin District*

To supplement the first girls' school we started in 2019, which was operating in the open, under tents and on rented patios, we started to repair a previously constructed but badly deteriorated



building and the construction of a new school on land donated by the villagers in February 2021. The beautiful 18-classroom school was completed in September and opened as our newest and the only girls' school in that area. There are over 500 girls attending our Achin girls' school and more are to be enrolled.

BADAKHSHAN PROVINCE *Shaghnan District*

With the help of our wonderful volunteer, Masad, a small home was repaired to be used as a school for girls. As of now, 100 girls between the ages of 7-14 are attending our school. The wait list is growing, and we are working to raise funds for more girls to be enrolled.



New school in Achin

Immigration Applications

We have experienced heartbreak within our organization as four of our volunteers were killed, a young teacher was molested, and others were beaten in the past few months. Sadly, one young man committed suicide. As we grieve for these volunteers, we are working tirelessly to try to evacuate the volunteers at highest risk.

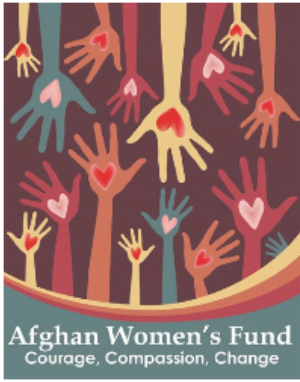
We have applied for immigration applications (humanitarian petition #131) for 54 people whose lives are in immediate danger. Each petition cost \$575/person, and we raised enough funds to cover these application fees. Our goal is to get these 54 people out of Afghanistan and bring them to the U.S. They are loyal volunteers who dedicated their time, energy, and knowledge with a passion to help us in our mission. We feel responsible for their well-being, for their lives, and for their children's future.

We are hoping that visas will be issued soon to enable them to come to the U.S. We need your help, first, to cover the cost of airfares for each of them. Once they come here, we will initiate a campaign to help them settle. Given that they are "sponsored" refugees, they will receive no government assistance or aid from the large refugee assistance organizations. Until they come here, we will do our best to keep them alive.

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Badakhshan Shaghnan girls classroom



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RETURN SERVICES REQUESTED



www.afghanwomensfund.org

We want to thank each and every one who reached out to us and offered love and support. We also want to thank all our donors, our supporters, our sponsors, and our wonderful immigration attorney Zachary Sanders, who offered his service pro bono to help us with this urgent matter. We also appreciate the support that attorney Angela Bortel and attorney Stephanie Morales have given us.

Library and lab (left); first day of school (right).

Thank you all for your ongoing support, you all have helped AWF for years to bring some light to the lives of Afghan women and children.

We look to you again to continue your support during this crisis. Any donation will be appreciated. You can donate by clicking on the link below.

As always, we thank you for your generosity and compassion. we take comfort in knowing that you will continue to stand with our sisters in Afghanistan and that they are not alone in their pain and struggle.

