



Fact Sheet

Office of the Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues
Washington, DC
June 4, 2008

U.S. Commitment to Afghan Women: The U.S.-Afghan Women's Council



In January 2002, President George W. Bush and President Hamid Karzai announced the creation of the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. The Council promotes public-private partnerships between U.S. and Afghan institutions and mobilizes private sector resources to help Afghan women. Specifically, the Council seeks to identify concrete actions to bring real and practical benefits to the women of Afghanistan and to enable them to participate and take leadership roles in the political and economic life of their country. To this end, the Council focuses on four areas: political leadership and legal awareness, economic empowerment, education, and health. In 2006, it added a special children's initiative, *Ayenda*. The Council alternates regular meetings between Kabul and Washington, DC to discuss programs and priorities for assisting Afghan women and to review progress. Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky co-chairs the Council with the Afghan Foreign Minister and the Afghan Minister of Women's Affairs.

Since the Council's inception major accomplishments include:

Education

Women's Teacher Training Institute. At the opening of UNESCO in 2003, the First Lady announced USAWC's initiative to establish a Women's Teacher Training Institute (WTTI). In September 2004, WTTI opened at Kabul University. \$10 million was dedicated to WTTI's first program the Afghan Literacy Initiative. An additional \$10 million was also made available for the Learning for Life program which helped teach basic literacy and numeracy to women in rural areas of Afghanistan. From 2008-2013, \$40 million will be made available by USAID, in part, to carry forward the work of WTTI by Afghanistan's National Literacy Center which will expand its mission to include priorities identified in the Afghanistan National Education Strategic Plan. (USAID Funded)

International School of Kabul (ISK). Also announced by the First Lady at UNESCO, the International School of Kabul opened September 2005 and is designed to provide Afghan children, grades K-12, with a first-rate education through U.S.-style curricula to help prepare them for higher education and leadership roles. Original contribution in 2004 from USAID was \$3.8 million. In 2007, USAID provided an additional \$4.7 million to support the school.

The American University of Afghanistan. This multi-year initiative established a University, which opened in March 2006, offering English-language business, management, information technology and other professional courses and encouraging the interchange of ideas between Afghanistan and the United States. In June 2008, the First Lady announced in Kabul that USAID will sustain its support of this institution with an additional \$40 million over the next five years. This funding will enable the University to offer new courses, provide scholarships, and continue the development of its campus.

Afghan Teacher Education Project (ATEP). In cooperation with the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, USAWC supported the pilot phase of ATEP at the University of Nebraska which provides training for Afghan women educators and teachers.

U.S. Leadership Management and Computer Education. In 2002, USAWC brought 14 women from various Afghan government ministries to multiple cities in the United States for an educational exchange program. During their stay, they received training in computers, proposal writing, communications, and leadership management.

Computer Assistance. Microsoft facilitated a donation by DELL Computers of \$100,000 worth of computer equipment and software with teaching applications to support the Women's Teacher Training Institute, the International Association of Women Judges, the Ministry of Education and the Women's Resource Center in Kabul.

Legal Training/Political Participation/Leadership

Laura Bush Afghan Women's Leaders Fund. Established in May 2006 by USAID, the Fund provides Afghan women leaders with necessary resources to participate in key training and conferences regionally and in the West.

Political Training and Leadership Exchanges. Between 2004 and 2006, USAID, the Department of State, and Embassy of Afghanistan sponsored a number of exchanges and delegations of Afghan women to attend key training/conferences including plenary sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, the Global Summit of Women in Mexico City and Seoul, Korea, as well as delegations to the United States for International Women's Day.

Family Law Study. In cooperation with USAWC, the Woodrow Wilson Center and RAND Corporation researched and published a document, pro-bono, titled "*Best Practices" Progressive Family Laws in Muslim Countries*, that depicts family laws in 12 Muslim nations.

Afghan Women Leaders CONNECT. Led by Council Member Diana Rowan, *CONNECT* supports Afghan-led women NGOs and legal training institutions that provide training in Afghan civil law/civil procedure codes and international conventions on civil rights. It has also supported the Afghan Women Judges Association (AWJA) legal aid clinic in Mazar-e-Sharif which provides free legal counsel to 100 vulnerable women each year and increases public awareness about women's rights.

Afghan Women Judges Training. Since 2004, three training programs for Afghan women judges, funded by the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), in partnership with the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ), have provided visiting Afghan women judges with on-site training in family, criminal and civic law.

International Association of Women Judges. Grant from the State Department (INL) supported legal and judicial awareness classes in 2005 for 300 high school girls and their teachers in Kabul.

Women's Resource Centers. A total of seventeen centers are completed (one built, in part, by a contribution by Time Warner). Asia Foundation was awarded a \$2.5 million grant in December 2005 to help build capacity at the Centers and implement new programming. \$1 million was contributed by the Council in 2005 to provide the following services:

- American Councils for International Education (ACIE): ACIE conducted a project to expose Afghan educational administrators and community leaders to different approaches in education and literacy training. The workshop was held at California State University Chico. The participants returned to Afghanistan and conducted training sessions at the Women's Resource Centers.

- World Learning (WL): WL, in partnership with the Afghan Center Kabul, conducted leadership training for six Afghan women at Bluefield College in West Virginia. Council Member Caroline Firestone generously donated DELL computers to these women to help further their training back in Kabul.
- University of Delaware (UD): UD partnered with the Afghan Institute for Learning and Creating Hope International in a program to prepare women to take leadership positions in the Women's Resource Centers.
- Women for Afghan Women (WFAW): WFAW worked with Afghan women entrepreneurs to train them in designing and manufacturing products that can be sold in the United States.
- Great Lakes Consortium for International Training and Development (GLC): GLC, a component of the WSOS Community Action Commission, in partnership with the Reconstruction Authority for Afghanistan (RAFA), conducted a program to foster business development by women in Afghanistan.
- Institute for Training and Development (ITD): ITD's program enhanced the capacity of ten Afghan women educators and NGO and Women's Resource Center workers to educate women and girls and to manage the educational services provided by their organizations.

Afghan Women Leaders CONNECT: *Connect* has dedicated new resources to expand the existing Women's Resource Center in Bamiyan to enhance services for women in that province.

Economic Opportunities

Doris Buffet/The Sunshine Ladies Foundation. This contribution helped with the completion of a school in Kabul, supported *Arzu* carpets and assisted internally displaced people while providing them with essential training programs such as classes on installation of solar paneling. She also generously supports the Initiative to Educate Afghan Women, a four-year degree program for Afghan women ages 18-22.

Institute for Economic Empowerment of Women/ Northwood University. Led by Council Member Terry Neese, the Institute teamed up with Northwood University to provide Afghan women business owners with a unique training program in marketing and entrepreneurship. Program participants spend time shadowing women business owners in the U.S. and learn how to open a small business. First program commenced in August 2007; the next is scheduled for summer 2008. The Institute has expanded its program to assist women entrepreneurs from Rwanda.

The New Hudson Foundation (NHF). NHF, established in 2005 by Council Member Caroline Firestone, invests in organizations, programs and people dedicated to providing opportunities for the advancement of the health and well-being of vulnerable people, especially Afghan women and children. Some of NHF's projects include school upgrades, tree planting, hospital restoration and management and support for the Afghan Red Crescent Society. NHF also generously supports U.S. servicemen in Afghanistan by donating items such as ipods, DVD players and videos.

Artemis Project/The Garvin School of International Management at Thunderbird University provides 15 Afghan businesswomen with advanced entrepreneurship training. Over a 2-year period, the Garvin School continues to mentor the women to help them develop business concepts and provides expertise to help them become mentors/teachers in their homeland. The next class is scheduled to begin in fall 2008. Additionally, in March 2008, Goldman Sachs, a global banking investment firm, announced a historic global partnership called "10,000 Women," which will provide 10,000 underserved women in predominantly developing and emerging markets with business and management education. Goldman Sachs has committed \$100 million over 5 years to this program. Thunderbird University and the American University of Afghanistan are among the program's first partners.

Arzu Carpets. This program provides training and literacy skills, to Afghan women in the hand knotted Afghan carpet industry. Over 2050 people are currently in the program and *Arzu* has expanded its operation to Bamiyan Province. With support from USAID, *Arzu* has more than doubled initial investments. *Arzu* has been profiled in *Time Magazine's Global Business World Briefing*, *Forbes*, *The Financial Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Wall Street Journal* and was featured in *Town & Country* and *Traditional Homes*.

Microcredit Loans. In 2003-2004, Daimler Chrysler's contribution to the Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA) opened seven community banks in Herat Province providing critical support to women with access to microcredit loans.

Agricultural Entrepreneurship Program (AEP). Initiated by the U.S. Departments of State and Agriculture, the AEP trained Afghan women at the University of Nebraska in farming and agricultural techniques, as well as business management including access to micro-loans.

Media

PBS, *Afghanistan Unveiled*. After PBS purchased the rights to the film, *Afghanistan Unveiled*, and broadcasted it over two hundred PBS affiliates, the film was nominated in July 2005 for an Emmy in the "News and Documentary" category. PBS and Council Member Caroline Firestone helped bring five of the original camera women to New York for the September 19 award ceremony. Council Member Pat Mitchell continues to work with the journalists and is exploring ways to support future endeavors.

Health

Burn Prevention Campaign. TriWest Healthcare Alliance has teamed up with the Council to launch a nationwide public awareness and burn prevention campaign for Afghans. Program launched in August 2007.

Community Dental Project. The New Hudson Foundation linked up with the International Medical Corps to establish Afghanistan's first community dental care program in Kabul. Program commenced in November 2006.

Health Training. Freddie Mac supported a project through Future Generations in Bamiyan Province that provided accelerated literacy and health skills to village women and provided refresher training to community health workers.

Herat Burn Center. Initiated by Council Member Peter Saleh, the Herat Burn Center opened in 2005, with support from the Defense Department, specializing in treatment for self-immolation victims.

Afghan Family Health Book. In 2004, the Department of Health and Human Services in cooperation with LEAPFROG Enterprises Inc. launched the "Afghan Family Health Book". This "talking book" provides useful and practical information about health practices and hygiene, focusing on health promotion and disease prevention. The books have been distributed via hospitals, clinics, and women's centers in Afghanistan. (DHHS funded)

REACH Program/Midwifery Training. In 2003, USAWC contributed \$5 million to the pilot phase of USAID's Rural Education and Community Health Care Initiative (REACH) which provided accelerated health basic literacy training for women and girls to become midwives and community health worker throughout Afghanistan.

Children

***Ayenda* – the Afghan Children's Initiative.** In March 2006, Council Members Tim McBride and Shamim Jawad launched *Ayenda*, a special project of the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. The project seeks to raise private resources to help meet the critical needs of Afghan children. To date, \$400,000 has been raised. *Ayenda* has funded Afghan music learning books, supported the Aschiana Foundation, a landmine-free soccer field, and will be establishing the *Ayenda* Learning Center in Bamiyan in fall 2008.

TriWest Healthcare Alliance. Led by David and Cathy McIntyre, TriWest will support burn treatment for Afghan children at the Herat Burn Treatment Center in Afghanistan.

Aschiana Foundation. USAID supported the Aschiana Foundation in its efforts to build a new center to educate disadvantaged school children in Kabul. Land was purchased and initial construction of a multi-story center is currently underway.

Meetings

Washington DC, January 17, 2008

Kabul, July 18, 2007	Washington, DC July 5, 2006
Kabul, March 28-April 1, 2005	Washington, DC, Oct. 17-18, 2005
Kabul, February 24-26, 2004	Washington, DC, June, 15, 2004
Kabul, January 8-9, 2003	Washington, DC, July 15-16, 2003
Washington, DC, April 24, 2002	

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