

# AFGHANISTAN

## OUR WORK IN AFGHANISTAN

### STATUS OF WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

THE RECURRING VIOLENCE IN AFGHANISTAN HAS LEFT MILLIONS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS DISPLACED AND WIDOWED. THE INFLUENCE OF THE TALIBAN AND COMMON DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES OFTEN MAKE IT DANGEROUS FOR WOMEN TO SEEK EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE SERVICES, EMPLOYMENT, OR, IN SOME CASES, EVEN TO LEAVE THEIR HOMES.

Afghan women have few legal rights, and marriage, inheritance, custody, divorce, and domestic violence laws provide them with few protections. Afghanistan has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, and Afghan women often face gender-based violence such as forced marriage, sexual and domestic violence, and the practice of *baad*, or the exchange of women and girls as payment to settle disputes. Women and girls who participate in public life by running for office, attending school, or speaking out about their rights often become targets for extremist groups.

### WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL IN AFGHANISTAN

JOB SKILLS ALONE ARE NOT ENOUGH TO EMPOWER WOMEN: THEY MUST KNOW THEIR RIGHTS, BE ABLE TO SPEAK OUT ABOUT THEM, AND HAVE RESOURCES TO HELP THEM MAKE DECISIONS BEFORE THEY CAN USE VOCATIONAL SKILLS TO CREATE LONG-TERM ECONOMIC STABILITY IN THEIR LIVES.

Women for Women International first opened its doors in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2002. Since then, we have trained 45,284 women and provided microcredit to 67,846 women in six provinces.

Today, our country office headquarters is located in Kabul, with a satellite office in Jalalabad. Our work is concentrated in Kabul, Parwan, and Nangarhar provinces. In 2014, an estimated 6,879 women in Afghanistan will be served through the Women for Women International program.

STRONGER  
WOMEN,  
STRONGER  
NATIONS

### OUR MISSION

In countries affected by conflict and war, Women for Women International supports the most marginalized women to earn and save money, improve health and well-being, influence decisions in their home and community, and connect to networks for support. By utilizing skills, knowledge, and resources, she is able to create sustainable change for herself, her family, and community.

## WHAT WE DO: OUR PROGRAM

WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL'S 12-MONTH TRAINING PROGRAM PROVIDES POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY, AND SOCIALLY EXCLUDED WOMEN IN COUNTRIES AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE WITH THE VOCATIONAL SKILLS, HEALTH INFORMATION, AND RIGHTS EDUCATION THEY NEED TO OVERCOME POVERTY, MAKE HEALTHY DECISIONS, AND BUILD LOCAL NETWORKS TO ADVOCATE FOR THEIR RIGHTS.

When women are able to sustain an income, be well, make decisions, and have social networks to support them, they develop the confidence they need to transform their lives, families, and communities. Our program promotes women's social and economic empowerment as the key to building more peaceful and stable societies.

Program participants are assigned to a group of 25 women who meet bi-weekly to engage in learning together. They receive life skills training, including lessons in health awareness, decision-making, negotiation, and civic participation. Women also learn business and vocational skills and gain access to income-generating activities that enable them to move towards economic self-sufficiency.

All of the trainings are led by local trainers and tailored to local contexts and markets. Prior to vocational training, numeracy training covering fundamental arithmetic skills is offered to participants identified as innumerate.

Every month during the training program, each participant receives a small cash transfer as a condition of participating in the program. Participants are free to use these funds however they wish. Many use them to purchase medicine, food, clothing, or transportation, to pay tuition fees for children, or to invest in starting a small business. Women for Women International also encourages participants to save a portion of their monthly training stipend.

## AFGHANISTAN COUNTRY OFFICE

STARTED: 2002

HEADQUARTERS: Kabul

ADDITIONAL OFFICES: Jalalabad

PROGRAMS IN:

Kabul, Parwan, & Nangarhar

## AVERAGE

### PARTICIPANT PROFILE

AVERAGE DAILY INCOME: \$0.16

CHILDREN IN CARE: 3

ILLITERATE: 88 percent

ATTENDED PRIMARY SCHOOL:

9 percent

AGE: 18-50 years

## VOCATIONAL SKILLS & TRAINING

Animal Husbandry

Agriculture

Tailoring

Rug Weaving

Handicrafts

## BUILDING ALLIES: MEN'S ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT REQUIRES WIDESPREAD SOCIAL CHANGE THAT INVOLVES BOTH MEN AND WOMEN. OUR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS OFTEN NEED THE SUPPORT OF MALE RELATIVES AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM, USE THEIR NEW KNOWLEDGE, SHARE IN DECISION-MAKING, AND MAKE CHANGES IN THEIR LIVES. IF MEN ARE NOT EDUCATED AND ENCOURAGED TO RESPECT WOMEN'S RIGHTS, WOMEN CAN EASILY FAIL IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO MAKE THESE CHANGES.

Afghanistan is one of five countries where Women for Women International has successfully piloted a program to engage men as allies in women's empowerment by improving their knowledge about some of the health, social, and economic issues that can negatively affect the situation of women. Afghanistan is one of the most challenging countries for Women for Women International to implement its women's empowerment program, due to significant religious and cultural barriers. We engage community leaders, family elders, and *mullahs* (Islamic religious leaders) to assist in overcoming such barriers, as they have tremendous influence over the attitudes, thinking, and behavior of other men in Afghanistan.

We focus on educating them about the value of women's economic engagement, social protection, and rights from an Islamic perspective. Verses from the Quran that promote women's value in society are discussed when training *mullahs*, and they, in turn, often discuss these with other men during Friday prayers.

Providing men with the knowledge and resources necessary to promote behavior change in their lives and in the lives of their peers is an integral part of the men's engagement program. We aim to illustrate how better communication between men and women and men's support for women's advancement improves the overall prosperity of families and communities.

Since 2010, Women for Women International has trained more than 700 *mullahs* and other community leaders through our men's engagement program in Afghanistan. Monitoring and evaluation data from 147 men who participated in the program in 2013 shows that at enrollment only 2 percent reported having taken action to reduce gender-based violence, but that number increased to 49 percent at the conclusion of the program. In 2014, we anticipate training an additional 150 male leaders in Afghanistan.

## IMPACT

INCREASING AWARENESS  
CHANGES BEHAVIOR:

CONFRONTING GENDER-BASED  
VIOLENCE

After participating, 49 percent of men report taking action to reduce gender-based violence.

This dramatic and positive increase from just 2 percent before the program underscores the impact of engaging men as allies for women's empowerment.

Since 2010, Women for Women International has trained over 700 *mullahs* and community leaders in Afghanistan.

## OUR IMPACT

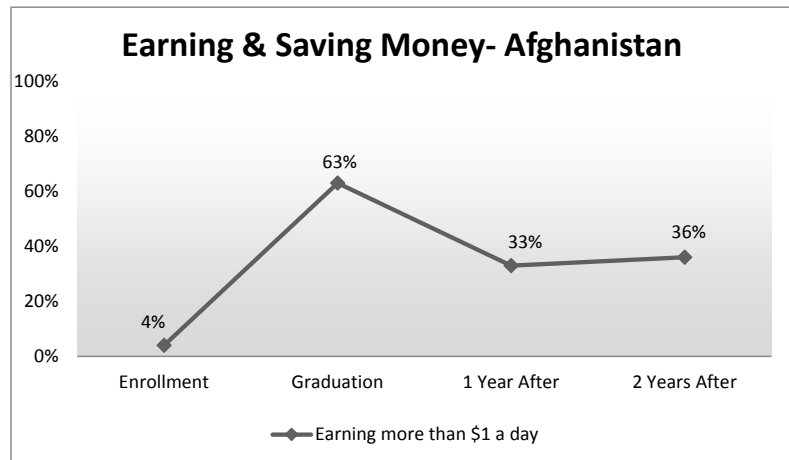
OUR PROGRAM IS FOCUSED ON HELPING WOMEN ACHIEVE THE FOLLOWING FOUR KEY OUTCOMES:

### 1 WOMEN EARN AND SAVE MONEY

When women earn an income, they reinvest a much higher portion in their families and communities, compared to men.

In Afghanistan, women demonstrate the ability to increase their daily income even two years after graduating from our program, earning an average of \$0.91 per day two years after graduation, compared to \$0.16 at enrollment.

(See footnote 1)



### 2 WOMEN DEVELOP HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Access to affordable and accessible healthcare – as well as training in disease prevention – significantly reduces preventable deaths.

Women continue to apply improved knowledge about how to protect their health and well-being after graduating from our program. 23 percent of women report practicing family planning at enrollment, compared to 70 percent two years after graduation.

(See footnote 1)

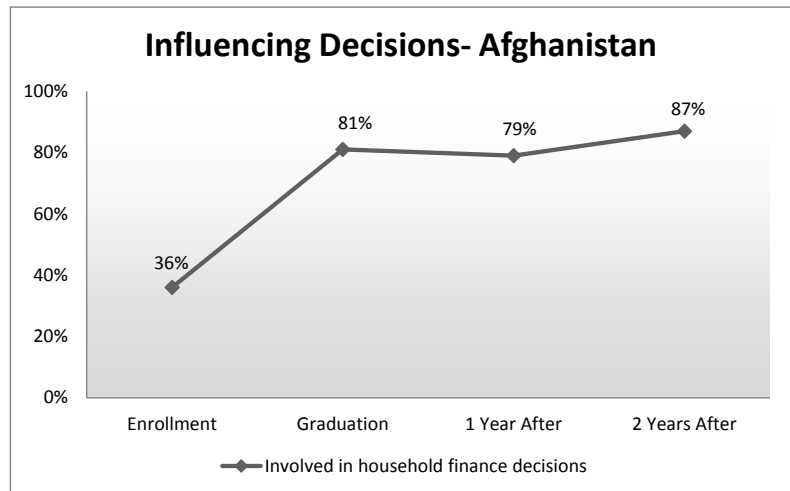


### 3 WOMEN INFLUENCE DECISIONS IN THE HOME AND COMMUNITY

Studies show that women exercise greater decision-making power within their families when they are educated, earn a stable income, and have access to resources such as land and credit.

Women become increasingly involved in making the decisions that affect their lives. Only 36 percent of women reported being involved in household financial decisions at enrollment, compared to 87 percent two years after graduation.

(See footnote 1)

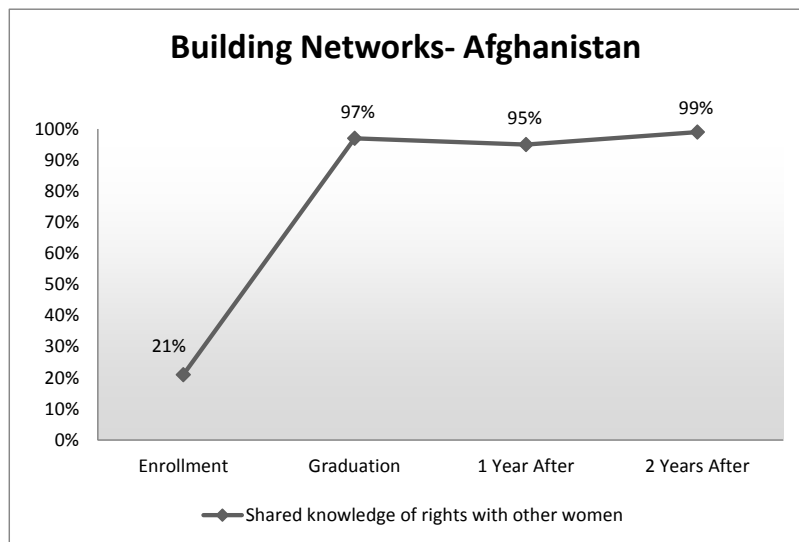


### 4 WOMEN CREATE AND CONNECT TO NETWORKS FOR SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY

As program participants, women learn the importance of working together. By working in groups, they also benefit from a support system and social networks.

Women share what they learn about their rights with other women in their communities. Almost all women reported educating another woman on her rights at graduation, one and two years after graduation, compared to 21 percent at enrollment. Educating a woman yields dividends not only for herself, but for others in her community.

(See footnote 1)



## FACTS ABOUT WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is ranked 147 out of 208 countries on the UN's Gender Inequality Index, with an estimated 71.2 percent of national achievement lost as a result of gender inequality.<sup>2</sup>

90 percent of Afghan women believe that a husband beating his wife is a justifiable action.<sup>3</sup>

Only 21 percent of girls and women who are married or in a union between the ages of 15 and 49 use some form of contraception.<sup>4</sup>

Only 39 percent of live births in Afghanistan are attended by skilled health personnel, and only 48 percent of pregnant women receive prenatal care.<sup>5,6</sup>

There were 400 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births in Afghanistan in 2013.<sup>7</sup>

The average Afghan woman will give birth to 5.1 children during her lifetime.<sup>8</sup>

Only 16 percent of women over the age of 15 participate in the labor force.<sup>9</sup>

In 2013, only 28 percent of parliamentary seats in Afghanistan were held by women.<sup>10</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Data represents women who graduated from our program in Afghanistan between 2010 and 2011.

<sup>2</sup> "Table 4: Gender Inequality Index." United Nations Development Programme. Accessed 6 June 2014. <https://data.undp.org/dataset/Table-4-Gender-Inequality-Index/pq34-nwq7>.

<sup>3</sup> "The State of the World's Children 2014." United Nations Children's Fund. Accessed 4 June 2014. [http://www.unicef.org/sowc2014/numbers/documents/english/SOWC2014\\_In%20Numbers\\_28%20Jan.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc2014/numbers/documents/english/SOWC2014_In%20Numbers_28%20Jan.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> "Contraceptive Prevalence (percent of women ages 15-49)." The World Bank. Accessed 4 June 2014. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.CONU.ZS>.

<sup>5</sup> "Births Attended by Skilled Health Staff (percent of total)." The World Bank. Accessed 4 June 2014. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.BRTC.ZS>.

<sup>6</sup> "Pregnant Women Receiving Prenatal Care (percent)." The World Bank. Accessed 4 June 2014.

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.ANVC.ZS>.

<sup>7</sup> "Maternal Mortality Ratio (modeled estimate, per 100,000 live births)." The World Bank. Accessed 4 June 2014. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.MMRT>.

<sup>8</sup> "Fertility Rate, Total (births per woman)." The World Bank. Accessed 4 June 2014.

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN>

<sup>9</sup> "Labor Force Participation Rate, Female (percent of female population ages 15+) (Modeled ILO estimate)." The World Bank. Accessed 4 June 2014. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>.

<sup>10</sup> "Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments (percent)." The World Bank. Accessed 4 June 2014. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS>.

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