

Women for Women International - Afghanistan

Challenges Women Face



152 of 208

Afghanistan's rank on the UN Gender Equality Index¹

23.8%

Can read²



11.2%

Complete primary school³

40%

Marry by the age of 18⁴



4.8

Average number of children⁵

90%

Believe that a husband beating his wife is a justifiable action⁶



87%

Experience physical, psychological or sexual violence⁷

21.2%

Practice some form of contraception⁸



396/ 100,000 Maternal deaths
Live births⁹



Photo credit: Millie Harvey

Country profile

Afghanistan is considered to be one of the worst places on the planet to be a woman. The recurring violence there has left millions of women and girls displaced and widowed. The influence of religious extremism and common discriminatory practices often make it dangerous for women to seek education, health care services, employment, or in some cases even to leave their homes.

Afghan women have limited legal protections under laws that govern marriage, inheritance, custody, divorce and domestic violence, but they are not effectively implemented, particularly in rural areas. The country's maternal mortality rate is among the highest in the world, and women and girls are subject to various forms of gender-based violence including forced marriage, sexual assault and domestic violence. Women who speak out about their rights, pursue education or run for office are often targeted by terrorist and armed groups.

There has been some progress toward gender equality since 2003, when the Taliban lost power. The rate of representation of women in Afghan parliament has never been higher (at 27%), and the National Unity Government has proclaimed a commitment to women's empowerment and changing discriminatory social norms. However, these gains are fragile, and some fear of rollback on women's rights amidst rising Taliban attacks.

Women for Women International remains dedicated to helping the most marginalized women in Afghanistan (and their male allies) to create widespread social change in the country, improving the status of women and building their capacity to excel.

Our reach



Total women served (since 2002)



Women served (2016)



Total men reached (since 2007)

Where we work



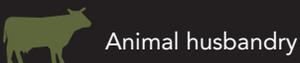
Women for Women International - Afghanistan

Our program in Afghanistan

Participant Profile:



Vocational skills & Training:



Local partners:

- Zardozi-Markets for Afghan Artisans
- Afghan Women's Network

Our work

In conflict-affected areas with limited access to services and discriminatory laws and gender norms, women face pervasive insecurity, lack of livelihoods, educational inequalities, threats of sexual violence, and poor health and well-being. Women for Women International seeks to create opportunities for change in the lives of these marginalized women.

Women for Women International has developed a program that offers Afghan women a constructive, dignified way to regain control of their lives. Our foundational training helps women know and defend their rights, influence decisions at home and in their communities, initiate activities that generate income, and save money for the future, contributing to economic self-sufficiency in their lives and for their families.



Photo credit: Millie Harvey

Our program

When supported by her peers and provided with the right resources and opportunities, even the most conflict-affected woman can develop the confidence and skills to transform her life, her family and her community.

Women for Women International's 12-month training program provides economically and socially marginalized women living in countries affected by war and conflict with the skills and resources to transform their lives.

Women meet bi-weekly in groups of 25 to learn, share and support one another. Women for Women International creates a safe and comfortable space for women to learn about essential health practices and nutrition, fundamental human and legal rights, household decision making, and participation in civic affairs and advocacy.

To support women to earn and save money, Women for Women International also offers training sessions in numeracy, business management basics, planning, selling products in the market, bookkeeping, group business and cooperative management. Women receive 40-70 hours of hands-on professional and vocational training in market-oriented livelihoods.

Each program participant also receives a training stipend of \$10 per month. The majority of participants either save this money or use it to cover training-related expenses, contribute to household needs, pay school fees for their children or invest in a small business. For women customarily excluded from economic activities, this may be the first time they have control over their own money.

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Photo credit: Millie Harvey

Building allies: men's engagement program

A transformative shift towards gender equality is only possible if we engage men as allies. Since 2002, Women for Women International has been a pioneer in men's engagement activities aimed at targeting male community leaders and male family members of our women participants in Afghanistan, DRC, Nigeria, South Sudan, Rwanda and Kosovo.

In Afghanistan, male religious and community leaders, with their strong influence on community social norms and practices, are currently being trained on family rights in Islam, focused on violence, inheritance, decision-making, health and well-being. We aim to illustrate how better understanding of and respect for women's rights improves the overall prosperity of families and communities. In Afghanistan, Women for Women International has reached 1,900 men to date.

Additionally, WfWI is piloting Community Protection Committees (CPCs) in Parwan and Nangarhar provinces. Due to weak law enforcement, corruption, and the traditional setting in target provinces, the majority of people appeal to informal mechanisms to resolve disputes and access justice. Before accessing formal systems, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and their families often turn to community councils to seek assistance as well as justice against perpetrators. WfWI is piloting CPCs to strengthen this community approach to creating a protective environment for women's rights and prevention of violence against women.

“ I now believe that Islam is an open, bright religion, with good rights for women. ”

Ghulam Rabi, 2014 Men's Engagement Program graduate

Increasing Men's Awareness and Changing Behavior

98%

graduates report having knowledge of women's rights compared to

9%

before the program

99%

report having positive attitudes regarding women's role in family decision-making, compared to

6%

before the program

42%

report taking action to stop own violent actions against women, compared to

16%

before the program



Photo credit: Millie Harvey

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WOMEN *for* WOMEN
International

Our vision

We envision a world in which all women determine the course of their lives and reach their full potential.

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 homes and communities, and connect to networks for support. By utilizing skills, knowledge, and resources, women are able to create sustainable change for themselves, their families, and their communities.

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