

## Theme: Gender Inequalities in Education: A Threat to Sustainable Societies?

### Title: Ideas for Action: Developing Sustainable Education for Girls and Women in Afghanistan

**Rapporteur: Professor Shirley Randell AO, PhD**

The Canadian Federation of University Women presented this workshop with partnering affiliates from Australia, Britain, Rwanda and the United States of America (USA), and special Afghan guests, Dr Sima Samar and Ms Nasima Rahmani.

#### Five Partner Affiliates Representatives

This workshop was notable for the number of national federations and associations (NFAs) that participated in the event, and the number of conference members, over 50, who attended. The five NFAs and their presenting representatives and functions were:

- Australian Federation of Graduate Women: Ms Lynda Roberts-Hall, *Panellist, Breakout Session Leader*
- British Federation of Women Graduates: Dr Cynthia Burek, *Facilitator, adult literacy and learning*
- Canadian Federation of University Women: Ms Hally Siddons, *Workshop Leader, Panellist, Facilitator, girls' constitutional rights (with Dr Sima Samar) and Dr Leila Metcalf, Workshop Co-leader, Interactive Panel Chair*
- Rwanda Association of University Women: Dr Shirley Randell AO, *Panellist, Facilitator, girls' post-secondary education (with Nasima Rhamani) Plenary II Discussion Leader, Rapporteur*
- Women Graduates-USA: Ms Heather Cousins, *Facilitator, girls primary education*

#### Special Guests

Two leading Afghan women attended and participated in the workshop.

- Dr Sima Samar, activist, physician, founder of schools and hospitals. Chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
- Ms Nasima Rahmani, advocate lawyer, activist and lecturer of law. Director of Women's Empowerment Centre, Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education, Kabul

#### Plenary 1

**Ms Hally Siddons** welcomed all participants and described the purpose of the workshop. She explained that the rugged and landlocked country of Afghanistan is located in one of the most politically turbulent areas of the world (see Figure 1). One of the poorest and least literate countries, it is the most dangerous in which to live as a woman. War is endemic and has continued unabated for the lifetime of most its citizens. She gave some UNESCO statistics about adult education in Afghanistan. Only 29 percent of the population is literate, 12 percent of whom are women. Of women aged 15-24, one in five are literate in urban areas, one in 15 in rural areas and one in 50 in the poorest areas. Seventy percent of the population lives in rural areas and 81 percent of these adults have had no education. Even the level and quality of

schooling available is inadequate; only a quarter of those who have primary school education are able to read a simple sentence.

**Figure 1: Map of Afghanistan**



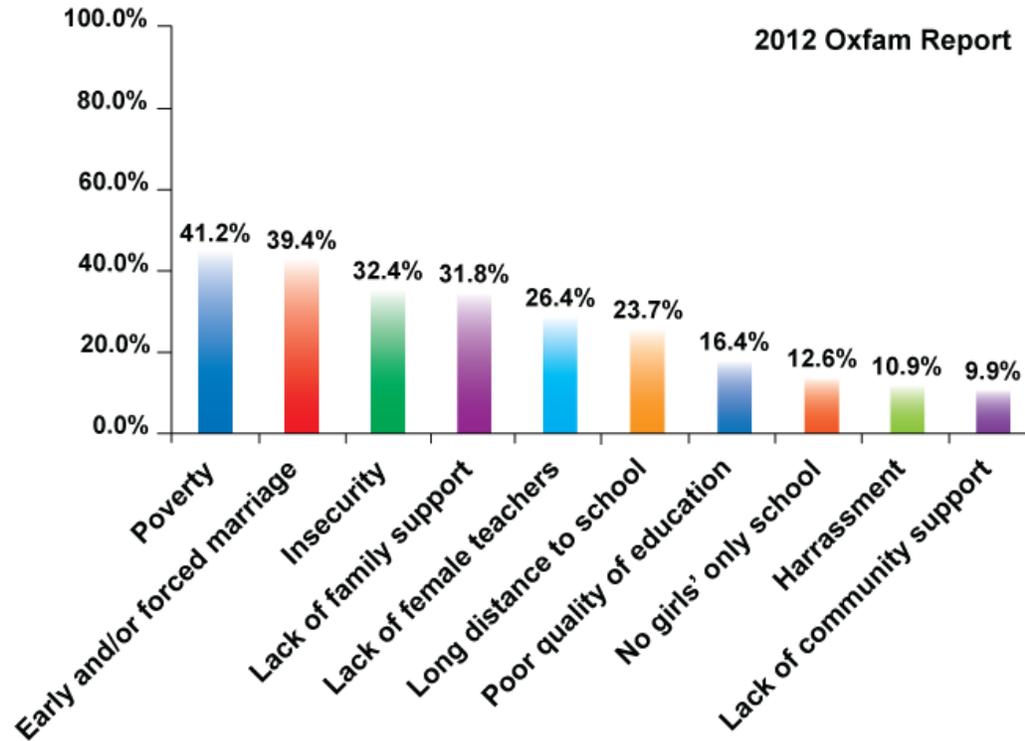
However, education has improved dramatically since the Taliban's misogynist regime, when girls were prohibited from attending school. Due to the work of the Ministry of Education and a plethora of international aid agencies, there are now 7.5 million children in school, 2.9 million of whom are girls. This is an improvement from 900,000 children in 2000, of which girls were only 5,000. About 6 million children are not attending school. These statistics are supplemented by data

provided by Nasima Rahmani in Attachment 1.

The 2012 Oxfam Report notes that efforts to improve education have slowed and warns a new approach is necessary from both the Afghan government and donors to sustain the gains that have been made. Figure 2 shows the key obstacles for Afghan girls. According to a recent UN World Development Report, **poverty** is the greatest barrier across the world to a girl's education, and over half of Afghans live in devastating poverty. Girls are forced into **early and arranged marriages** for a bride price that the family may use to settle debts, an impetus to early marriage often to much older men. Education for girls stops with marriage which often precedes puberty. **Security** and personal safety are always at risk. There is a **lack of family support**, because families are large and girls are needed to do domestic labour at home. Additionally there is a **lack of female teachers** at school. Trained women teachers are few and persistently harassed. One of the greatest deterrents to attending school is the **long distance** that girls face in getting there, often a two-hour trudge there and back. The **poor quality of education** girls find at school is poor. Teachers at the schools they reach are often unqualified, with few resources, little curriculum, and in their defense, are paid very little. **Girls-only schools are few**, and often far from home, poorly built, without electricity, latrines or the security walls to protect female students. Girls risk constant **physical and sexual harassment**. Finally there is a **lack of community and family support**. Religion and culture can play a large role here.

Hally pointed out that the purpose of the workshop was to address the question: "How does Afghanistan develop sustainable education for girls and women and how can we provide support?" and then introduced Dr Sima Samar from Afghanistan.

Figure 2: Key Obstacles to Girls' Education



**Dr Sima Samar** is a physician for the poor, an educator for the marginalized, a defender of human rights for all Afghans, a brave, creative visionary, and a truly remarkable woman who inspires all whom she meets. Currently Chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, she has been recognized by countless international awards for her wisdom, leadership, infinite courage and many accomplishments. She addressed the audience on how best IFUW, NFAs and Individual members can support Afghan women to achieve sustainable education for Afghan girls.

Dr Samar commented that the Afghanistan Constitution states that education is free and compulsory from primary to year 8 level and some financial incentives exist. However, although the rights exist, the reality is a different picture, with low levels of primary education and a lack of political will to enforce the provision of universal education. In addition, social, religious, security and family economic problems prevent the attainment of this ideal.

There is a need to change attitudes of parents, and most importantly to improve the security for children attending schools. There are strong links between limited education and the lack of family planning. Tribal, religious and social elements contribute to the preference for large families, with an average of 6.7 children per family. The economy cannot realistically support this number of children at school. Nevertheless, education is free up to Bachelor level for all schools and departments, including law, medicine and engineering.

What can IFUW do to support Afghan women to achieve sustainable education of Afghan girls? Perhaps the provision of scholarships is one answer, but we need to know how many places are available in private universities for students. These universities are businesses and there is already a problem of degrees being bought rather than earned.

There is a fundamental need for trained teachers as a priority in Afghanistan. Again, there is a lack of political will to ensure that there is a country strategy to keep girls at school and to provide good teachers for them. There is even a suggestion that there is corruption at government level in relation to funds for the education of girls.

Donors need to set the conditions for development assistance and monitor the use of aid when it is given for education to ensure that results are achieved. There is a need for continued political pressure by NGOs in Afghanistan who are concerned to ensure international promotion of education. IFUW should network with other NGOs to create the maximum chances for the success of their projects.

Women's rights are human rights and without them neither development is achieved, nor peace and stability is maintained.

#### **Panellists' Presentations**

Three panellists made short presentations on how they are supporting educational opportunities for girls and women in Afghanistan (see Picture 1).

**Picture 1: Panel speakers, Lynda, Shirley, Hally and Leila**



**AFGW**

Lynda Roberts-Hall reported that AFGW’s journey in relation to Afghanistan began in response to *IFUW Circular 8/2012: Call for Resolutions for the 31st IFUW Triennial Conference* (August 2012). They thought about this and considered that they should be doing something on a global basis; not just locally.

Following a suggestion from a member about the access to education of women and girls in Afghanistan, AFGW decided they wanted a resolution that involved women from Afghanistan. In particular, they wanted a way in which there would be commitment from IFUW, NFAs, and individuals. They asked: who should be or could be strategically involved? In developing the resolution, they knew that any resolution made for Afghans without Afghan women’s involvement will not work. They also knew that resolutions work better if there is consensus agreement - gathering ideas and support, so they began consultations.

AFGW consulted with women from Afghanistan to gain their perspective and information from emails and from Afghan visitors. They worked on resolutions across borders, using email and skype. First they considered the Australian perspective through email and phone consultations, in order to see what is already happening in Australia, and investigating the current Australian position. This included contacting the Global Ambassador for Women and Girls, working in partnership with AUSAID, learning about Children of Uruzgan with Save the Children Fund – (AUD 35.7million from 2012-2015), Empowerment Through Education with CARE Australia and the Afghanistan Reconstruction Fund.

**Picture 2: Afghan winner QWG bursary**



One example from AFGW is GWQ that presents an award of \$250 to a student at each of three Exit Assemblies at Milpera State High School in Brisbane. Milpera is a special purpose state high school that teaches English language across curriculum areas. It provides settlement services to newly arrived immigrant and refugee background young people to prepare them for living and studying in Australia. Refugee Program Chair, Kayla Suzmer is pictured with an Afghan girl, winner of a Milpera bursary in 2012.

In developing a resolution, AFGW sought to tie in the elements, seeking something practical that everyone can do at international, local and individual levels and across NFAs. Australia will now support the new emerging association in

Afghanistan, continue to lobby government, work with other Afghan women and follow up on the results from this workshop and the AFGW resolution, which ended up being co-sponsored

by the British Federation of Graduate Women and seconded by CFUW. For Australia, their work in this area is the beginning of a journey.

**CFUW**

Canadian news from the besieged country of Afghanistan was meagre until Canadian troops were deployed to that country with the International Security Assistance Force in 2003. Although battle stories predominated, some Canadian journalists began to report on the sad plight of Afghan women just emerging from the brutal Taliban regime; and CFUW took note.

When Hally's Club in Ottawa, the capital of Canada, where embassies, government offices, NGO and National Defense Headquarters, and two universities are located, was to host the CFUW Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 2010, it chose to feature Afghanistan and brought the extraordinary Dr Sima Samar as their keynote speaker. After her inspiring speech, Dr Simar has been CFUW's mentor, and both have shared the joys and many sorrows of the women in her country. From this rich source, Ottawa Branch explored the complex issues of gender inequalities in Afghan education, advocated for these women, and provided support where possible. Four years later, with the original group 40 members strong, and with international troop and media withdrawal imminent in 2014, this work is more crucial than ever. Hally acknowledged CFUW nationally for its ongoing support and encouragement of the work of her local Ottawa group.

What **has** CFUW done to support educational opportunities for girls and women in Afghanistan?

- We continue to learn. Inequalities in girls' educational opportunities are only part of their challenge, and must be put in the broader context to be understood. We have attended innumerable lectures, met with NGOs, Afghanistan Embassy and Canadian government officials, nurtured contacts with exceptional Afghan women in Afghanistan and in Ottawa, linked to an international technology (IT) network that provides Afghan news from international sources, archived significant information, and shared extensive reading and website lists. This cumulative research is invaluable to our credibility locally and nationally, and determines any actions we take.
- We look for and support other NGOs who share our vision. For example:
  - a) At an International Women's Day fundraiser, we partnered in a Kabul education project.
  - b) We support work to bring employment-oriented education to Afghan girls through distance learning from Canada.
  - c) Many members support the exemplary hands-on work of Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan.
- We fundraise. For example:
  - a) CFUW-Ottawa raises funds for the Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education in Kabul founded by Dr Samar, to ensure there is a good pool of well-educated women to take leadership roles in the country (see Picture 3). We support over ten scholarships annually and know that we are not just educating "our" girls, but that the impact of their education will be felt in the lives of future generations. This money is raised through a luncheon with a

mini concert and silent auction at our National Art's Centre, a Summer Evening Garden Reception, and through donations and work in kind.

b) CFUW nationally raised funds through member donations to support a leader of the newly-formed Afghan organization to travel to Istanbul, knowing that as a result there would eventually be repercussions for girl's education in her country.

**Picture 3: Students UWHAW (CFUW-Ottawa) supports at the Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education with the Director of the Women's Empowerment Centre, Ms Nasima Rahmani**



- We raise public awareness. Not only have we raised awareness in our local club, community and country, but we have extended it to CFUW members at their annual general meetings across Canada. IFUW members were present at these meetings. The connections forged led eventually to a Seminar, a Workshop, a Resolution and a new Afghan organization at this Triennial Conference.
- We advocate and take every opportunity to remind the Canadian Government of its specific commitments to the women of Afghanistan. At the local and national levels, we write letters to the editor, we write to our elected officials and we participate at the UN where CFUW has consultative status.

To conclude, the world and its politicians must continue to learn about the inequalities of girls' education in Afghanistan and to support them as they work towards their own sustainable system. It will be long term and a slow process. We must not let these women be forced to relinquish the gains they have made. Lighting one little candle can start a big fire. We can work creatively together, so we encourage you to Join in, bring your network, start a Study group, continue to learn, support other NGOS with similar vision, fundraise, raise awareness and advocate.

**RAUW**

**Dr Shirley Randell** outlined how members of the Rwanda Association of University Women (RAUW) had been able to assist education in Afghanistan in their individual working capacities with their association’s support. Justine Mbabazi Esq., Board member and the Scholarships and Awards Convener of RAUW had been working as Country Director of Global Rights: Partners in Justice in Afghanistan for the last three years. GRPJ has been in Afghanistan for 11 years and offers legal aid to more than 20,000 Afghanistan women, supporting more than 3,000 young lawyers. It works with seven universities and funds 37 local non-government organisations.

In 2012, Justine invited Prof. Shirley Randell, Board member and Convener for International Relations of RAUW to conduct legal training for legal interns working with Global Rights. She conducted training in gender concepts, gender law and gender mainstreaming for 102 legal interns. The two RAUW members collaborated with Afghan women academic leaders to call together a group of over 20 leading women graduates to a meeting to discuss the possibility of forming an Afghanistan association of university women. Shirley gave a PowerPoint presentation about IFUW, its vision, mission and goals. Both talked about RAUW and what had been achieved over the past seven years. Participants discussed the feasibility and advantages of establishing an Afghanistan association. Picture 4 is a photograph of some of the women who attended the session.

**Picture 4: Women who attended first Afghan women graduates information meeting**



Ms Nasima Rhamani has been working with Afghan woman to develop the logo and Afghanistan Constitution that has already been approved by the Membership Committee. It is hoped that the Afghanistan Organisation of University Women will be admitted as an NFA at the next Conference. Nasima will comment on the prospects of the Afghan Organisation for improving educational opportunities for girls and women in Afghanistan.

**Dr Leila Metcalf** then facilitated a discussion among the panellists, who elaborated on their presentations by asking them two specific questions.

*1 What would you say has been the biggest challenge/hurdle you have faced in your work to date, and what have you done to address this?*

Lynda responded that one of the biggest challenges for **AFGW** was finding out the future direction of activity of the Australian Government. With an election looming, relevant government staff were unable to comment, neither on current programs and the aid being given, nor about likely changes to the programs and aid. The other challenge was working on developing the resolution, which was independent to the workshop. They worked with two NFAs and needed to satisfy co-proposers and seconders as well as Australian members. The vast differences in time meant it was all done electronically and so took a lot longer than expected.

Hally said that **CFUW's** major challenge was to establish credibility in their community and their club, both on the issue and on their knowledge of the issue, because there was a lot of cynicism on the topic and a lack of understanding. In fact people who thought they knew most, really knew least. Without credibility it was difficult to move forward. They had responded through learning themselves, raising public awareness with a continuing quiet resolve that they needed to persist in what they were doing. Learning is ongoing. However, live opportunities in Ottawa are lessening with the approach of 2014, and the withdrawal of the international troops, media attention and, sadly, gradually aid to Afghanistan. Canada continues to subscribe to the Network of Afghan Women List ([info@nawlist.org](mailto:info@nawlist.org)) and this has been invaluable. Most recently they have connected with some amazing Afghan graduate students at the two Ottawa universities who make the story very real for members.

Shirley responded that **RAUW's** biggest challenge is the lack of willingness of the association to take up any controversial issues with the government. However, RAUW uses its electronic Dgroup network to inform members about issues. It also plans to make much greater use of its webpage on the IFUW website. Shirley has continued to correspond with Nasima and support her through the process of developing a logo and a constitution for a new organisation affiliated with IFUW.

*2 How do you raise public awareness to get support for your work and what are the issues?*

Lynda said that their project was profiled at **AFGW** Federal Council Meetings, where it was promoted through branches as well as through the website, where letters of advocacy to the Government and Government responses were published. An article is being planned for the

next AFGW National Publication and AFGW will continue to support this area when opportunity presents.

Hally described **CFUW's** public awareness efforts. Locally, they publish letters to the editor, hold fundraising events in prominent locations to add visibility and encourage press coverage, make informative presentations to their club and community when invited, and display resource material at public events. Nationally, they have arranged to meet with interested members at the last two national AGMs, prepared and offered a resource kit (hard copy and electronic) at these sessions, and have formed a loose Afghanistan interest group across Canada. An article about their work was published in *Diplomat and International Canada*, Spring Edition, and CFUW has highlighted news of the group's work on their website, in their weekly news and in their newsletter. In addition, CFUW lists a National Working Group in its Directory for members who wish to learn more about the issues facing Afghan women.

Shirley said that **RAUW** has not raised public awareness about Afghanistan, and she would take the ideas and actions of AFGW and CFUW back to her association.

**Ms Nasima Rahmani** shared her vision of how an Afghan organization of graduate women could support and improve educational opportunities for girls and women in Afghanistan.

At the **higher education level** an NFA could:

- Raise funds to offer scholarships to those who miss the opportunity to get into the public universities, so that they study in the private institutes
- Offer bridging course to assist female students pass the exam and get in to the public universities
- Offer consulting and training services to enhance learning for female students and help them to achieve better results.

At the **school level**, and NFA could

- Provide incentives to encourage teachers to go back to their provinces and villages and teach in schools there
- Assist the villagers in opening basic schools where there is no school available
- Conduct research for providing information and data on needs
- Advocate for improvement of education for women
- Create a coordination mechanism between the government and NGOs that work for education in Afghanistan.

The **main objectives for an Afghan NFA** could be:

- Creating educational opportunities for women and girls through the provision of scholarships at the higher education and school levels. This could be conducted both within and outside Afghanistan
- Uniting educated women in efforts for improvement of other women's status by using their skills and knowledge where required
- Advocating for increasing the quality of educational opportunities for women and the improvement of women's status in public and private educational institutions

- Conducting research activities to collect information about Afghan women’s educational status in Afghanistan, as well as out of the country, and the quality of educational services provided in public and private schools and educational institutions.
- Advocating for the progress of educated women through their appointment, when qualified, to key positions in the Government of Afghanistan and the private and non-government organization sectors.

#### Breakout session

**Ms Lynda Roberts-Hall** convened breakout groups to which facilitators had been previously assigned (see Picture 5). An icebreaker activity ‘Building a house with lego blocks and without speaking’ opened group work (see Attachment 2) and then each group discussed a particular question related to supporting women and girls’ education in Afghanistan.

- **Girls' Primary School Education:** How best can individual members, NFAs and IFUW support Afghan girls' education in primary schools to lead to sustainable education?
- **Girls' Secondary Education:** How best can individual members, NFAs and IFUW support Afghan girls' education in secondary schools to lead to sustainable education?
- **Women and Girls' Post-Secondary Education:** How best can individual members, NFAs and IFUW support Afghan girls' education in post-secondary schools to lead to sustainable education?
- **Adult literacy and learning within Afghanistan:** How best can individual members, NFAs and IFUW support adult literacy and learning to lead to sustainable education?
- **Support for Girls' Constitutional Right to an Education:** How best can individual members, NFAs and IFUW support girls’ constitutional right to an education to lead to sustainable education?

**Picture 5: Breakout group**



Each group considered

- What can individuals do?
- What can NFAs do?
- What can IFUW do?
- How would women in Afghanistan be involved?
- What role would men and boys have in achieving this? IS there a practical role?
- Can these approaches work in other countries with similar situations?
- Are there other organisations we should involve?
- How do we measure success?

## Plenary II

Breakout Group Reporters presented the findings for each group, and these were typed and projected onto a large screen in generated ideas and categorized themes for viewing. Ways to help Afghan girls and women overcome educational barriers were identified. These are detailed as ideas for action by individual members, NFAs and IFUW as well as some tentative suggestions for Afghanistan women (Table 1).

**Table 1: Ideas for Action to Support Afghan Women and Girls Education**

Education level	What can NFAs do?	What can individuals do?	What can IFUW do?	What can women in Afghanistan do?
Primary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise funds</li> <li>• Support development of teachers</li> <li>• Provide nutrition programs as an incentive to get children to school</li> <li>• Enable provision of school supplies and uniforms</li> <li>• Visit the country, government and ministries</li> <li>• report back</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby governments</li> <li>• Speak` to own organisations, for example, Retired Teachers’ Association</li> <li>• Raise awareness with family and friends</li> <li>• Be a donor and get feedback from recipients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support individuals in Afghanistan in some way</li> <li>• Support infrastructure</li> <li>• Train teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to women in the community – a dialogue is required to identify needs</li> <li>• Teach men and boys to be supportive as they benefit too</li> <li>• Enlist support of tribal elders</li> <li>• Enlist family support by providing literacy</li> </ul>
Secondary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide scholarships for students</li> <li>• Initiate reading/ study groups in NFAs</li> <li>• Generate a reading list</li> <li>• Consider how to change the curriculum to be less biased but it is difficult to have influence</li> <li>• Find out facts from</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring up the topic in conversation</li> <li>• Try to overcome cynicism of people who say they don’t hear about what happens with funds they donate (this is not the case)</li> <li>• Read Sally Armstrong’s book</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate networking</li> <li>• Provide goods and materials, for example, Pencils for Pakistan project</li> <li>• Develop a resource list</li> <li>• Provide best practice reports</li> </ul>	

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	<p>own government so as not to duplicate or be in conflict with them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build resources, for example, DVDs</li> <li>• Use NFAs to gather information to feed back internationally</li> <li>• Provide scholarships for teachers and better incentives for them to go back to their own towns</li> <li>• Produce resolutions</li> <li>• Raise funds</li> </ul>	<p><i>Bitter Roots Tender Shoots</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform ourselves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop resolutions</li> </ul>	
<p>Post-secondary education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spread of information from one organization to others</li> <li>• Provide scholarships/fundraising</li> <li>• Information to corporations</li> <li>• Toronto Group gives yearly pot luck dinner with Afghanistan women. Is a live Skype presentation possible at this time.</li> <li>• NFA actions can be the same as individual actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per other groups</li> <li>• Business sponsorship</li> <li>• Write articles to share information with groups</li> <li>• Spread of information from one organization to others</li> <li>• Need to find out what Afghan people need</li> <li>• Ascertain what can professional and other organisations do</li> <li>• Contact own university to lobby for scholarships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibility to extend membership of IFUW with refugees everywhere</li> <li>• People who can help integrate are needed</li> <li>• International reach – connect NFAs with each other in relation to advocacy. Share it with Afghanistan</li> <li>• Use the same approaches that work in other countries across different NFAs.</li> <li>• All scholarships should be granted on a needs assessment basis so that those who truly are in need benefit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afghan women can speak to groups when they are abroad and keep contact with each other</li> <li>• There are common issues Afghanistan and Tadjanistan – perhaps they can work together (Zaretsky may be able to help)</li> <li>• Make connections with other groups when you travel</li> <li>• Donors give what they want to give, not what is needed - via NFAs and the Canadians talk with students to find out</li> </ul>

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<p>Adult literacy and learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same types as individual</li> <li>• Develop resolutions that promote action</li> <li>• Start with what they want, what they want to read, and their needs</li> <li>• Use UNESCO as a way to channel funds</li> <li>• Use International Adult Learning Week as a way to raise the profile of Afghanistan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn from Afghans in your own country</li> <li>• Raise funds as individuals</li> <li>• Provide funding for teachers' salaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness</li> <li>• Give fellowships to possibly help research adult literacy in Afghanistan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use groups to teach each other as adults, similar to using sewing circles to teach each other. or by reading to each other while doing other things</li> <li>• Make this applicable so that they would learn about things important</li> </ul>
<p>Right to education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide scholarships</li> <li>• Pressure donor countries to identify where their aid goes.</li> <li>• Work to bypass corruption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise what the Afghanistan Constitution already says and check on compliance with it, for example, free and compulsory education for nine years is already on the books</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund scholarships</li> <li>• Organise exchange for teachers and administrators</li> <li>• Provide Information and accountability for programs with accurate statistics</li> <li>• Use UN reports, for example, CEDAW to enforce compliance with conventions</li> <li>• Demand accurate statistics and data</li> <li>• Listen to women's voices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right to education</li> </ul>

## Concluding remarks

### Picture 6: Hally Siddons, Dr. Sima Samar

Hally thanked Dr Samar for once again telling the unvarnished story of the plight of Afghan women and girls, this time on the eve of 2014 when international troops will withdraw, leaving Afghanistan still in conflict (see Picture 6).



She had reminded participants that there can be no security without the full participation of women at the peace table and that education is the key to that participation. The girls and women of Afghanistan must be educated so that they can take their rightful and equal place in a post-war Afghan society.

As educated women we cannot ignore Dr. Samar's message. Now knowing the full complexity of their plight and the infinite number of ways we can provide support to them on their journey to a sustainable society, IFUW, NFAs and individual members must help keep their story alive and on the active agendas of our affiliates. Nasima was also thanked for her insightful contributions to the workshop and for her phenomenal efforts to create an Afghan affiliate, and was wished every success with further negotiations.

Hally made special mention of Nezihe Bilhan and her LAC committee for a very fine conference. She also thanked Lynda, Cynthia, Heather, Shirley and Leila, partner affiliates, Merle and Lavergne for their special assistance during the workshop, and indeed, all who attended, encouraging us to stay connected and to work together to bring the international community to support these women and girls as they seek the light of education and a future sustainable society for Afghanistan.

## **Attachment 1: Education of Women in Afghanistan: Some Facts**

### **General**

- Article 43 of the current Constitution: Government of Afghanistan is responsible for providing free education for its citizens through the Bachelor degree level.
- Education is compulsory up to grade six (secondary education level)
- Some of the public universities have hostels/dormitories that are covered by government as well

### **Secondary education**

- No accurate data available, but the estimations indicates that literacy rate among women is 15.8% versus 31% for men
- According to the MoE in Afghanistan, %38 of 800,100,000 students currently enrolled in schools, are girls.

### **Challenges in secondary education**

- Lack of Access to education:
  - Shortage of schools
  - Long distances to schools
- Security issues
- Traditional beliefs:
- Lack/shortage of female teachers in the schools
- Economic problems
- Women's burden of the household work

### **Higher education**

- The female students in 2009-2010, accounted for 19.9% of the entire student body, 61,375
- 22% in the year 2011-12, for around 60,000.
- This shows increase in the number of female students, but there are differences
- According to a research: In southern parts of the country (Paktia and Kandahar), girls enrolment is 0 - 3.6 % compared to those in the west 33.9%.

### **Challenges in higher education**

- Shortage of universities: This leads to shortage of adequate spaces for all graduated students who pass the entrance exam to the public universities
- Economic problems ( to get in to private ones)
- Traditional beliefs imposing limitations on women, these barriers are also fueled by the co-education system
- Security issues
- High rate of early marriages among the school girls
- Difficulty in meeting requirements (to pass the exam)

## Attachment 2: Lego Exercise – Facilitator’s Instructions

The Facilitator distributes the lego blocks equally amongst group. Then the Facilitator tells them that:

*“As a group, you have to build a house using the lego blocks in front of you. You cannot speak at all. All blocks must be used. Blocks cannot just be taken from each other – permission must be granted. This must all be done without speaking. As a group you have two minutes to build your house. Your time starts now”*

The Facilitator must make sure no-one speaks and no-one helps themselves to someone else’s blocks. The facilitator stops the exercise at the end of two minutes. Time must be strictly observed.

A few minutes discussion should then take place. The facilitator can ask:

- Was something built? What does everyone think of what was built? Is it a house?
- How did everyone find the experience of working together when your communication was limited?
- Did you find ways to communicate?
- What sort of rules were developed? Did people select roles?
- Did anyone not participate? If so, why not? If so, what could have been done by the other team members that would have meant that person would have contributed? Did the rest of the team feel it was ok that they did not contribute?
- Did members think outside the box? Eg write instructions, do sign language? Did members restrict themselves in how they acted?
- If members did it again, what would they have done differently?

This exercise is an example of how communities with no language in common can work together to achieve a common goal. The idea is to see that in action. It is in this spirit that we are tackling this workshop.

### Further Networking

Anyone who attended and who left without signing our sheet could join our ongoing network list by contacting Hally by email at [hrs@siddons.ca](mailto:hrs@siddons.ca).

