

2021

Annual Report



**MISSION STATEMENT**

Canadians taking action, in partnership with Afghan women, toward improving human rights, ending women's oppression, and providing opportunities for Afghan women and girls to live their lives with dignity, certainty and purpose.

**Because human rights are universal!**

**بخاطر اینکه حقوق بشر جهانی است!**

Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan  
PO Box 15007 Aspen Woods, Calgary, AB T3H 0N8  
Registered Charity #887718203RR0001



## A message from our Board Chair

Dear CW4WAfghan Community,

In this year's annual report, you'll read about the devastating aftermath of the regime change in Afghanistan, and the tragic, earth-shattering outcomes it has had on the lives of all Afghans, as well as its effects on our work and programs in the country.

But this report is also one of resilience. The resilience of Afghan school girls, fighting for an education at any cost; of Afghan women, publicly protesting for their rights despite the inevitable life-threatening risks; and of human rights defenders, speaking out, resisting, organizing, and distributing aid, schoolbooks, and credible

information. We have heard reports of mothers doing incredible and unspeakable things to protect their families, and we have seen the global community of Afghans and allies raise their voices and sing loudly of the dramatic loss of humanity that has, and continues to occur in the country.

You are among these voices. Your support and your passion for this work matters. This community's dedication to the protection of basic human rights in Afghanistan was a guiding beacon steering us forward through some of the darkest moments of this crisis. Our chapters, members, donors, and supporters have shown a remarkable steadfastness to the mandate of this organization; and our Board of Directors and advisors have provided devoted and expert leadership, matched only by the magnitude of the responsibility at hand. I am humbled by the outpouring of commitment and dedication that we have witnessed.

To our exceptional team in Canada and in Afghanistan: there are no words that can reflect the deep appreciation and gratitude I have for each of you. I have no doubt whatsoever that the countless hours spent, flexibility and patience demonstrated, and the significant sacrifices made by you and your families, are the reason our work has continued, and indeed grown, through the most difficult of circumstances. With our brilliant Executive Director, Dr. Lauryn Oates, at the helm of this work, showing extraordinary vision and leadership, I am pleased to report that, although 2021 was an extremely challenging year, this organization nevertheless continued to successfully deliver on its mission and values.

In contemplating the magnitude of the task ahead of us in the year to come, I am comforted by the abundance of collective resilience and strength we hold, and by the example brazenly set by the Afghan women and girls forging the path ahead. I leave you with the words of Suhaila Bawar, published in September, 2021, by Free Women Writers:

“  
*We're Afghan girls, Beautiful as roses.  
Our field is destroyed.  
The ground we grow from is dryer than our unspoken mouths.  
We've never been exposed to the sun.  
Surrounded by eternal shadows of darkness, We've managed to grow.  
We've learned how to stand tall, Despite the storm wandering on our land.  
Despite the desperate hands plucking out our thrones, We've still kept hope hidden in the buds of our hearts.  
Despite this gloom, We've still managed to spread out our petals,  
And bloom.*”





## A message from our Executive Director

Greetings,

I'll be straight with you: these past months have not been easy.

Our year ended completely differently from how it started. In January 2021, we embarked upon a new year of delivering both well established and successful programs like our literacy classes and teacher professional development work, as well as exciting new initiatives including our Getting Girls Back to School campaign funded by UNESCO, that aimed to alleviate the drop-out rate among girls in the aftermath of Covid-19 school closures in Afghanistan, and another UNESCO project to create local language accessible

storybooks for Afghan children with disabilities. Our main challenges were keeping up with the workload, recruiting qualified staff to join our growing team, and tackling the usual issues that crop up during project implementation: delays in procuring supplies, meeting report deadlines, negotiating with officials to start new activities, and the other mundane tasks of program management. But we kept an anxious eye on the so-called peace negotiations with the Taliban – which never in fact amounted to substantive talks but were, as it would turn out, a facade. And we watched the security environment slowly, and then more quickly deteriorate, a process that had been underway for years, and which was subjecting Afghans to violence on a daily basis and meant that one went through day to day life always with the ever-present fear of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

It is still hard to comprehend how that reality shattered in August, taking us back – in full force – to gender apartheid in Afghanistan, where today, there is no longer anything resembling democracy, or the flourishing civil society we saw Afghans build over two decades of hard work. Some hopeful optimists insisted this was a different Taliban, but writing this in March 2022 – a few days after the news that girls' schools appeared to be permanently closed for all girls past primary age – it is now starkly clear that this is indeed the same Taliban as before.

And so, we face this new reality. From Day 1, we knew we would not waver in our mission, as hard as it now is to fulfill under current conditions. We knew we could not be tempted to compromise. We knew if ever there was a time to live the values of our slogan, because human rights are universal, it is now. So we put our heads down and we took a hard look at all of our programming. We decided it all must continue. We re-designed programs, adapted activities, and found workarounds. We also began emergency assistance activities to respond to the economic crisis that threatens the lives of millions of people, and responded to thousands of heart-wrenching pleas for help from those looking to safely leave Afghanistan, working with partners globally to build robust evacuation and resettlement resources. And we looked ahead to what will be required of us to meet the needs of women and girls in circumstances where their freedoms are radically curtailed. It's a completely new operating environment. There's no handbook for this. But we've taken the most critical first step: we have resolved to do everything we can to act on our solidarity in the form of practical assistance that supports human rights and humanitarian needs, buttressed by advocacy and public engagement.

We wish the situation were different. But we will navigate the situation as it now is. When you read this report next year, I am confident that you will read many updates similar to those of past years: about women who learned to read, about girls who went to school, about teachers who acquired new skills, and Afghans who found a bounty of information in our digital library, gaining power over how and what they learned. We will be delivering in new ways, and we will be doing even more as we expand our work to meet the still growing needs. We will keep our eye on the prize: a belief that the future can be different if we work towards what we know to be right – that every girl and every woman, everywhere in the world, has the right to an education and to determine the course of her own life.



## A message from our Senior Director

As I look back, I recall opportunities, challenges, accomplishments, and failures in Afghanistan over the past two decades. CW4WAfghan has been part of this bumpy journey alongside Afghan people for all these years. We navigated our way through every challenge and turned it into an opportunity through our programs, whether training a generation of skilled and qualified teachers, working with the communities to allow women to enroll in all-women literacy classes or bringing light to the life of children and youth by opening their path to schools. For over two decades we have delivered our programs under any circumstances, and we did the same last year in the midst of COVID and the increased insecurity. In the first six months of the year, we worked with UNESCO on a nationwide education campaign

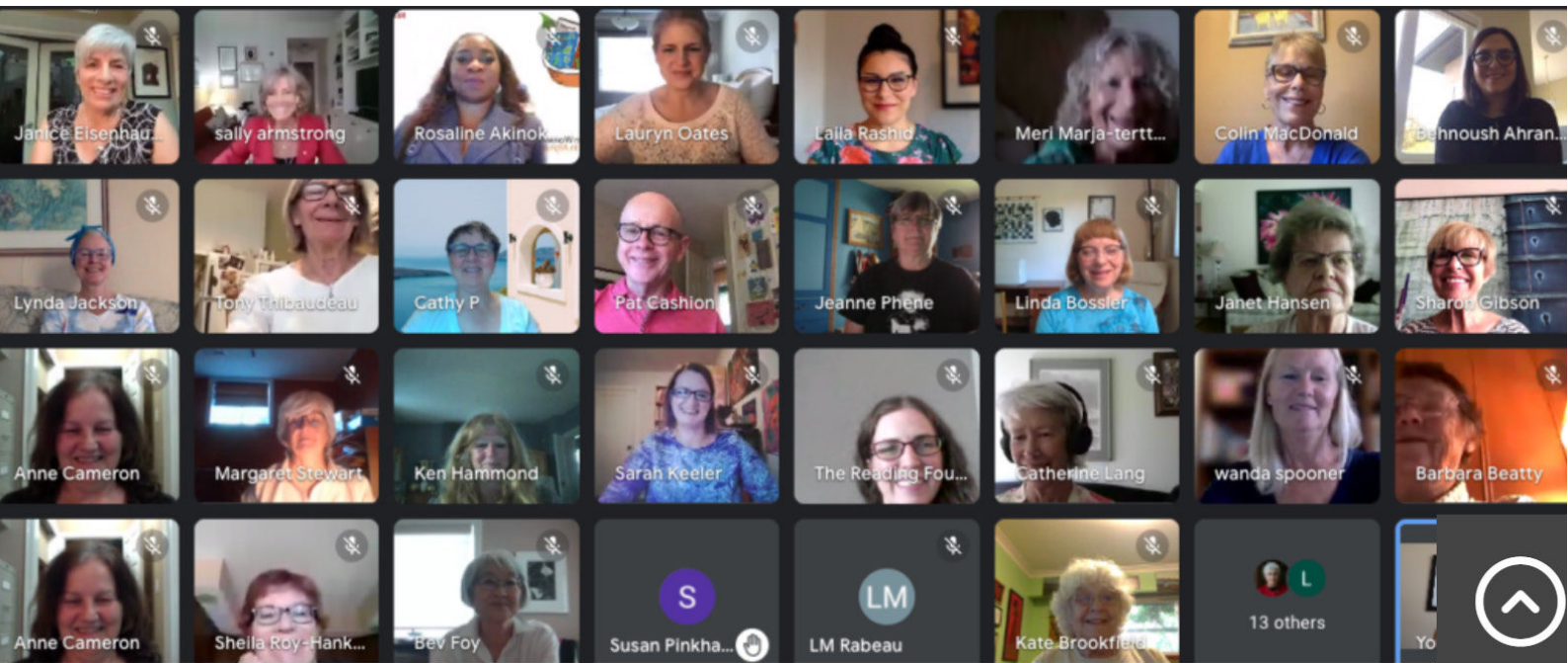
to bring girls back to school after the pandemic. A high number of our literacy class graduates were enrolled in public school with the hope of accomplishing their dream of formal education.

The teacher training colleges eagerly participated in the professional development activities of our Global Affairs Canada funded Gender Equity in Teacher Training project. Several new projects were underway to start 2021. But August 15th changed everything and stopped the cycle of progress in an instant. Suddenly, time stopped and for Afghan women, the clock started ticking back. The Taliban's first directive restricted access to education for women and girls by closing secondary and high schools and universities in September 2021. The students and teachers in our programs have been sharing their despair at the closure of their schools and classes.

It's a regression not only for Afghanistan, its people, and especially for women, but also for our international allies. But in the face of all this, one thing that stands out to me is the resilience of women and girls. While I knew the younger generation of Afghan women and girls were different from their forebears, the resistance and protests of women and girls demanding their rights in the face of repressive Taliban rule has been on an unprecedented level of courage and resiliency. I see the power of education in this transformation. Even if on a small scale, CW4WAfghan contributed to this transformation by ensuring quality and equitable access to education for women and girls for all these years.

I am proud of the resilience of our colleagues in our Country Office, who continue to implement aid and programming, while also navigating many changes to our operations and ways of working. All the while, they have been and continue to be exposed to great risk as long as they remain in Afghanistan.

I was also overwhelmed by the level of support and generosity of our supporters and chapters across Canada during this most difficult time. We were not abandoned by our supporters as Afghanistan was abandoned by its allies. Together, we will continue on this path. Thank you for walking with us.



## Thank You to Members, Donors, and Supporters

“

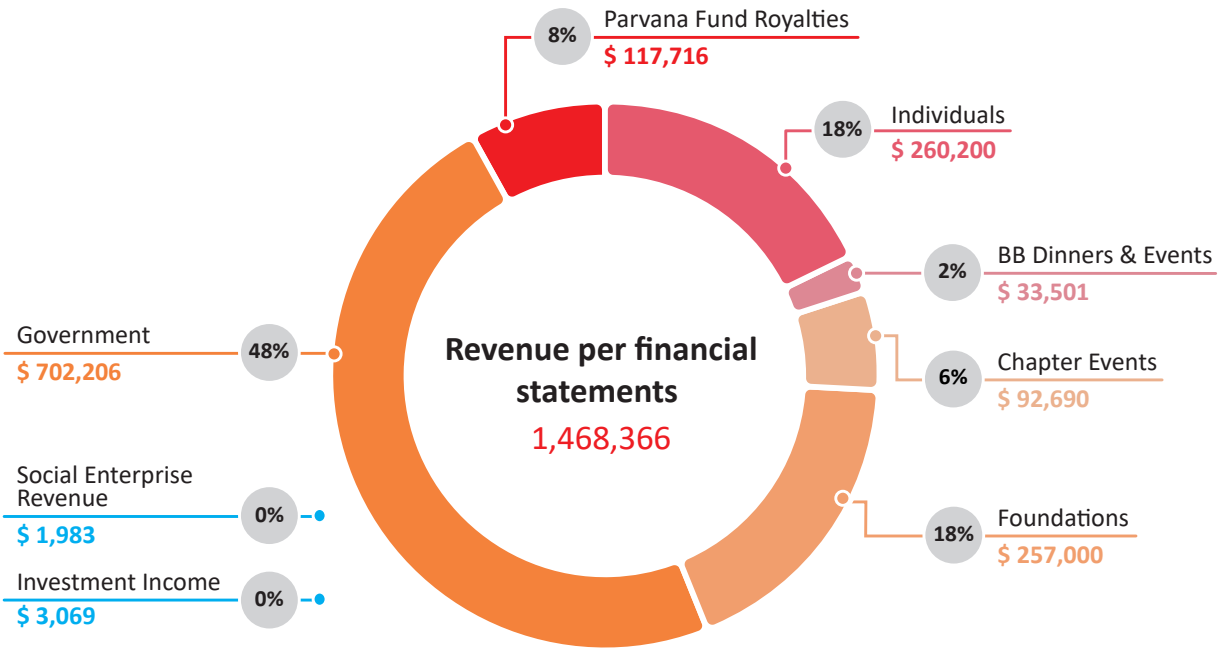
*Your support and your passion for this work matters. This community's dedication to the protection of basic human rights in Afghanistan was a guiding beacon steering us forward through some of the darkest moments of this crisis. Our chapters, members, donors, and supporters have shown a remarkable steadfastness to the mandate of this organization. On behalf of the board and staff, thank you for your ongoing generosity, compassion and commitment to the fight for gender equality, despite the difficult odds we now face*

*- Laila Rashid, Chair, CW4WAfghan Board of Directors*

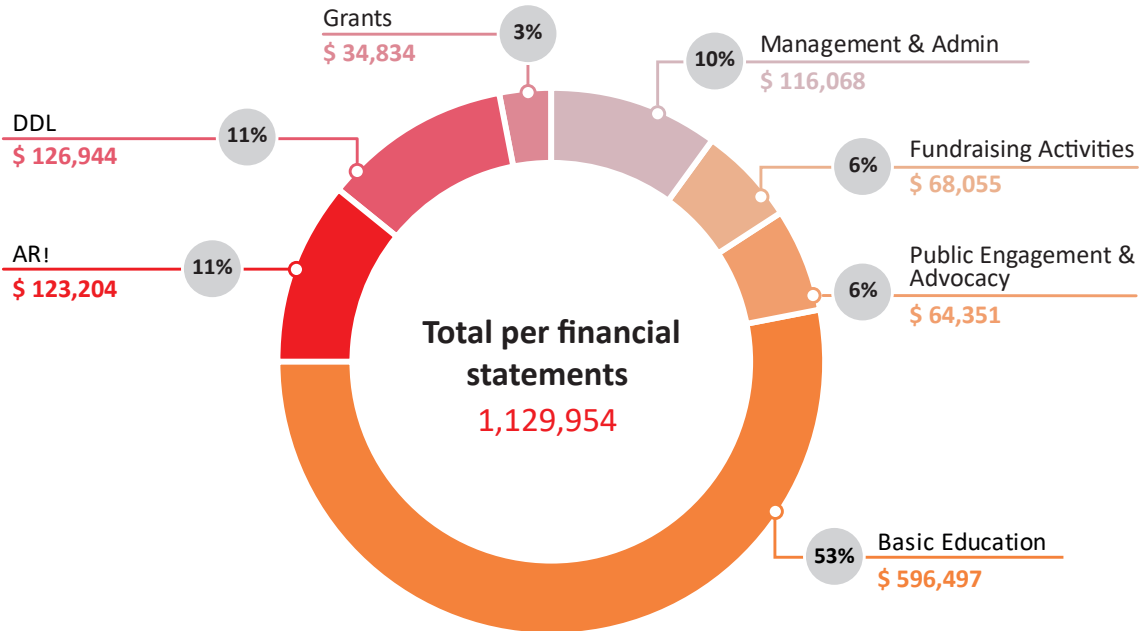
”

# Financials

## Revenue



## Program Spending

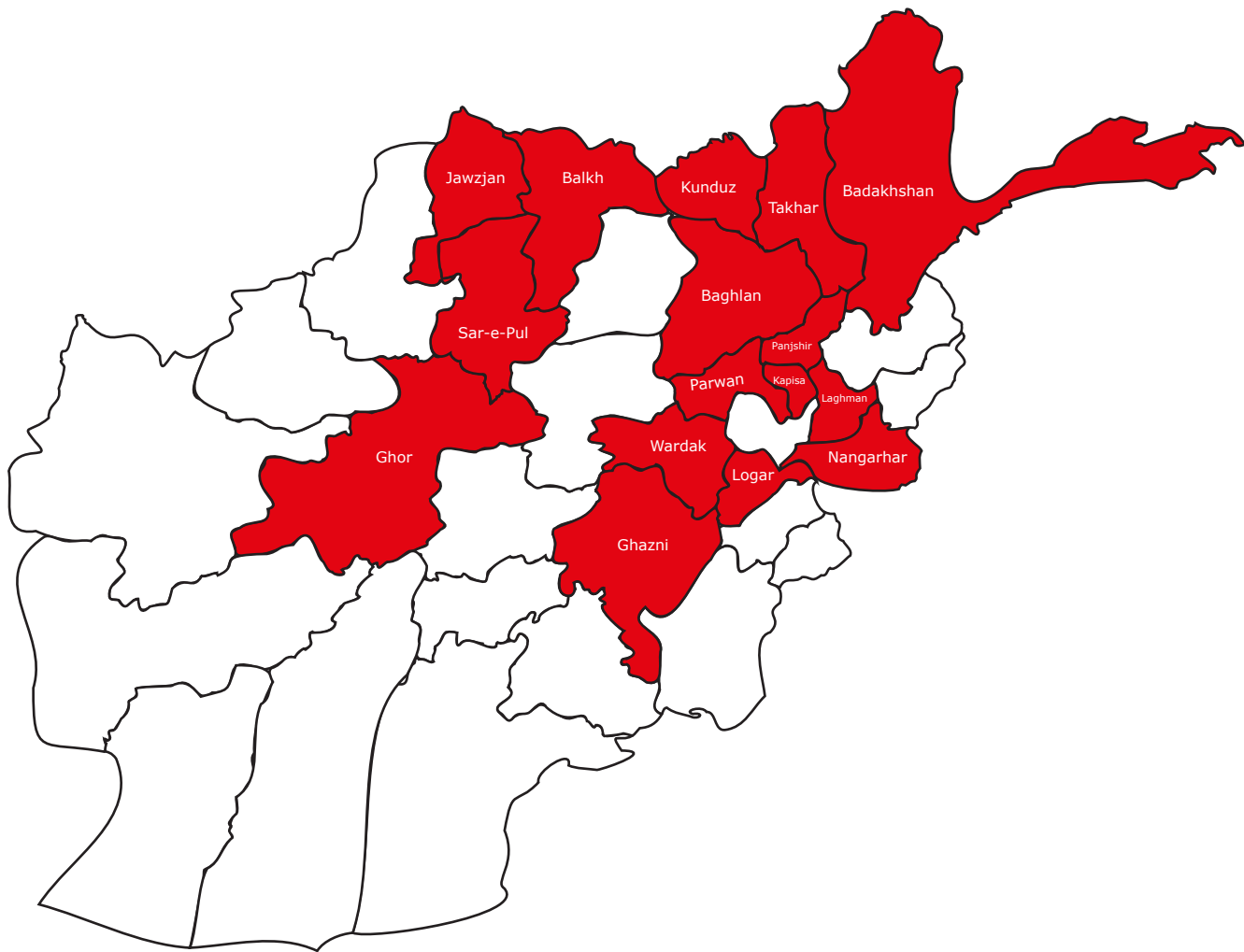


Program Expenses	1,110,368
Admin & Other Expenses	19,586
Expenses per financial statements	1,129,954

Complete audited financial statements can be found [on our website](#)

# Our Programs

**In 2021 we delivered programming in 16 provinces, from urban centres to remote and rural areas.**





## Humanitarian Response



Families receive Learning Plus Baskets, including food aid, hygiene items, warm blankets and learning materials

In 2021, with a humanitarian crisis unfolding in Afghanistan, we quickly responded by assessing and delivering on emergency needs, on top of our established education programs. We distributed emergency assistance such as food aid and winterization support including warm blankets and firewood to hundreds of families displaced by the crisis. We continued and adapted our Learning Plus Baskets activity, first developed as part of our COVID-19 response, providing bundles of books and other learning materials delivered directly to households along with food aid so that every member of the family has engaging material to learn from, as well as food security during the worsening economic crisis. We have also delivered thousands of books to schools that remained open in the aftermath of August 15.

Going forward, we will continue to assess and meet emergency needs as they arise, and are also exploring how our programs can provide income assistance to Afghan women who have lost their income since last year, for example, by employing them as teachers on our virtual platforms. Learning Plus Baskets will continue to be distributed across Afghanistan, and to displaced Afghans outside of Afghanistan whose children cannot access formal education.



**395**

Learning Plus Baskets distributed



**1,430**

Individuals reached

“

*This is a great support to me since I was displaced. The blankets will keep my children warm during winter and food will make them healthy. I received a call to collect the supplies and I am happy to receive them today - a mother from Kunduz province*

”

## Program

### Investing in Basic Education



A teacher receives books distributed at one of 33 schools



As part of our Investing in Basic Education program, 2021 saw us distribute thousands of storybooks to schools and displaced families, graduate a cohort of students as we completed our relationship with the Fatema Tul Zahra School, work with UNESCO to deliver a campaign on girl's education during the COVID-19 pandemic, and work to enhance teacher training through our Global Affairs Canada funded project, Gender Equity in Teacher Training.

This work continues, as we develop and distribute local language reading material and more for Afghan children and their families through the Learning Baskets initiative, deliver virtual learning opportunities to Afghan children, youth and adults both in Afghanistan and beyond through new initiatives like DD Classroom and DD Courses, and provide professional development to displaced school leaders, teachers and students.

“

*I read the books and found them much interesting for children to read. This has added beauty to our school library collection*  
- Parveen, a teacher from Spin Kalai High School

”



**15,810**

Storybooks printed and distributed



**77**

Library Starter Kits distributed



A student teacher stands in front of one of our GETT campaign billboards



24

Radio and Video Public Service  
Announcements produced in Dari and Pashto



395

Families received Learning Baskets

“  
*This campaign is really encouraging for women teachers like me, who will educate more girls for the future. It gives me strength to continue my education, and can change families' perception towards girls' education*  
 - student teacher at one of our Gender Equity in Teacher Training project member colleges  
 ”



## Program

# Afghanistan Reads! Libraries, Literacy and Books



Students attend a literacy class in Kabul province

In 2021, the Afghanistan Reads! Program trained literacy teachers, taught and graduated students who would otherwise not have access to education, outfitted classrooms and delivered life skills education. Even as classes paused in response to the ongoing security situation, we continued to provide vital support to students in our community literacy classes, including through the distribution of mental health resources and storybooks for families to share at home when the classrooms were closed.

Going forward, we will continue to provide this support for lifelong learning through adapted programs to meet the needs of Afghan women and girls both in Afghanistan as well as those displaced in the region and internationally.



## 225

Students in 9 classes completed our literacy program



## 32

Students transitioned to public school



## 234

Mental Health Books distributed to students



## 9

Teachers trained in life skills education and librarianship





Literacy class students transition to public school, holding their certificates

## Program

### Grants & Scholarships

The Shafia/Mohammad Memorial Education Fund for Afghan Women and Girls is a fund established in memory of three young sisters (Zainab, Sahar and Geeti Shafia, all in their teens at the time of their deaths) and Rona Amir Mohammed, who were all murdered on June 30, 2009 in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. The funds are used to support female education through providing small grants to students to cover some of their education expenses. Although established with support from the Kingston community, the fund has been so successful that this initially short-term initiative has become a permanent program that welcomes donations from all of our chapters, members and supporters.

In 2021 we awarded Shafia Fund scholarships to 14 young women studying at secondary or post-secondary level. Part of our response to the crisis in Afghanistan is to expand our scholarships program. Going forward, we will also support women and girls to study outside of Afghanistan, including at higher education institutions in the region. Our continued support for women and girls within Afghanistan to access to education will include continued Shafia Fund scholarship grants to private higher education institutions, and to provide internet access for online learning.

“

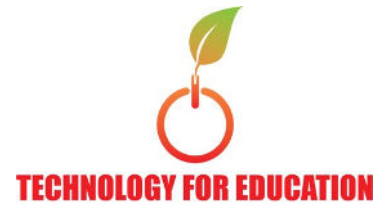
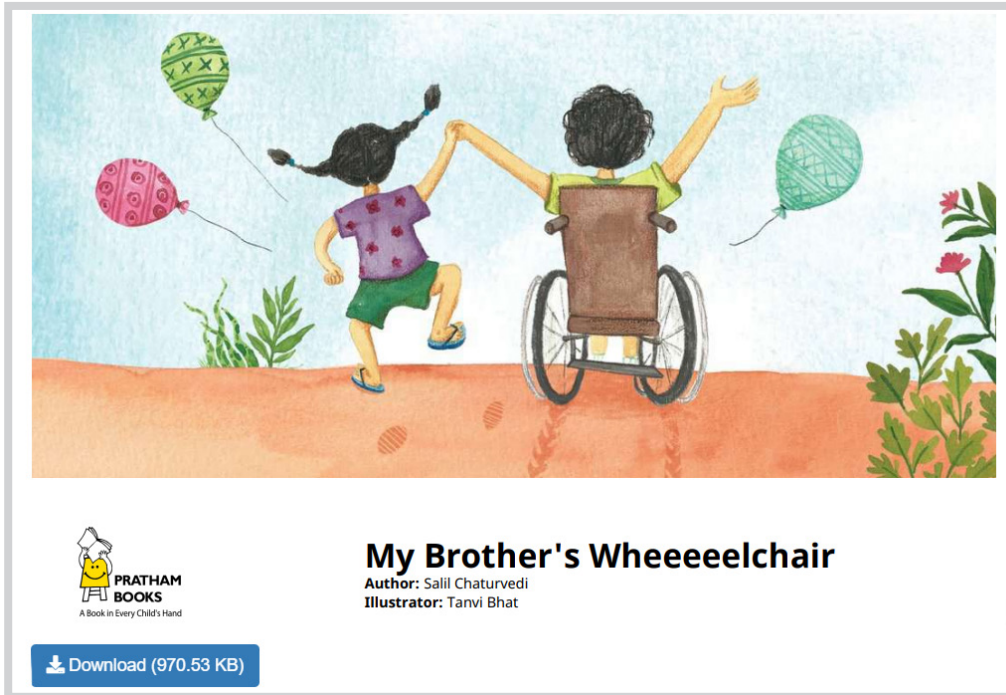
*Thanks to support from CW4WAfghan, I was able to work hard and achieve all the things I had dreamed about for the future. I hope that with continued support, I will be able to graduate university and help other women and girls from my province*

*- a Shafia Fund scholarship recipient*

”

## Program

### Technology For Education



One of the thousands of children's storybooks available in our DD Library through a partnership with Storyweaver

Our Technology for Education Program provided a vital means for us to continue offering and expanding educational opportunities to Afghans in 2021, even as the situation for women and girls deteriorated. The work we do using the power of technology to deliver learning and teaching at a distance, continues. In fact, this work is more relevant than ever, and we have been working to expand virtual education opportunities so that women and girls who were cut off from their conventional education in Afghanistan can still access learning opportunities.

Going forward, in addition to our DD Library and DD Courses, we are pleased to be adding a third tool to our suite of platforms enabling virtual education in Afghanistan, DD Classroom. DD Library gives access to learning materials including books, storybooks, lesson plans, videos, experiments, games and more in nine languages. DD Courses allows people to take full courses at their own pace on a variety of subjects, asynchronously, from any location. And now, DD Classroom provides a means of synchronous learning by enabling live video classes. This allows, for instance, girls in Afghanistan to resume high school classes from home, teachers to take professional development courses, or university students to take classes if their university in Afghanistan is closed or they can no longer attend due to the Taliban's policies.



# 6,240

Learning Materials in the Library



# 1,000

New Learning Materials added in 2021



**50,000**

Average Monthly Visits



**220**

Storybooks translated in 2021



**50**

Audiobooks added to our collection



**17**

DD Lite (offline library access) installations

“

*Thank you to all the DDL team that are working to provide educational resources for children, especially children abroad that have no access to educational resources or books. Your services are truly valuable. I am proud of such culture loving people of our dear homeland*  
- DDL user, June 2021

”



A member of our staff delivers a DDL Lite installation and demo at a secondary school in Kabul province



## Program

### Public Engagement and Membership

#### Annual Symposium

In 2021 our annual symposium was hosted virtually under the title *Eyes on Afghanistan*, highlighting the ongoing need for the global community of supporters to keep attention on the human rights situation inside the country. In a presentation of our field programs, we shared how CW4WAfghan is continuing our work in Afghanistan, as well as adapting and expanding programs to meet growing needs inside the country and for the large numbers of displaced Afghans in the region. We also heard keynotes from journalist Ruchi Kumar about the importance of centering Afghan voices in reporting on the country, from Pashtana Durrani of LEARN Afghanistan, and others.

Thanks to all who joined us! Highlights of the event, including recorded keynotes, can be found [on our website](#).



eyes on  
Afghanistan

#### Highlights from our Chapters

Throughout 2021, as the going got tough, our chapters across Canada were passionate and energetic in championing our mandate and the rights of Afghan women and girls. Whether it was through fundraising events, community engagement such as presenting our work to schools and service clubs, or their political activism, our chapters continued to show the power of Canadians acting as global citizens. Standing in defence of the right to education for those in Afghanistan and among the increasing displaced population, our members put their commitment in action, living our motto human rights are universal. Here is a glance at chapter activities in 2021.





Members of our Victoria chapter demonstrate in solidarity with Afghans



Our Peterborough chapter staged another successful Red Pashmina Walk, raising funds and awareness



Please support our 2021

# [un]GALA#2

TICKETS: \$100 (100% income tax receipt)

Your 2021 ticket provides you with the intangible benefit of knowing you are continuing to support the girls and women of Afghanistan at a time when major fund-raising events have stopped, but the needs and costs to support Afghan girls at our school, and our Shafia scholars, remain the same.

**PRIZES**  
(keepsakes delivered to your door):

- Kingston package: \$50 gift certificate for Olivea and 2 tickets to The Screening Room
- Charcuterie box from Seed to Sausage
- Boreal beverages from Seed to Sausage
  - One litre of local maple syrup
- Beautiful hand-woven pashmina from Herat
- Selection of Afghan-related books
- A beautiful bouquet of flowers

**PRIZES DRAWN TUESDAY, JUNE 1ST**

**FOR YOUR TICKETS:**  
Contact a chapter member to arrange registration and payment or contact Madeliene @ 613 375-8290 or tarasickm@gmail.com  
Deadline for ticket sales: Monday, May 31st.

**Prefer not to purchase a ticket?**  
Donations of any amount humbly and gratefully received!

*"Education elevates a child, a community, a nation!"*



Our Kingston chapter held another hugely successful UnGala (left); a fun and creative online henna art workshop was hosted by our Calgary chapter (right)



Our Ottawa chapter raised their voices on Parliament Hill (left); in Vancouver, our chapter held a rally of solidarity with girls' denied the right to education (right)

**CANADIAN FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN**

**I STAND WITH THE WOMEN AND GIRLS OF AFGHANISTAN**

**Rally of Solidarity**  
When: Sunday November 7th @2:00PM  
Where: North Plaza of Vancouver Art Gallery

**Did you know?**

- \* As of November 7, Afghan secondary school girls will have been banned from school for 52 days
- \* Five million girls are affected by the ban
- \* The Taliban's seizure of power caused a humanitarian crisis which requires an urgent global response

**Because human rights are universal!**  
بخاطر اینکه حقوق بشر جهانی است!  
Learn more at: [cw4wafghan.ca](http://cw4wafghan.ca) and [cfuw.org](http://cfuw.org)



## Program

### Afghanistan Policy Dialogue

Throughout 2021 our advocacy work took on a new significance, as the so-called peace talks halted and then fell apart, and we navigated an increasingly complex and volatile political context. In summer 2021, with the situation in Afghanistan rapidly worsening and as the international community fell silent, we raised our voices all the louder.

Working with a diverse community of partners internationally, advocacy coalitions sprang into action, and here in Canada we supported chapters, members and concerned citizens with resource tools, fact sheets, and media talking points to mobilize in their communities as a vital means for us to engage governments, civil society, partners in Afghanistan, and members across Canada in improving outcomes for Afghans.

We adapted quickly, and though our team is small, our impact has been big - we have provided evidence based recommendations to the Government of Canada, at the UN level, and to the Parliamentary Special Committee on Afghanistan, as well as giving numerous media interviews.

Since August 2021, the program has focused on a two-fold agenda, advocating for safe passage for at-risk Afghans, and for the protection of human rights for those inside Afghanistan. We are especially focussed on the restoration of the right to education for girls and women.

Women activists in Afghanistan -- now in grave danger -- raised their voices in warning, and continue to bravely fight for their human rights in the face of Taliban threats and violence. We will continue to stand in solidarity with them, and to use every opportunity available to amplify their voices on the international stage.



Students at Calgary Girls' Charter School participated in our Day of the Girl campaign, standing in solidarity with their peers in Afghanistan for the human right to education



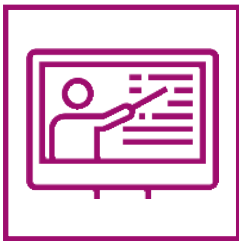
9

Meetings with representatives from federal government or UN



18

Media Interviews or Articles published by staff



2

Parallel Sessions to the UN Commission on the Status of Women, attended by 424 participants



5

Advocacy Campaigns launched

“

*Thank you for being our voice and our hope from far away. I remember you did many things for Afghan girls and women and you are still doing right now. Many thanks for everything and please don't leave us alone in this crucial time - an Afghan high school student, September, 2021*

”



**Upholding Afghan Women's Rights: What the US and allies must do now**

A parallel event to the 65th UN Commission on the Status of Women

March 23, 2021

Sponsoring organizations

**Featuring**

- Habiba Sarabi**, Member of Government of Afghanistan Peace Negotiation Team
- Amb. Melanne Verweer**, Executive Director, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security
- Samira Hamidi**, Amnesty International Regional Campaigner, South Asia
- Eleanor Smeal**, President and co-founder, Feminist Majority Foundation

**Moderated by**

- Lauryn Oates**, Executive Director, Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan

An advocacy campaign message in major media outlets (left); one of two parallel sessions to the UN Commission on the Status of Women (right)



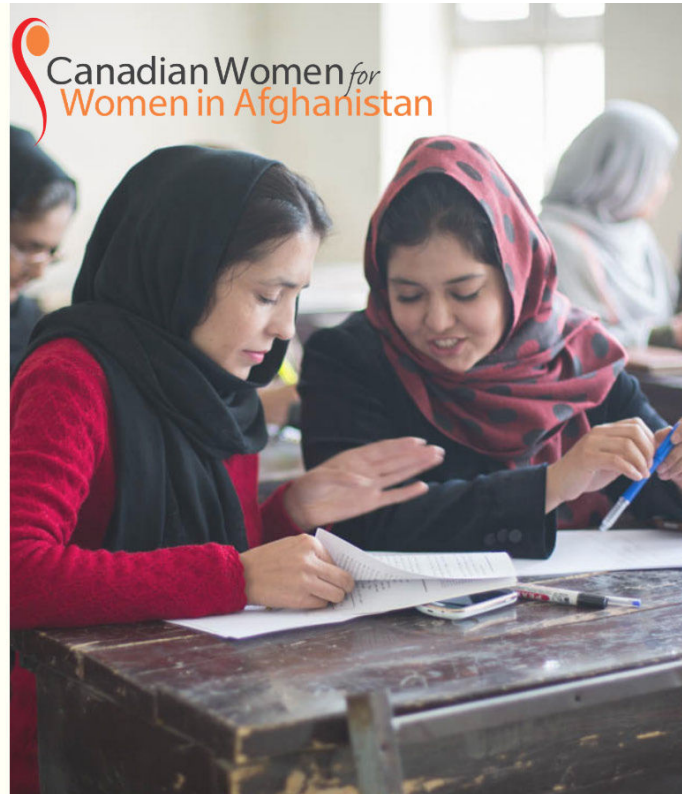
The literacy rate for young women in Afghanistan has nearly doubled since 2011, from **32%** to **57%**.

That's progress worth protecting.

Visit [cw4wafghan.ca](http://cw4wafghan.ca) to learn more

**#IDW2021 #GoForTheGoals  
#EducationIsARight  
#NeverGoBack**

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



A campaign image marking International Development Week

## Our 2021 Champion for Education

With the events that brought Afghanistan to the brink of widespread humanitarian catastrophe in 2021, the symbolism of the Champion for Education was particularly poignant. In alignment with CW4WAfghan's ongoing advocacy to protect the human right to education for women and girls in Afghanistan, the Champion for Education award was presented to every Afghan girl who ever wanted an education.

We could think of no one more worthy of recognition than the girls of Afghanistan who dream of and fight for education, at a time when their right to education is being denied to them. The 2021 award is a tribute to their courage.

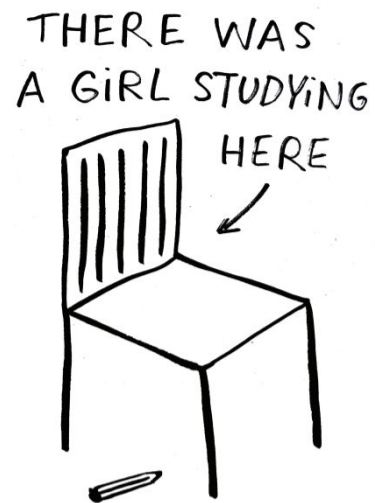


Image credit [Gabriela Araujo](#)

“

*Our mission is more relevant now than ever. Whatever we can do to help build hope for the future, we must do so with the demands and rights of Afghan women at the core of our actions. The pathway ahead seems so frightening, and uncertain. If we feel the loss of hope, imagine how Afghan girls are feeling as they face this dark pathway to their future. I've seen through the struggles of Afghan women and girls how their resilience and resolve are born of pure hope. Wielding this hope relentlessly and with determination, Afghan girls are powerful and self-motivated change makers.*

*- CW4WAfghan co-founder Janice Eisenhower, presenting the award as part of our 2021 annual symposium*

”



 Canadian Women *for*  
Women in Afghanistan

Because HUMAN  
RIGHTS ARE UNIVERSAL