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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 10

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Articles have been accepted in good faith, if you have any queries please contact the editor

FROM THE CONVENER

When the international press reported in March 2006 that an Afghan man who had converted from Islam to Christianity 18 years ago and had now returned to Afghanistan, was in danger of being condemned to death for apostasy, western politicians expressed outrage and disgust for a system based on fundamentalist religious values. Several months earlier, when an Afghan woman was stoned to death for alleged adultery, their voices were not heard. Do women count for less, not only in the eyes of Muslim fundamentalists but in the eyes of western journalists and politicians as well?

The latest RAWA speaking tour of Australia came to an end earlier this month. Mariam Rami, known to those of us who have been with SAWA from its beginnings, gave a vivid account of the situation of Afghan women today to audiences in several towns and cities. If you did not have an opportunity to listen to her presentation you can read her speech on SAWA's "news" web page.

This issue of the SAWAN demonstrates that SAWA's work is expanding rapidly. From dedicated support for Nasima Shabeed High School, which will continue unchanged, SAWA is moving into the regular supply of pharmaceuticals for RAWA's hospital and mobile medical teams. These initiatives require the dedicated support of many. Some SAWA supporters have responded to our call to make regular monthly or quarterly donations. To maintain our support for Nasima Shabeed High School we need many more who decide to do the same. If you have not yet subscribed to give a regular monthly or quarterly donation, please consider to change to a regular donation schedule, however small, via automatic bank transfer or credit card payment. To make regular credit card payments simply go to the SAWA website and fill in the subscription details. Remember: A monthly donation of only \$58 pays the full salary of a teacher at the school. There can be nothing more satisfying than the knowledge that your donation allows a qualified teacher not only to live but to enable Afghan girls to spread their wings and reach their full potential through an education that is not based on fundamentalist indoctrination.

Matthias Tomczak

SAWA sends pharmaceuticals to Malalai Clinic

As reported in the last SAWAN, SAWA contacted Overseas Pharmaceutical Aid for Life (OPAL) last year and submitted a list of antibiotics desperately needed at RAWA's Malalai Clinic. OPAL agreed to provide all medicines.

On 26 April Mariam Rami collected ten kilograms of pharmaceuticals worth some \$3,000 from OPAL's store in Adelaide. Dara and Geoff Lockyer, who established OPAL 18 years ago and are now supplying free medicine to poor countries in all continents, told Mariam that OPAL's ability to provide free medicine is virtually unlimited as long as the organizations requesting it can cover the price of sorting and packaging in OPAL's warehouse and the cost of transport. OPAL's invoice for sorting and packing amounted to \$250. This is a small cost compared to the \$3,000 saved by not having to buy the medicines. It is an amount that could easily be covered by a dedicated donation from individuals or community organizations.

Because Mariam could take the medicines back as accompanied baggage there were no transport costs involved this time. SAWA intends to organize regular medicine supplies for Malalai clinic and RAWA's mobile health teams in the future, which will attract transport charges from time to time. Air courier services charge OPAL only 20% of their normal rate for the transport of humanitarian goods, so the transport costs will also be low compared to the value of the goods and can again be covered by targeted donations from individuals and community groups.

If you want to support the sending of free medicine for RAWA, send us an email or letter to let us know. SAWA will then send you the details of the shipment for which your donation is to be used. You can also talk to your local Rotary Club, branch of Soroptimists or Zonta and ask them to sponsor the next shipment.

SAWA-Australia P.O. Box 90, Flinders University PO, Bedford Park SA 5042 www.sawa-australia.org info@sawa-australia.org

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SAWA OBJECTIVES

Raise funds for Afghan women and children;
increase community awareness of the forgotten needs of Afghan women;
encourage women, men and young people to join SAWA-Australia;
set up SAWA/RAWA support groups throughout Australia.

Convener: Matthias Tomczak

Secretary: Barbara Kameniar

Treasurer: Heidi Leffanue

Committee:

Ruth Redfern, Barbara James, Colin Banks

Newsletter Editor: vacant for this issue

Public Officer: Colin Banks

Auditor: Barry Hocking

SAWA acknowledges the sponsorship of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Australia.

Malalai Hospital Update

Regular readers of the SAWAN will remember RAWA's urgent call from late 2004 to help keeping Malalai Hospital open. More than a year has passed. What is the status of Malalai Hospital today? This report is based on information from RAWA published in November 2005.

RAWA originally established Malalai Hospital in Rawalpindi to help the over 20,000 Afghan refugees living in a refugee camp called Kacha Abadi, located between Islamabad and Rawalpindi. In May 2005 the government of Pakistan forced the refugees to leave, threatening to destroy the camp if necessary. The government also pressured Malalai Hospital and other aid groups to stop their services in order to induce the refugees to leave. Finally the Pakistani police bulldozed all the mud huts, and the refugees were told to relocate to camps closer to the Afghan border.

With the destruction of Kacha Abadi camp the existence of Malalai Hospital in Rawalpindi did no longer serve a useful purpose. RAWA decided to move its medical services to Khewa camp, a refugee camp closer to the border near Peshawar. A small clinic run by an NGO was closed there a year ago, and the refugees were in grave need of proper health care.

The tight funding situation meant that support for a fully fledged hospital was not available, so Malalai Hospital was re-established in Khewa camp as Malalai Clinic. Currently the clinic is being run 4 days a week, 9 am to 2 pm, by a team of a female medical doctor, a child specialist, a gynaecologist, three nurses, a lab technician, a pharmacist, a registrar, a service worker, a driver and a security guard. It is equipped with a medical laboratory - including superior equipment to treat eye problems - and an ambulance to transport patients to Peshawar in case of emergency.



The in-patient department to admit patients and carry out surgeries is still awaiting funding before it can be opened. However, the OPD is running to full capacity.

In Rawalpindi, Malalai Hospital was serving only Afghan women and children. In Khewa camp, due to the lack of any other medical facility, RAWA decided to also provide medical services to Afghan men.

The nearest alternative medical facility is a Pakistani private hospital about 25 km away. It is nearly impossible for the

refugees to pay the high costs of transportation. By moving Malalai Clinic to this area, the local Afghan refugee population has been relieved of one of its biggest problems.

There are about 5000 refugees living in Khewa camp. A further 25,000 live in the surrounding camps and brick factories for whom Malalai Clinic also provides medical care. Each day between 120 and 180 patients from Khewa or the neighbouring camps and factory workers come to the clinic. Among them at least 100 - 120 are women with gynaecological problems and children who have diseases such as diarrhoea, dehydration, skin infections, pneumonia, flu, malnutrition and others.

Patients of Malalai Clinic pay a small fee of 10 rupees (about 20 cents) to get registered. After that, all medical check ups, tests and prescribed medicines are provided free of charge. Common medical tests such as typhoid, malaria, hepatitis B & C, and other routine tests are carried out in the clinic. Any patient who suffers from a serious medical condition that cannot be treated at the clinic is immediately sent to a well-equipped hospital in Peshawar city. The ambulance formerly used by Malalai Hospital is available on a 24 hour basis for transporting patients.

The clinic also has a Mobile Health Team composed of two doctors, a nurse and a pharmacist. The team visits neighbouring camps and especially families who live and work in brick factories, and provides them with free health care services. There are several poor families who are suffering from various illnesses but cannot spare the time to visit a doctor as they are struggling to spend each hour working to support their families. In other cases women and children are not allowed by their families to leave home.

Aside from providing medical treatment, Malalai Clinic has regular programs of health education for women to educate them about the importance of hygiene, how to acquire healthier food, and how to look after babies and children. The programs also educate them about different vaccinations, serious illnesses, etc.

With the help of FemAid RAWA ran a course for midwives to train women who can provide First Aid in situations where there is no doctor. Currently 15 women are being trained who will graduate in early 2006. They will then be provided with a First Aid kit and other equipment and medicines.

The full report, which includes several photos, can be found on the web site of The Afghan Women's Mission.

RAWA event on International Women's Day in Kabul

A function organized by RAWA on 8 March in Kabul to celebrate International Women's Day demonstrated the support RAWA enjoys in the community. When RAWA had planned the event the committee in charge expected to see some 500 people but decided to plan on the safe side and provided 800 chairs. When the day arrived it had to set up a total of 1,500 chairs in a hurry, and still many people did not find seats and had to stand through the event.

RAWA's statement released on the occasion of International Women's Day 2006 can be found on the "news" page of the SAWA website.

At the Kabul event RAWA presented a certificate of honor to Mr. Mir Ghulam Nabi, a worker of Kabul's museum who removed some of the precious exhibits to his house during the reign of the Taliban to save them from deliberate destruction. He returned the exhibits after the Taliban's fall. In his short speech, Ghulam Nabi said: "I thank RAWA and urge them to continue their revolutionary mission."

New photos from Nasima Shaheed High School

SAWA's support for Nasima Shaheed High School is provided in quarterly instalments that cover the salaries of 28 teachers and other staff. Two transfers have been made so far (December 2005 and March 2006). RAWA will provide a report on the operation of the school when the school year ends in late June.

In the meantime, here are two photos Mariam Rawi included some recent photos from the school in her presentation during her speaking tour.



RAWA plans to move orphanages from Pakistan to Afghanistan

RAWA has operated orphanages in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan for many years. In Afghan society children are considered orphans if they lost their father. Many orphans still have a widowed mother who finds it hard enough to fend for herself and is forced to give her child into an orphanage, and most orphans have extended family in Afghanistan.

Living in an orphanage in a refugee camp in Pakistan isolates the children from the remaining relatives in Afghanistan. RAWA is now calling for support to relocate

some orphanages to Afghanistan. A RAWA statement released in April says that "the children deserve to live in orphanages close to their native homes where they can visit their remaining relatives as often as possible. We are nurturing the next generation of Afghan citizens and can do so in our native land with your support."

The costs to run an orphanage are higher in war-torn Afghanistan than in Pakistan, where they already increased dramatically for many reasons (for example an increase in rents of more than 50% due to the devastating earthquake). Nevertheless, RAWA considers it important that the orphans grow up in their own country and is appealing for support to raise the necessary funds.

Moving selected orphanages to Afghanistan will take several years. Establishing a new orphanage requires around \$23,000. SAWA's main funding project is Nasima Shaheed High School, which has a target of \$33,000 for 2006 and requires minimum annual funding of \$18,000. This is about the level of SAWA's current fundraising ability. Most of the support for new orphanages will therefore come from other countries. But we can contribute to the campaign by fulfilling our target for Nasima Shaheed High School and thus relieving RAWA of the need to spend funds on the school.

RAWA's Australian visit a great success

In April Mariam Rawi of RAWA was in Australia at the invitation of Deakin University to present the opening address of Deakin's conference in Melbourne: 'Community Development in a Global Risk Society'. This was RAWA's fifth Australian visit and Mariam's second invitation to Australia, her last visit being in 2004. RAWA supporters had the great opportunity to renew links with RAWA and hear accurate information of the current situation for Afghans in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as receive an update on RAWA's work.

Whilst in Australia, Mariam was able to renew old friendships with ardent supporters as well as meet many new RAWA supporters. Her visit included events held in Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide, Hobart and country towns Whyalla, Inverloch and Foster where many enthusiastic groups and hardworking individuals organised RAWA events. Mariam made a big impression with members of Soroptimist International at the Conference of Clubs, Soroptimist International of the South West Pacific (SISWP) in Brisbane where she gave a presentation. Many Australian club representatives assured Mariam of further ongoing RAWA support in the year ahead. Mariam also made contact with Soroptimist International in Hobart and Adelaide. Rural Australians for Refugees, the Boite, and Women's Probus clubs hosted RAWA support events.

Mariam also made links with members of the International Women's Development Agency that sponsored a RAWA conference on peace in Pakistan in 2005, as well as the Melbourne Mercy Sisters Social Justice group and World Vision.

Following the very full three weeks in Australia, Mariam headed back to RAWA loaded with 45kg of luggage,

including approximately 20kg of pharmaceuticals donated by OPAL, children's books, approximately \$10,000 (\$5000 raised in the Melbourne 'Support a RAWA Orphan at Christmas' appeal) and one giant teddy bear that became attached to Mariam and insisted on returning to Pakistan to join RAWA.

The message Mariam brought us was that not much has changed for Afghan women and needs are still very high. Despite the desperate need for RAWA's programmes, financial support has reduced for RAWA as global interest has shifted from Afghanistan. We were very much moved by Mariam's words and Mariam left with the pledge of the many supporters in Australia that RAWA and Afghan women will not be forgotten.

Onnie Wilson

RAWA in South Australia

The invitation from Deakin University to its conference *Community Development in a Global Risk Society* allowed RAWA member Mariam Rawi to undertake an extended speaking tour to several states, including South Australia.

The main event in Adelaide was an evening presentation jointly held by SAWA and the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre of the University of South Australia. Mariam's speech was followed by an exhaustive questions and answers time that gave the audience of about 80 people deep insight into the situation of women in Afghanistan. Mariam's speech can be found on the "news" page of the SAWA website. An abbreviated version was also printed in the weekend edition for 6-7 May of Adelaide's main newspaper *The Advertiser*.

Zonta prepared to donate birthing kits

When Mariam Rawi's visited Adelaide during her speaking tour she met with the Adelaide Hills group of Zonta, a charity organization of professional women. The group had developed a kit to assist rural births where access to midwives and medical help is restricted and birth assistance is often given by family members. The birthing kit has been available for many years and is now distributed to organizations in many countries.

Mariam took ten sample kits back to Pakistan for evaluation by Malalai Clinic. The kits are likely to be of great value for remote regions of Afghanistan, where they can be distributed by RAWA's mobile clinics. Zonta is prepared to supply the kits in large quantities as required. This will greatly help reduce the instances of women dying after child birth. Today many women in rural Afghanistan still die from complications during childbirth.

SAWA financial statement for 2005

SAWA's Annual General Meeting was held in Adelaide on 3 March. The convener presented his annual report, which was accepted. A copy can be obtained by contacting SAWA by mail or email. The financial statement for 2005 shows that SAWA was again successful in raising much needed

help for RAWA. Less than 0.5% of SAWA's income was spent on administration – no NGO can do better than that!

2005	income	expenditure
bank balance 1 January	2,300.02	
revenue (1)	28,364.30	
total income	30,664.32	
transfer to RAWA		22,332.25
administration (2)		1,104.48
total expenditure		23,436.73
bank balance 31 December		7,227.59
Balance income/expenditure	30,664.32	30,664.32

(1) donations and membership

(2) postage of newsletters, website maintenance etc

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can contribute enormously to promoting SAWA:

- Pass this newsletter to a friend/neighbour/relative.
- Print and/or copy this newsletter and give to friends, work colleagues, relatives and organisations. Forward it to your address list or through your organisations.
- Ask your medical centre for permission to have this newsletter placed in its waiting room.
- Encourage others to join SAWA and to check out the SAWA web page:
www.sawa-australia.org
- Invite a few friends and neighbours or members of a group you belong to, over for morning tea/supper.
- Ask your organisations/employers to make a donation.
- Run a fundraiser or join SAWA as an organisation member.

JOIN SAWA HERE:

Name:.....

Organisation:

Address:.....

Post Code..... Phone:().....

Email:

I support the objectives of **SAWA**

Signed:.....Date:.....

(circle as appropriate):

Organisations: \$100.00

Individual \$20.00

Concession \$15.00

Student \$5.00

School \$10.00

Donation \$.....

TOTAL \$.....

(Pay by cheque, via Internet at www.sawa-australia.org or via direct deposit through your bank)