



Support Association for the Women of Afghanistan

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

Remember Afghanistan's women as Christmas is upon us!

Soon Christmas decorations will be going up in shopping centres to remind us that the biggest commercial event of the year is not far away. You can show your friends that you care by giving them a donation to SAWA as a present. We have a new range of personalized greeting cards that we are happy to send to your friends on your behalf. See page 4 for details.

FROM THE EDITOR

Afghanistan's elections are already one month away. The results are still not known, but our television news shows Hamid Karzai receiving bags of cash without embarrassment, saying that the millions are "for the office of the president." In Canberra parliament and senate "debate" Australia's military involvement and make clear that business will continue as usual, despite a majority of Australians expressing their opposition to the war. Meanwhile, life in Afghanistan goes on, people mourn their dead and worry about the food prices that were pushed up by the floods in Pakistan.

Afghanistan's women need our help more than ever. Fortunately, SAWA is poised to increase its support through several new developments, the most notable one being the foundation of a second state association, SAWA-Australia (NSW). The combined efforts of the new state association and the old SAWA-Australia, now reconstituted as SAWA-Australia (SA), will without doubt result in higher donation income.

An important development has been the signing of a partnership agreement between SAWA-Australia (SA) and Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA that allows donations to become tax-deductible. Please follow the information on page 2 exactly if you require a receipt for taxation purposes.

This will be the last SAWAN in the present format that shows the information of the South Australian state association on the front. Future editions will report equally on the activities of both state associations. The details will still have to be worked out, but the new SAWAN will reflect our new strength.

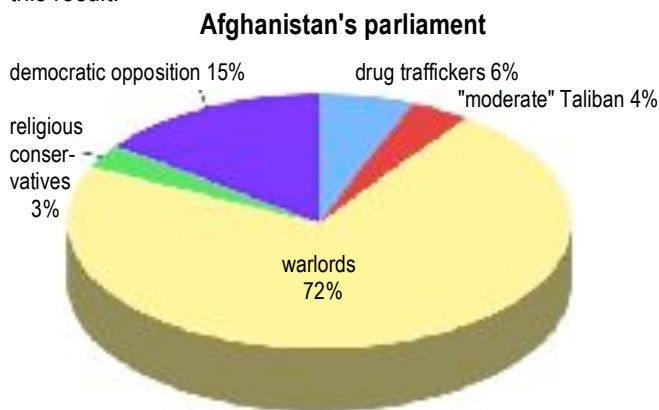
Matthias Tomczak

Elections in Afghanistan, an eyewitness report

The weekend 18-19 September saw another attempt to "bring democracy to Afghanistan" through parliamentary elections. The western press praised the Afghan security forces, Defence Minister Stephen Smith was quick to congratulate voters and candidates. It is difficult to see why, perhaps because most of them came out of the process alive?

Four days before the elections SAWA received an email from Latifa, the director of the Vocational Training Centre in Kabul: "As I told you we will have a party at the Training Centre very soon, but unfortunately we are facing some obstacles. The government announced that all schools and courses will be closed because of bad security. Last night there was an explosion in Herat where more than 15 civilians died but the government didn't let the media report it because people may become afraid and not participate in the election. This morning there was a demonstration where fighting started between police and the public. Our administrator's nephew and two other members were killed and many other people injured."

Is this the price for democracy? Italian RAWA-supporters analyzed the composition of the last parliament and came to this result:



From all we hear in the press the new parliament will be worse than the old one; fewer women, more warlords.

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

Bendigo Bank Account Number: 126035633 Adelaide Branch BSB: 633-000

SAWA OBJECTIVES

- Raise funds to assist in development and relief projects 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 James

Treasurer: Christine Tomczak

Committee: Carmel Chiu-Sutcliffe, Libby Drew, Kath Jones, Ruth Redfern

Newsletter Editor: Matthias Tomczak

Public Officer: Ruth Redfern

Auditor: Bob Shahinger

This is the "democratic process" Australia supports. SAWA expressed the condolences of its members to the death of its friends, to which Latifa responded: "Thank you so much for your sympathy for the suffering Afghan people. Yesterday was parliamentary election, one million out of five million participated. The Ministry of Defense announced that around 1300 attacks killed some 1026 people, so you can imagine how bad the situation is. But you are our hope; our energy and your support encourage us to struggle against all this."

The Stella Watson party at The Vocational Training Centre, a great success



We reported in the last SAWAN that Janet Watson-Kruse collected donations on her mother's birthday to establish the Stella Watson scholarship for literacy training. On 26 September, after

some delay due to security clampdown before the elections, the over 150 students of the Vocational Training Centre held their first Stella Watson party in the presence of a guest from the Literacy Section of the Ministry of Education and several OPAWC staff. Here is an excerpt from their report:

"The party was opened with some verses from the Quran, followed by a speech of the representative of the Ministry about Literacy Week. Fatima, one of the teachers of the Centre, then gave a speech about the importance of education and its values, encouraging the students not to stay behind in the face of progress. She reported how she went to the mosque to argue with the religious authorities who create problems for the Centre. The speech was liked by all as they were smiling and applauding her for her braveness.



The main event of the party was the great debate. The teachers had prepared a list of 50 questions, which they had handed out to all students one week before. On the day of the party they selected eight questions for the debate and divided the students into two groups. The debate started and it was wonderful and the two teachers made it even more attractive by asking the students of the groups some additional questions; those who answered them correctly received a present and their group received extra points.

The result was excellent, both groups reached the same score and presents were given to both groups. The students were happy and laughing.

Following the debate the guest from the Ministry congratulated OPAWC for its hard work and meaningful activities to improve the lives of women. He said that OPAWC got the highest score of all NGOs working in this field. He praised the students and encouraged them to come to their classes regularly.

At the end of the party the guest from the Ministry and the students were invited to tea and cake."



Donations to SAWA are now tax-deductible

In September SAWA entered into a partnership with Union Aid Abroad - APHEDA, the overseas aid organization of the Australian Trade Union Council (ACTU) that allows donors to receive tax deductible receipts for donations.

Tax deductible receipts are only available for donations to the Vocational Training Centre. Donations to Hewad High School are not tax deductible. To maintain our support for Hewad High School we ask all donors who do not require tax deductible receipts to continue to donate to SAWA directly. Donors who require a receipt for taxation purposes can now send donations to the Vocational Training Centre through a special APHEDA account. Cheques are to be made out to APHEDA and sent to APHEDA, Level 3, 377-383 Sussex Street, Sydney NSW 2000, accompanied by a note that the donation is for the Vocational Training Centre in Afghanistan. Donations can also be made directly from your own bank account to Commonwealth Bank Haymarket Branch, BSB 062-006, account number: 10049043 account name: "APHEDA Inc. Overseas Projects Account No 2". It is essential to send APHEDA an email or letter with the details (date and amount) of your donation and specify Afghanistan as the reason for the donation, or your payment may go into the general APHEDA account inadvertently.

The new committee of SAWA-Australia (SA)

In this SAWAN we introduce the new committee of SAWA-Australia (SA) that was elected at the Annual General Meeting held on 28 September.

Barbara James, Secretary

Barbara is a retired English and French teacher with 30 years experience in secondary teaching and specialist areas English

Communications, Adult Learning, Teacher training/mentoring, Course Design, Film-making, Resource-Based Learning, International and Aboriginal Education, working with socially disadvantaged youth. She wrote two study guides to assist students and teachers in their appreciation of Geoff Goodfellow's "Poems for a Dead Father" and "Punch On Punch Off" (downloadable from <http://www.geoffgoodfellow.com/>).

Retired from 2006, Barbara is a committee member since 2005 and committee secretary since 2007. She has organized many fundraising activities, dinners, film nights and committee functions and co-hosted a visit to South Australia by Malalai Joya. She often speaks at public events with women's groups and schools, and has made many contacts in media, business and the wider community. In 2008 she received an award "Women who have made a difference" from Soroptimists Eastern Districts for her work with SAWA.

Matthias Tomczak, Convener

Matthias came to Australia in 1979 to join CSIRO and later the University of Sydney as an oceanographer. He has given training courses in marine science for the United Nations in Malta, Mombasa, Bangkok and Fiji. In Sydney he worked with the Deaths in Custody Committee. Matthias joined Flinders University in Adelaide in 1992 and founded the local SAWA group in 2003. He became national convener in 2005.

Now retired, Matthias spends much of his time on SAWA business. In October 2008 and April 2010 he visited SAWA's support projects in Rawalpindi and Kabul. He is also the SAWA webmaster and newsletter editor.

Christine Tomczak, Treasurer

Chris also came to Australia in 1979. As Matthias' wife she, naturally, has been supporting SAWA since the time the SAWA committee moved from Victoria to South Australia; but most of her time and energy went towards working with the "Circles of Friends", supporting refugees, visiting them in Baxter Detention Centre, advocating for them and when they finally got released (some of them after six and more years) helping them to live on our side of the fence. She took some of them into her house while they were waiting for their visa.

Chris is involved in playing chamber music; over the years she organized a number of fundraising concerts, some of them for SAWA. Chris is very happy now to be able to work for SAWA in an official capacity.

Ruth Redfern

Ruth worked as a Registered Nurse for 40 years, qualified in Psychiatry, General, Midwifery and Spinal Injuries (U.K.). Now retired, she has worked with the Australian Refugee Association for three years and as an assisted private migration agent for two years. She is a member of the St Ignatius Refugee Support Group and has been on the SAWA committee since 2005. Ruth's many musical interests have helped SAWA's fundraising effort on several occasions. Ruth is an on air presenter with 5MBS 99.9FM and a horn player in the 2nd Wind Concert Band (Horn) and in the Mitcham Orchestra. She plays the recorder and percussion in the Sylvan Players Recorder Group. Ruth is also SAWA's public officer.

Carmel Chiu Sutcliffe

Carmel is a researcher interested in using feminist geography, social planning and geographic information systems (GIS) to

promote social justice, social inclusion and sustainability. She has a passion for working with at-risk young people and disadvantaged communities and has spent time in Eastern Europe and Australia working on youth development programs. She has previously worked for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Volunteers for Peace and the Bulgarian Youth Alliance for Development and is the founder of the Sohbet Society for Human Rights at the University of South Australia.

Libby Drew

Libby has a strong interest in languages and global issues, graduating from Monash University in 2003 with a BA (Languages), majoring in Spanish. She has lived in Mexico, London, Glasgow, Melbourne and Adelaide. Whilst at university she was a volunteer teacher with the Monash Student's Association English teaching program for Afghan refugees and a volunteer English tutor with the Adult Multicultural Education Service (AMES). Libby has been involved in the Fair Trade sector for over seven years and currently works in quality control and sales administration with Oxfam Australia. She has been an active member of SAWA for over a year and hopes to visit Afghanistan one day.

Kath Jones

Kath is Administrator to the Morialta Trust Inc charity and holds a Bachelor of Commerce from Flinders University. Spending her childhood among the Xhosa people of the Transkei she developed great respect and admiration for tribal women who with little or no education have to provide for their children in a sophisticated and materialistic world. In 1982 she and her husband brought their children from Zimbabwe to South Australia. In 1997 Kath became a volunteer to teach English as a second language in conversation classes. This brought her into contact with Afghan refugees released from detention. She initiated a support group for them that evolved into the Murray Bridge Refugee Support Group. Kath believes that education of women is the best way to empower and assist them to provide for their families with the dignity and respect they deserve, especially when they are widowed.

Reports from local groups and donors

Adelaide: From Bach to the Beatles and beyond

SAWA (SA) is fortunate to have the support of The Green Oak Players. This fine group of recorder musicians performed a range of pieces at an afternoon concert *named From Bach to the Beatles and beyond*. The music was beautiful, lyrical and sometimes humorous with some new works being performed in public for the first time. We were fortunate to listen to the "hurdy gurdy" being played and explained to us. We learnt that this ancient instrument dates back to the 12th Century and sounds like a violin and bagpipe combined!

Over 100 people attended, afternoon tea was served and Afghan handcrafts were available for sale. All proceeds from the afternoon were generously donated to the Vocational Training Centre for war widows in Kabul, one of SAWA (SA)'s major projects. The amount raised was \$1886.00, a fine result!

Thanks must go to The Green Oak Players, St Ignatius Refugee Support Group, St Ignatius Parish for the use of its hall and to Ruth Redfern.

Northern Rivers: Sahar Alum-Zadah used her birthday party at a friend's restaurant to raise funds for SAWA. Supported by Bob Oort's guitar music she and her guests raised \$1,500 – a great boost for SAWA's support projects!

Josh Saines, who runs "Arid Art", a specialist nursery for rare and exotic plants he sells through eBay auctions, has generously offered to donate the proceeds from some of his plants to SAWA. In the first month this already produced over \$200 for SAWA. We thank Josh for this initiative and welcome Arid Art (<http://stores.ebay.com.au/Arid-Art>) as a new sponsor.

New greeting cards available

For several years SAWA offered personalized gift cards with a photo of Naseema Shaheed High School. The school was closed by the government of Pakistan in 2007, so it is time to replace it with new cards. There is now a choice of three cards in support of Hewad High School and two cards in support of the Vocational Training Centre. The cards can be ordered online at www.sawa-australia.org/products.html or by mail. Please visit the web page to find out details or request information by post if you cannot access the internet.



Hewad card 1

Hewad card 2

Hewad card 3



Training Centre card 1

Training Centre card 2

SAWA's blank greeting cards drawn by Amin, Ulfat and Barkatullah have always been popular and remain available.

SAWA-Australia now also incorporated in NSW

Just before this SAWAN went to the press we received the exciting news that SAWA-Australia now has a state association in NSW. The contact address and bank details are

SAWA-Australia (NSW), PO Box 1741, Rozelle NSW 2039. Bendigo Bank Rozelle Branch, BSB 633-000, account no. 141397471, account name SAWA-Australia (NSW)

Office bearers are Dawn Atkinson (convener), Shirley Allen (Assistant Convener), Karen Pakula (Secretary), Carolyn Allen

(Treasurer); committee members are Maryellen Galbally, Margaret Hetheron, June Lunsman, Herma Sieper and Helen Toner. Dawn was one of the recipients of the 2010 Edna Ryan Awards for Education of the Women's Electoral Lobby NSW, who says about her:

Dawn Atkinson's life's work has revolved around education. Since the early seventies she has been known in the Inner City for her feminist-based teaching approach. Now retired, she devotes her energies to promoting the Support Association for the Women of Afghanistan.

Her leadership skills in organizing fundraisers for this Association have raised thousands of dollars to help the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), a feminist organization in Afghanistan educating women and girls. Dawn and her co-workers in SAWA have made an enormous difference to countless women and children.

SAWA members can now choose which state association they want to be affiliated with. They can also be members in both state organizations.

We die so that

In this edition of the SAWAN we present another poem by Elyas Alavi (علی‌آسی), the internationally renowned poet. We printed his poem "She had beautiful eyes" in the last SAWAN and thank Elyas that he allows us to present another example of his work.

Elyas' web blog (in Farsi) is at www.elyasalavi.blogfa.com, and he can be contacted via elyasalavi@gmail.com.

We die
so that sick poets can write their poems
We die, it's a lovely game
When a mother licks the boots of a young officer
And the newspapers keep printing photos of the father
Standing next to important people.
Every evening a thousand times a girl becomes a bride
And a thousand times my sister screams
A thousand times, it's a lovely game
The workers will get excitable at eleven o'clock
And tomorrow they'll all pour into the streets
shredding colourful banners into pieces
They'll sing
they'll dance
and of course they'll chant slogans
We die
So that the photographer of the Times can win a prize.

Translated from Farsi by Dr Zuzanna Olszewska from Oxford University

Kabul in the 1950s and 1960s; a correction

In the last SAWAN we printed a report by Mohammad Qayoumi, slightly abridged from *Foreign Policy*. We said that *Foreign Policy* is a World Bank publication. This is incorrect. *Foreign Policy* is published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.